

TIRANA ART LAB
Centre for Contemporary Art
is pleased to invite you to its inauguration:

After four years of operating in different spaces in the city of Tirana, we are pleased to announce the official opening of Tirana Art Lab (TAL) space and its first exhibition.

“LET US START FROM THE MIDDLE / EFFI & AMIR”

With guest artists: Matilda Odobashi, Era Tula, Driton Selmani, Pleurad Xhafa, and Ergin Zaloshnja

Friday, 5th September 2014 at 7 P.M

“Let us start from the middle” is the exhibition title of the duo *‘Effi & Amir’* presenting their current visual research project into the world of *‘Google Street View’*. Through this exhibition they try to develop different approaches of film making within an existing photography. *‘Google Street View’* offers a parallel already documented reality. Inside this huge “snapshot of the world”, it seems that all that is left to do, is to reframe it.

Obviously, this is a simplistic way of describing a move that, in fact, is highly challenging both artistically and philosophically. *‘Effi & Amir’* not only reframe it, but they also intervene within the pictures of *‘Google Street View’*, by mixing them with other footage and enabling them to reveal other stories. Their work questions perception and representation, authorship and appropriation, time and space correlation and it points to the surprising shift in the western concept of mapping – from abstraction to the anecdotic.

“Let us start from the middle” includes three projects: a new video-work titled *“The Vanishing Vanishing-Point”* and *“As If”*, five-channel video installation. These projects were jointly developed in collaboration with artists from Albania and Kosovo. Both works will be exhibited for the first time. In addition, results drawn from the workshop *“Tirana Collective Mental Mapping”* developed with young people from Tirana will be shared.

In this case, *“The middle”* refers to the arbitrary character of the world-view that *‘Google Street View’* offers, questioning at the same time the centrality OR denial of hierarchy and/or linearity.

The exhibition engages with the current location where the artists live, in Brussels and the city where the exhibition will take place, in Tirana. The fictional space of *‘Google Street View’* is transformed into a tool that allows them to address issues related to both realities at once. The fictional enables them to engage critically and put into question power structures in the European Union, the institutions that represent it and *‘Google Street View’* system.

2nd, 3rd, and 4th September 2014, from 4 to 8 P.M

Mental Mapping Workshop

‘Effi & Amir’ invite you to participate in creating the mental map of Tirana.

On 4th of September the workshop will also be opened to the public.

Please pass by, say hello, and help us put together the mental map of Tirana.

6th September 2014 at 7 P.M

A talk by ‘Effi & Amir’

A land voice overed

With excerpts from their own work as well as other artists and filmmakers

Israel, in general, and Jerusalem, in particular, is a representative case of a place, whose imaginary dimension often overshadows its real existence. For centuries and onwards, the Holy Land, Zion or Shalem, were extensively represented visually, often by artists who had never ever visited these places. The biblical people of Israel itself and even Abraham the Patriarch, heard of the land and inevitably imagined it before they saw it with their bodily eyes.

Perhaps more than in the imagined place itself, we are interested in the gap opened at the moment of encounter between what was imagined and what is real. How is this gap bridged? Which of the perceptions subordinates the other? Or perhaps, the two are actually different places who just carry the same name?

In their talk, ‘Effi & Amir’ will present examples of this tension between the imagined Israel and the real one, and the attempts to resolve it, deconstruct it, or highlight it. Starting from the Bible, passing through ancient maps and art history, to contemporary art and cinema, they will show excerpts of their own works as well as of other artists and makers.

Opening Hours

6th – 21st September 2014

Tuesday to Saturday, between 4 to 8 P.M.

Tirana Art Lab

“Ymer Kurti” Street, Building 2/1, Ap. 1, 1001

Tirana, Albania

(Near Wilson square, behind Post Office No. 8)

This exhibition was made possible thanks to the support of SmartBE, the Ostrovsky Family Fund and the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Albania. Produced by La chose à trois jambes and Tirana Art Lab.



