

VERONIKA TZEKOVA

WITH_{and}IN PUBLIC SPACE

W U M A M P A R O I

(When You Make a Mistake Put a Rose on It)

WUMAMPARO I multiple modules tackle emotional non-commitment and physical abuse and disregard of public spaces, urban furniture, buildings and in general our environment. *WUMAMPARO I* counterstrikes the collective psychology, dilapidation, neglect, and lack of respect to one's inner and exterior world.

The 'availabilities' in the public space become the source and the media of the project. *WUMAMPARO I* reverses the process and the failures turn into advantages.

WUMAMPARO I consists of many whimsical environmental interventions, which are tiny in their locality but address larger community and even global issues.

Some of the manifestations of *WUMAMPARO I* are anti-monuments to attitudes towards public space, either by the authorities, institutions or individuals and ideally seeks to stretch and invest new meaning in the word monument. Though different in certain aspect such as appearance, locations, and concept conveyed, these monuments carry characteristics typical for the most of the monuments such as: commemoration of importance, improving appearance and re/ organizing of public space, communicating idea and impressing.

So far *WUMAMPARO I* has been developed in several modules, as the main ones are:

WUMAMPARO I_I, anti-monuments to a collective psychology.

From Nature Morte into Nature Vivante. The essence of this part is turning holes on streets into informal gardens; real plants replace the 'warning' branches and garbage in the variety of holes offered by the streets in Sofia, Bulgaria.
2008, ongoing

WUMAMPARO I_II, anti-monuments to a culture specific form of disrespect of public /and/ space.

Reverse employment of a space-polluting medium: planting sunflowers instead munching on the seeds and spitting around the husks.
2009, ongoing

WUMAMPARO I_III, interventions on urban furniture and situations:

- *Space Appropriators (Urban Olympics 2011)*, interventions in public space, Sofia, Bulgaria, 2011
- *Dadissuasori*, Italy, 2010
- *Space NRGZers (#1, 2, 3, 4, 5)*, Italy, 2010

W U M A M P A R O I _ I

(When You Make a Mistake Put a Rose on It)

Anti-monuments to a collective psychology

Guerrilla gardening

Sofia, Bulgaria

2008, ongoing



WUMAMPAROI_I // The Beginning // in December, 2008 a hole in a bridge in South Park, Sofia, was filled and planted with Juniperus tree











WUMAMPAROI_I // Through the years // 2011 // Views: the sight before the action and the plate of the anti-monument WUMAMPAROI_I 2011

Part of the spring edition, 2011 of *WUMAMPAROI_I* was a mixed media installation, part of the *Big Bang* exhibition in Credo Bonum Gallery in Sofia. It consisted of more than 3 m high weeping birch, which was planted later in the location #1; two screens and banner stand with free material for building the complex anti-monument *WUMAMPAROI_II* 2011.

On the first of the two screens part of the installation, was shown the hole, which inspired the project. On the second initially was played slideshow featuring the project development through the years. After the planting of the tree during the second week of the exhibition, the slideshow was replaced with video documentation of the action.



WUMAMPAROI_I // Through the years // 2011 // Views: installation at Credo Bonum Gallery and the construction of anti-monument WUMAMPAROI_I 2011



Space NRGZer #1

Short-term intervention, living statue /
Photograph
Como, Italy
2010

This short-term intervention on a grand staircase at Fondazione Antonio Ratti in Como was provoked by the physical asymmetry created by the earlier destruction of a sculpture of a child. The work restores the original composition but this time with a living statue, which references the previous history whilst bringing a playfulness and spontaneity to the site.



