

Art, Travel & Beyond

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W139, Amsterdam

*Exhibition based on research and a concept by
Amiel Grumberg (1980-2004)*

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Produced by W139, Amsterdam



Paula Roush is the founder of msdm {mobile strategies of display & mediation}, a collective that provides a co-laboratorial space for art practices that use, promote and investigate the mobility, distribution and presentation of artworks.

Her work is a hybrid intersection of different media, including para-architecture, sound, video, photography, text, posters, installations, computer gaming, web streaming, public interventions and curating.

Tourism is one of her interests. For the project Contemplation Room in Copenhagen she produced a new cut & fold version of the pre-packaged m4, a modular/mobile/micro/multiple space, an artist run urban entertainment centre. As a piece of urban hardware for the megalopolis, the m4 was planned to address the condition of post-tourism, a term coined by sociologist John Urry to describe the fashion in which all city dwellers have become tourists in their daily life, even when they are just shopping or walking in the park in their place of residence. AG



Paula Roush
Mud d'Artiste / Kunstniku Muda
2006
video, colour, silent, 7'
Courtesy the artist

PAULA ROUSH

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Paula Roush
Mud d'Artiste/ Kunstniku Muda
30g of Pärnu mud bottled August 2005 by Paula Roush/msdm
Courtesy the artist

MUD D'ARTISTE/KUNSTNIKU MUDA

I was invited for a project by the Rael Artel Gallery in Pärnu, an Estonian seaside resort and a tourist destination renowned for its many sanatoria and mud baths. I decided to work directly with mud. I was interested both in the material, its healing and artistic qualities, and in the place, the Pärnu Mudaravila, the first sanatorium and grand neo-classical building opened in 1838. The health programme developed in Pärnu has, over the years, mutated from a trade union health centre for workers during the soviet occupation to become, since Estonian independence, a liberalised post soviet event space. Today, the sanatorium also houses a wax museum, sharing the original treatment facilities with an exhibition of wax celebrity look-alikes, which includes, in an amazing feat of time-space compression, side-by-side simulacras of Stalin, Princess Diana and Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Before travelling to Pärnu, I found out that the local weather report was available online via a webcam that feeds live video from the main street's tourism office. This webcam was part of a global network of surveillance cameras: the Axis 2100 Webcam (made in Sweden), is a pre-programmable device with its own server, which sends images from weather stations, shopping malls, university libraries and nature resorts all over the world. To address the relationship between tourism and surveillance and post 9/11 anti-terror legislation that make it illegal to wear face coverings such as masks and face paint in public space, I tried to obtain Pärnu mud to build a mud mask. This proved impossible as the local mud is not available for sale and can only be experienced as part of the sanatorium treatment. Furthermore, the Pärnu mud is only used on the body, facial treatment being excluded from the current mud treatment practice.

I visited the sanatorium and negotiated my own special treatment, which consisted of a unique blend of mud to cover my head and face. When I finished the treatment I took away enough mud to be bottled as a small series of mud d'artiste (artist's mud) multiples, which include two to be displayed locally - one for the Rael Artel gallery where the exhibition took place and the other for the Museum of Pärnu, which has an archive of the local mud baths sanatoria. The other mud d'artiste bottles are to be included in the exhibition, Global Tour Project, addressing the issues of tourism and surveillance.

The mud d'artiste multiples are accompanied by a video juxtaposing the images of the mud mask treatment with the wax look-alikes, both filmed at the sanatorium. The project will be finalised the day I make a wax look-alike of myself with the mud mask.

Paula Roush, 2005