Smartbe

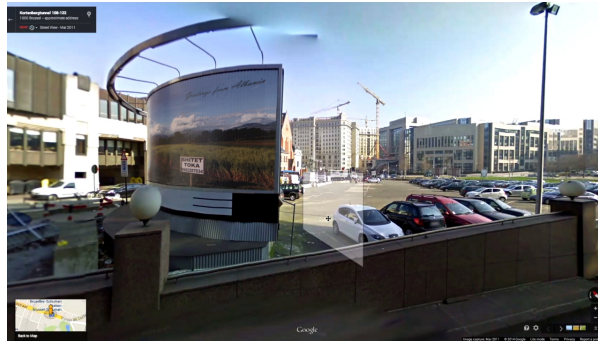




THE VANISHING VANISHING-POINT 28'00, 2014, 'Effi & Amir'

The Olive tree, as foreign as us, appeared in the Leopold Park several weeks after our own arrival in Brussels. We filmed it for 7 years, until it died. But only a year later, when we found out the tree still exists in 'Google Street View', this work took shape. In the heart of Europe there is a garden. In this garden there is a tree and there is always a couple. The new world with its new, supposedly unlimited knowledge is very tempting. The Vanishing Vanishing-Point is a contemplative walk and a detective story, within the parallel world of 'Google Street View'.

Screening starts every half an hour



‘AS IF’ - 5 video chapters

‘Effi & Amir’ in collaboration with Era Tula, Matilda Odobashi, Driton Selmani, Pleurad Xhafa, and Ergin Zaloshnja

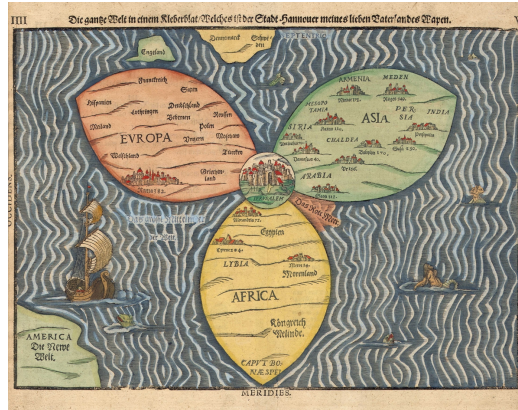
In “*As If*” - Effi & Amir have invited other artists to develop an artwork inside their own work. These are 5 five Albanian artists, four from Albania and one from Kosovo invited to propose an artistic intervention in the public space within a radius of 500 meters from the European Parliament.

[Or, more simple:] In “*As If*” Effi & Amir host five artists from Albania and Kosovo inside their own work. The guest artists were invited to propose an artistic intervention in the public space within a radius of 500 meters from the European Parliament (which also happen to be the neighbourhood where both artists are currently living). The proposed works were then integrated into a series of short movies of the chosen locations, shot inside ‘*Google Street View*’. The artists themselves also appear in the image, as if they were caught by ‘*Google Street View*’ camera, while they are supposed to be on a visit in Brussels to install their respective works. The artists where then asked to create a voice-over to accompany the short video.

In this specific context, the virtual aspect, the intervention in a public representation of the world, a representation that in many respects influences our perception of the world, echoes the question of Europe as an entity versus a place, and for that matter, the debate about the possible adherence of Albania to the EU.

‘Effi & Amir’ contacted the five artists, while explaining their motivation as follows:

“This project is part of a larger investigation of the world’s most ambitious representation- ‘Google Street View’, this massive, arbitrary snapshot that has become a global reference to reality. ‘As If’ challenges the status of this mirror-world, and undermines the authoritarian quality of documentation. It creates a “what if” situation, that echoes the “what if” question regarding the adherence of Albania to the EU. What if Albania is an EU Member State? What if you could tell Europe your position about it? What if you would be invited to make an art-work in the European quarter? What if it really happened?”



Tirana Collective Mental mapping Workshop with young participants from Tirana

In the framework of a workshop and with the participation of young people from Tirana, we will create a map of the city. Not an accurate reproduction of official maps, but a collective map of the city as it is perceived, experienced, carried in the minds of its inhabitants.

The process consists of collectively creating a mental map of the city, without achieving a consensus or a compromise. The multiple views and relations to the place would be preserved and would co-exist in the same map. In fact, multiple subjective-maps will be drawn into the collective one. For example, the centre of the town can be a geographic matter or a personal life-circumstances consequence. This can imply two (or more) centres. By gradually creating the map, using drawing, collage and objects, the participants will weave their personal stories, interpretations and wishes into the pattern of the place. The visual representation of it will trace and express links, relations, emotional charge as well as social, economic or political intuitive analysis (or prejudice).

In the context of the exhibition, and from an artistic point of view we will try to extract a story out of a generalization (or an anecdote out of an abstraction). The workshop adopts somewhat a reverse process, translating the story or the anecdote into a graphic representation, but without losing the subjective point of view.