Space NRGZer#2, APPI BAR

Intervention on ready-made

Biella, Italy

2010, in progress

During my residency at Cittadellarte-Fondazione Pistoletto, Biella, Italy in 2010, I continued with my quest for unhealthy urban conditions. That's how I came across the garden of Fondo Edo Tempia, foundation conducting research and prevention of cancer. They wanted to turn the garden belonging to the building hosting the foundation into more attractive spot for social exchange and leisure, where the foundation will be able to communicate better its activities and achievements. So far it was quiet and empty park, hosting car parking and donations such as the three colossal Vas Two-s. Vas Two is a product of Serralunga company producing outdoors furniture, a flowerpot with a classic shape, just scaled up to the gigantic dimensions of 1.50 m height and 1.60 m in diameter. It has elegant but formal presence, so I wanted to warm it up and enliven the site a bit. That's how as a result of my bipolar relationship with Vas Two the *APPI* BAR* was born. The *APPI BAR* is an addition to the existing flowerpot turning it from container into a bar, an invitation for communication, exchange and leisure. The *APPI BAR* is going into mass production by the company producing the Vas Two and is going to be official NRGZer of this industrial design. This spring during the garden refreshment at Fondo Edo Tempia in Biella two *APPI BARS* will be installed at two of the three Vas Two-s in the foundation garden.

*'Appi' is a word my daughter used to name everything with round shape and it is also the Italians pronounce 'happy' (they omit the 'h' in the beginning).



The garden at Fondo Edo Tempia, Biella, Italy, 2010 and Vas Two by Serralunga s.r.l.



Space NRGZer#2, APPI-BAR :: Intervention on ready-made :: Prototype on Vas Two by Serralunga s.r.l. :: Views from the installation at Cittadellarte-Fondazione Pistoletto, Biella, Italy :: 2010

Space NRGZer#3

Digital visualization for an intervention
on ready-made

Italy
2010

Space NRGZer#3 is a proposal for a fun gardening in the same Vas Two. One can climb up the ladder, pick an apple, hoe and when done, slide down. Together with the *Appi Bar*, *Space NRGZer#3* definitely may enliven the (e)motionless aesthetics of the featured garden, for example. *Space NRGZers* #2 and #3 add value to the site and encourage communication, play and social interaction in the garden. *Space NRGZer#2*, #3, #4 confront the awkwardness in size and placement of urban furniture, whether by authorities, companies or NGOs. However, the works deal in a positive way with the inconsistencies of urban spaces.



Space NRGZer #4 (Soft Benches)

Intervention on urban furniture /
String installation
Biella, Italy
2010

Space NRGZer #4 (Soft Benches) are conceived after an encounter with awkwardly placed benches on a street in Biella, Italy. The city of Biella is located in a region that once served as the centre for the Italian textile industry. Originally the benches were placed along the sidewalks facing the facades of shop windows. Most of the businesses were closed, with 'for rent' signs placed on the shop front exteriors. My intervention took the form of a string installation, which extended the shape of the benches and connected them with strands of yellow yarn produced in a nearby factory. The resulting soft benches were like vivacious yellow rays of light and yet not usable urban furniture. The use of the locally produced wool thread memorialises the social aspect of the economic decline of the textile industry in the region, as it is no longer something upon which the local population is able to rely or 'lean on'.





Space NRGZer #5

Digital visualization for an intervention
La Pigna, San Remo, Italy
2010

On the small square near S. Costanzo Church in La Pigna, San Remo three pepper trees have been cut down. I was told that they were cut down on the decision of the architect of the Municipality, who has previously explained that trees are cut down to 'preserve the look of the old town'. *Space NRGZer#5* turns the circular concrete bases, which are now empty apart from the remaining tree stumps, into sand pits, whilst keeping the cut-off trunks visible.



Dadissuasori

(in Italian dissuasori=bollards and dadi=dices)
Intervention on broken urban furniture / Graffiti
La Pigna, San Remo, Italy
2010

The bollards were placed in front of St.Giuseppe church in La Pigna, San Remo, Italy to prevent cars from passing and parking. At the moment of the intervention they were randomly displaced (pic.1). Employing their positioning and dice-like shape, I turned them into huge dices thrown on the small square to monument the shifting fortune in the competition between planned urban environment and personalized appropriation of space (pic.2 and pic.3). Strangely some functionary of the church found it blasphemous and painted over the dots (only) of *Dadissuasori*, making them even more sad and ugly (pic.4). How far an institution, and even more religious institution, can and should control public space outside its premises? *Dadissuasori* were the first permanently installed art piece in public space in La Pigna, with the potential to turn a sad destruction sight into landmark... the story isn't over. I hope the people of La Pigna will claim them back, after all the church functionary used water based paint.



