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Moving Borders

Artists: Elin&Keino (Nieminen and Nyberg)

Curator: Asikin Hasan

We have decided to address the theme through researching the meaning and personal experience of national independency in a global context. We wish to raise the question by comparing two simultaneous timelines indicating various states of independence or loss thereof.

In 2017, 220 years has passed since the (former) Republic of Venice lost its status as an independent state. In the same year Finland celebrates its first centennial as an independent nation.

We wish to focus on time as a constant factor, bringing change we cannot imagine or grasp due to our relatively narrow view of our surrounding and our seemingly short memory of history. Approaching the centennial celebrations in Finland, we also see a change in generations. There are only few left that were born pre-independence, and most of the war veterans of the 2nd world war, who also fought for the independence of Finland are no longer among us. With new generations taking our independency and the freedom that comes with it for granted, the memory and knowledge of what it actually means is in danger to be forgotten.

The importance and meaning of independence can be seen as an easy question, but more closely you consider all factors - financial and geopolitical interdependence, internal political and cultural differences, historical context as well as a (dis-)connection to the country on a personal level it turns out to be a complex matter. In its most concrete form, independence takes shape through drawn and marked borders that surround a specific piece of land, dividing it from the rest of the world. Depending on the perspective, the idea of independence can even become quite absurd especially in the global world of today.

We have decided to put our focus on the multiple ways one can experience the notion of independency by comparing one nation's countdown towards a centennial celebration of independence with another ones continuous movement further away from its past status as an independent nation. As much as we humans have a fear of change, we also have a talent for both forgetting and adapting. We seem to forget that the hegemonic reality (geographical, political, economical...) that we live in today, was not imaginable only a generation or two ago - just as it is not likely to be the same as it is now in yet another generations time. The changes we live through and fear right now is most probably the normality of the next generation, taken for granted and accepted without question.

Within this frame, questions of borders and what they symbolize in this context also interest us; what in fact are borders, are we united by our borders or do they function as an element of imprisonment or exclusion? Do we build them to protect ourselves (our land, our culture, or people) or are they actually isolating us from the world around us. Yet again, our personal experiences form the meaning of these man-made limits.

Projected on opposite walls in the pavilion are two separate time counts of years/days/hours/seconds - one which counts the time which has passed since Finland received independence (100 years on 6.12.2017), the other counting the time which has passed since Venice lost their independence (220years on 12.5.2017). Two fences create a pathway through the middle of the space, marking the territory of each respective country - continuing outside of the pavilion onto actual Venetian soil. The fences can be seen as symbols of unification, protection and inclusion or of exclusion and isolation. Are borders protecting us or are they keeping us prisoners.

“The Modern world spawned paradoxically. On one hand it promises prosperity for mankind, but on the other hand the risk caused by the Modern world to the environment, ravines rich and poor, dominate to one party over the other, and causes of social problems. Exploration by humans since the Enlightenment, have caused the earth and life of the universe to change significantly.”

Asikin Hasan, Curator

Elin&Keino is a co-operation between artists Sandra Nyberg and Heini Nieminen that started in 2009. We are interested in the dynamics between the individual, the community and the environment. Elin&Keino deal with the politics of human interaction, interference, and reclamation of our surroundings. Our work is about encounters, collaboration, interpretations and transformation between sites, participants and situations - creating a dialogue between contemporary art and the environment/community.

We wish to investigate environmental and communal features, phenomena or characteristics. We are specifically interested in the idea of site-specificity and public intervention; creating works that are integrated with their surroundings while exploring local cultural, political, sociological and/or historical contexts. We often work with themes related to the somewhat problematic man/nature relationship and are interested in questions of ecology, sustainable development, global consumer culture and its effects on us and the age in which we live.

We communicate through tactile, participatory and visual artistic media as many people relate to their environment through involvement and aesthetics. We want to offer experiences that help the participant/audience relate to their surroundings and perhaps lead to universal questions of the individual and her place in this environment, to stimulate imagination and nurture personal and communal creativity and innovation.