



Initiated in June 2000, *M(odel) 4 ∞* at BüroFriedrich addressed the theme "Sports" and began with an open barbecue hosted by Rirkrit Tiravanija (top left); the Copenhagen-based artist Amel Ibrahimovic ended up covering two walls with hand-drawn portraits of his favourite people in the artworld who were portrayed like soccer players, outfitted in the uniforms of their respective national teams (top right); exhibition view from Bik Van der Pol's *Insert* (bottom left); Angela Bulloch invited people to hang out in her *Devil Bags* (bottom right). Courtesy of BüroFriedrich.

Another model BüroFriedrich not only favour uncertainty and complexity but also reflect a conscious attempt to break with the representational architecture of most public art and cultural institutions. By Jennifer Allen

"TO REALISE UNCERTAINTY:" Waling Boers thus defines the goal of BüroFriedrich, a non-profit platform for contemporary art in Berlin. Boers came from Amsterdam in 1997 to open up the multifunctional space in the abandoned Czech cultural centre in Friedrichstraße, a former border crossing point in East Berlin, from which the office takes its name. Located in Gipsstraße since December 1999, BüroFriedrich continues to host a wide range of events: exhibitions, panel discussions, lectures, special weekends and performances. Boers actively cultivates a complex curatorial model to facilitate uncertainty, if not chaos, attempting to add many different layers of meaning and experience to a given event. "The structure of society is based on reductionism," explains Boers. "One is supposed to present oneself as a unique identity. In politics, for example, we vote

formula: "the apartment = the office = the studio = the exhibition space = the apartment."

These heterogeneous and seemingly contradictory functions were brought together through alternating collaborations with artists, curators, critics and the public who were all invited to reflect upon different models of reality in the living/working space. Indeed, upon entering BüroFriedrich, one is never quite sure what reality one will find behind the large double doors: a group of silent spectators watching a movie, an artist drilling away at a new sculpture among the permanent installations, an intense office meeting or a well-peopled party.

These different situations are often created by combining seemingly disparate events and by involving as many participants as possible at the level of art production and spectatorship. Thus,

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for faces, not for complex policies. Art is the only situation where complexity can be articulated and invented in an interesting way because it has an open format that allows you to explore parallel structures, be they cultural, economical, social or even psychological."

The *M(odel) 4 ∞* project provides a good example of these complex explorations by taking infinity as both a mimetic ideal and a productive goal. Initiated in June 2000 with the Berlin-based artist Rirkrit Tiravanija, the on-going series takes advantage of the current location's architecture – a double apartment in a new building designed by Hans Kollhoff – by sticking to the following working

M(odel) 4 ∞ addressed the theme "Sports" and began with an open barbecue hosted by Tiravanija, who also cooked for visitors watching the European Soccer Championship, the Tour de France and Formula 1, which were all shown live on a large video screen in the space. The Copenhagen-based artist Amel Ibrahimovic was invited to stay and work for a couple weeks; evidently inspired by the spectators and the sports, Ibrahimovic ended up covering two walls with hand-drawn portraits of his favourite people in the artworld – curators, artists and gallerists – who were portrayed like soccer players, outfitted in the uniforms of their respective national teams. Every

day, Raymond Cuijpers e-mailed new computerised stills of soccer players taken from the televised matches of the previous evening while Tom Simpson presented photographs of female soccer players, both adding a whole new set of portraits to the exhibition. In this case, the cross-over into sports did not simply produce yet another new artistic theme, but rather fused in the very same space two vastly different ways of looking. Watching sports and watching art probably never came so close before; in the end, fans from both worlds became indistinguishable.

Boers and his co-workers run the office in the midst of these activities and artworks, taking a break, of course, to participate. Here, contemporary art allows the spaces of work, life, play and display to flow easily from one into the other. The permanent installations are for the most part functional works that are always available for immediate use, including: AVL's generous *Modular Multiwomen Bed*, 2000, for seven sleepers and even more loungers; Angela Bulloch's large bean bag seats *Devil Bags*, 2000; and Lucio Auri's furniture pieces made from found materials, including scrap wood and twigs. Exhibited artworks rarely appear in frames and are never out of reach of the visitors. Since there is no special, separate space for exhibitions in BüroFriedrich, one may happen upon a piece in the most unexpected of places. During *Look and Feel*, which was curated by Gregor Muir, Tim Macmillan's video *Dead Horse*, 1999, was installed in one of the bathrooms; the frozen image of the horse being shot and the sound of its hoofs hitting the cement added a morbid and medicinal touch to the white bathtub tiles, while confounding the private activities of the restroom with the shared experience proper to aesthetic appreciation. For the *SuperSplit* exhibition, organised in collaboration with IASPIS, Pascale Marthine Tayou projected two videos of images taken from Stockholm and Yaoundé directly onto the beer crates piled up in one of the kitchens, while Koo Jeong-a made a micro-sculpture with salt and paper among stray kitchen utensils on a window sill.

The fluid and dynamic spaces of BüroFriedrich not only favour uncertainty and complexity, but also reflect a conscious attempt to break with the representational architecture of most public art and cultural institutions. "We have an anti-institutional approach," explains Boers. "Too often, institutions try to symbolise something else; they pay attention to how their building looks from the outside while hiding their organisational activities on the inside. Here, all the spaces are equally visible and accessible. Anyone can come in and see us working while they have a coffee and a good art experience." Although BüroFriedrich is generously funded by the Dutch government, Boers emphasises the participation of many different financial partners, from the British Council to DAAD, which may support individual exhibition projects and artists. Both in funding and in practice, BüroFriedrich evidently shies away from the representational cultural models proper to the nation-state, such as embassies and language centres which are expected to distribute and to promote a particular and cohesive national identity. "We don't represent a specific country," notes Boers. "We run a platform intended for artists of all nationalities."

—Jennifer Allen

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