pic.3



pic.1



pic.2



pic.4

Space Appropriators (Urban Olympics 2011)

www.urbanolympics2011.hit.bg

The series of urban interventions *Space Appropriators (Urban Olympics 2011)* comment on modes of use and behavior in common spaces in the city of Sofia, Bulgaria. Each *Space Appropriator* employs different situation in the urban fabric in order to question the Status Quo of variety of urban spaces and elements. Most of the *Space Appropriators* are developed in the shape of outdoors games, realized with simple media such as chalk drawing, elastic rope, stencils, stickers and etc.

Space Appropriator #1 / GUMMITWISTers

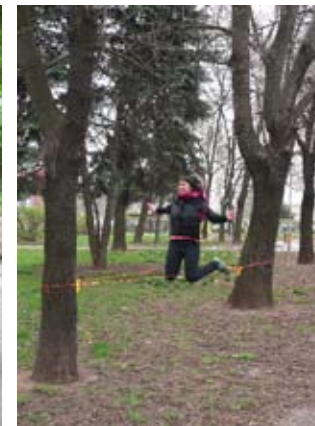
Urban interventions, performances

Props for urban games/ rubber band, messages on stickers

Sofia, Bulgaria

2011

Nowadays kids play less outdoors and their activities are usually 'branded' and physically and mentally limited due to the environments hosting these activities. Street games are no longer practiced. *Space Appropriator #1/ Gummitwister* comes in action at 'branded' playgrounds, as well as in green areas and spots intended for neighborhood playgrounds, which are turned into muddy parking places.



Space Appropriator #2 / Hopment

Urban interventions, performances

Attributes for urban games/ chalk drawings

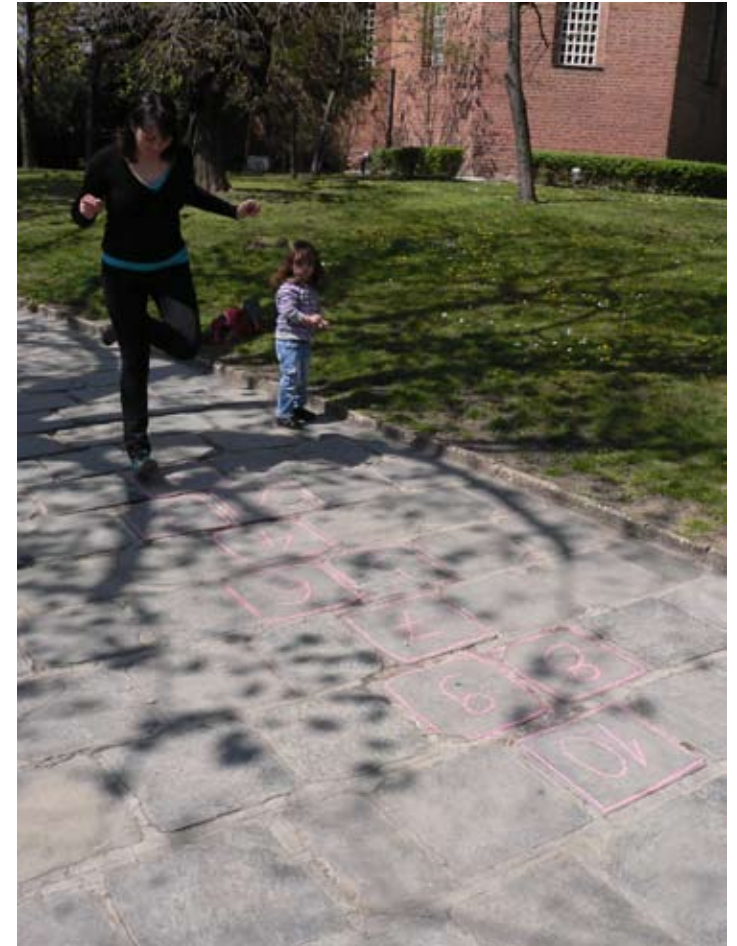
Sofia, Bulgaria

2011

Views from location #1 and #2

Space Appropriator #2 takes advantage of the pattern of the sidewalk tiles and by adding a chalk drawing turns them into a hopscotch.





Space Appropriator #3 / Junior Pro-ball

Urban intervention, performance

Attributes for urban game/ chalk drawing

Sofia, Bulgaria

2011

The city of Sofia has huge parking problems. On the featured sidewalk obviously the owners of this now closed enterprise made arrangements to prevent the cars from parking, which created peculiar situation. *Space Appropriator #3*, alike *Space Appropriator #2* uses the specificity of the sidewalk and by adding a simple chalk drawing in the shape of a football field offers an alternative experience of the place and an opportunity to practice a street game.





Space Appropriator #4 / TT Ludo

Urban intervention, performance

Attributes for urban game (on tactile tiles)/ stickers

Sofia, Bulgaria

2011

TT Ludo turns the tactile tiles used rarely on the sidewalks in the city of Sofia into Ludo board by adding color stickers on the relief pattern of the tiles so to form the Ludo board model.



Detailed view



General view



Space Appropriator #5 / Adaptation

Urban intervention, performance

Sofia, Bulgaria

2011

"Adaptation is the evolutionary process whereby a population becomes better suited to its habitat...

The term adaptation may also refer to a feature which is especially important for an organism's survival and reproduction..."

From Wikipedia

Adaptation is a short-term intervention and performance on a piece of damaged urban furniture, inspired by and fictionally reusing it. The rails were meant for strollers and bikes. At the moment the *Adaptation* took place they were found anonymously and very "creatively" remodeled, absolutely dysfunctional, even dangerous ...



**Space Appropriator #6 /
Security Overturned (Urban Olympics 2011 Finissage)**

Repurposing of urban furniture (large security bollards)/ textiles,
sparkling wine, glass/ performance
(in front of) The Residence of the British Ambassador, Sofia,
Bulgaria
2011

View from the intervention

Space Appropriator #6 with the title *Security Overturned*, served as a closing event for the *Urban Olympics 2011*. The artist converted one of the large security bollards in front of the residence of the British Ambassador in Sofia into cocktail table and had a baby bottle of sparkling wine. All this was filmed. Of course this conflicted the security regulations of the place and was terminated sooner than the desired by the respective authorities. Thus the finissage of the *Urban Olympics 2011* highlighted once again the conflict between many private interests in the otherwise common public space.



Space Appropriator #6 / Security Overturned (Urban Olympics 2011 Finissage) // Views from the intervention // Sofia, Bulgaria // 2011



Hacking the City

Luxembourg, Casino Luxembourg
2009

Urban identity as any other identity is complex. Therefore, the issue of representation here is also crucial, while urban environment reflects the values and the needs of the citizens. On the other hand, we all have seen the conventional sort of post cards, considered representative. The two parts of the project consists interventions in the city and postcard available at Casino Luxembourg.

Hacking the City #1 :: A thing that stroke me at ones were the many restrictive signs at the park entrances. The park is supposed to be a leisure and relaxation place, so I decided to offer people alternative solutions to the don'ts. The interventions consist of drawings and text.

www. .lux (Hacking the City #2) :: Since the time I boarded Luxair airplane I came across the topic of a nation and destination branding. There are several variables that are usually taken into account working on the nation branding. However, ever since I landed in Luxembourg, the expression 'LUX' comes across my eyes. It is employed excessively in the names of products, services and company names. So I had the feeling the people of Luxembourg have already branded their identity: 'LUX'. Having in mind the direct association of 'LUX' with luxury was also a strong lead to my work. Therefore, I went through the city and changed many domain suffixes from .lu to .lux.



Hacking the City #1 :: Original view of the signs before the interventions



SWITCHABLES

('POLITICS', 'MEMORY', 'DESIRE', 'FATALITY')
operable light sculptures, urban furniture,
vegetation

View Moeland Castle,
St.Niklaas, Belgium
2010

The *Switchables* originate from the innocent desire dating back in the childhood to possess a magic wand and have the ability to change facts or moments in life when we do not like them. They are operable illuminated letterboxes, which one could switch on and off. They visualize a 'switchable' word and thus on the metaphorical level its meaning and existence in one's life, which could be manually ceased at any time using the on/off button.



“Veronika Tzekova is fascinated by the processes of change in an urban context. The certainties presupposed by the economy, politics or advertising world, turn out to be fickle and ephemeral. The visual messages they leave behind evoke people’s desires for a different and better existence. Tzekova observes these changes in a town, and their influence on the behavior of its residents. Her artworks create the impression of being politically loaded statements. Although that may very well be the case, they also express a concern about essential human needs.

To live in the best of all possible worlds, quite many changes would need to be made. However, many decisions or actions cannot be undone. In *WUMAMPAROI (When You Make a Mistake Put a Rose on It)*, she toys with the idea of undoing something. This is achieved symbolically by the planting of the flower, in some way analogous of the penance that follows the Catholic confession ritual.

For *Coup de ville*, Veronika Tzekova works in the inner court of Moeland Castle, which is part of a hospital. It is the ideal place for asking yourself questions about what you have done wrong and how this can be rectified. *Switchables* is an installation consisting of benches, with words on a lightbox that can be switched on and off. With plants placed around the furniture, the location is a pleasant oasis that invites people to relax and reflect for a moment. The artist asked the hospital staff to provide words in their personal lives that they wished could be changed. From these words, Tzekova selected a few such as ‘memory’, ‘desire’, ‘incurable’, ‘politics’, ‘nationality’ and ‘gender’. Switching the lightbox on and off simulates what is possible with the computer, namely undoing a mistake by pressing the “Ctrl+ Z” keys.”

Stef Van Bellinghen for the catalogue *Coup de ville*
Sint Niklaas, Belgium
2010

Sweetshirt ("My Boss Is Turkish")

Various media
2002-2005

Images:

- Free cards, Sofia Bulgaria, 2002;
- Bilboard Gallery, Bratislava, Slovakia
- Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Kassel, Germany

The Sweetshirt project confronts stereotypes related to nationality, origin and religion and in particular related to the use of the word "Turkish", inspired by its heavily loaded with social, historical and political meanings in a country like Bulgaria and many other countries as well.

The idea is to use various means of presentation and action, the social and mass media structures, for advertising the sentence "My Boss Is Turkish", aiming rising emotions and sending messages that re-energize personal, social, political and historical issues. Feelings about the messages, which the project communicates, are sometimes impulsively influenced by the "local climate" they were born, and this causes quite interesting geographical fragmentation of the opinions.

The Sweetshirt project invites multiple, may be even contradictory readings and at the same time takes no position and thus allows them to coexist and complete each other leaving space for dialogue.



Reconstructed Identity

Sculpture, fiberglass

3m/0.9m

2002-2005

View from installation in Belgrade, Serbia

Reconstructed Identity was born after the daily encounter with the second-hand employment of the Coca-Cola bottles. Old women selling homemade milk in Coca-Cola bottles were casual view on some of the central streets of Sofia. This symbiosis between the world's most famous brand and the homemade milk might be a banal sight for the passers-by in Sofia, but it is intriguing with the way it becomes Bulgarian symbolic representation of the process of globalisation.

Reconstructed Identity is an attempt of producing an adequate to its time "monument" of society in transformation, a "monument" of a global form filled with local content.

The sculpture represents large-scale model of a Coca-Cola bottle, made as a solid object of materials resembling visually the originals and with height 3.00m as the original proportions are kept. Instead of the original soft drink, the bottle is "filled" with milk.



Veronika Tzekova // artist, urban practitioner // www.veronikatzekova.hit.bg // veronika_tzekova@abv.bg