

Diogene bivaccourbano

The *Diogene bivaccourbano* (Diogene urban bivouac) is an international residency program that intends to promote artist exchange and mobility, cutting down the number of structures for this purpose to a few basic elements by using the network of existing public services that characterizes a particular urban space with the aim of reducing costs and allocating funds to realize an essential living structure, avoiding the construction and management of complex permanent systems.



Bivaccourbano, 2009, visione dei book in coedizione per la residenza, Fondazione Spinola Fiume, Poirino (TO)



Bivaccourbano, 2009, Cuneo-Rapallo, cuneo-to-Cuneo Verona, Treno

Progetto Diogene

Bivaccourbano, 2009,
positioning of the train in the
roundabout



Cecilia Cenzoli
Progetto Diogene
Diogene.bivaccourbano



Biennale pavilion, 2005, interior and exterior view of the biennale

Biennale pavilion, 2005, presentation of the "Building Transmissions Team", with Nicu Duda (Artist in Residence 2009) and Pel Marchit, at Stark, Turin



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tion for applying. The main criteria are the originality of the artistic works and the coherence of the artist's statement with the proposed project; only in the final phase of selection do we consider the curriculum of the artist. During the residency, the selected artist takes advantage of the urban and natural resources (sun, water, public toilet, internet points): the bivouac is self-contained and self-sustained, with a little kitchen, a chemical outlet, and a system for hot water and a shower. The dweller's life is conditioned by the weather, with energy derived from a solar panel that powers all the mechanisms in the residence. The listening space that we aim at creating, and which, as you said, is crucial, is almost accidental, and resembles more the concept of chance. Building a real place and developing a program of meetings and conferences constitute an official, working hypothesis of exchange, while the physical closeness with the artist brings a different quality of listening. Producing a new piece is not a fixed goal, but it is like an occasion of sharing a work. This happens or does not happen depending on the subjectivity and wishes of the selected artist. And beginning this year, the time of residency is longer in order to allow the artist more time to familiarise him- or herself with the context.

Mari Björnson —

To whom are you addressing meetings and conferences? To the academic world? To artists and students? To the art crowd?

Progetto Diogene —

The conferences are addressed to other artists, students, and art professionals. Beginning this year, it will take the shape of a discussion between fewer people. The entire project and its processes are also addressed to the community—the building of the bivouac-tram at the period of residency awakes interest and curiosity in inhabitants of the city. The bivouac is inside the public space, making visible the artist's work space. The aim is to communicate to inhabitants that the artist works in a real place, essential for him and not so far from the world. We show in some ways the entire process of work of art.

Mari Björnson —

Can we go back to the idea of criticality in art? You said that you do not intend to be critical. I am not referring to critique in a *stricto sensu*. In the moment, you analyze your art context and decide to produce something that doesn't fit with the rules of the system, you have a critical attitude. It is also important to control the meaning and the ways of "reading" of your project. In my opinion, this can be done if the producer defines from the beginning the finality of the project. If a project like yours is proposing to be out of the economic circuit of art, I think that it has a criticality. This was the reason I asked you for more details about the conferences and presenta-

■
Bivouac-tram, 2008. Open studio with Pak Shing Chan (Artist in Residence 2008), Piazza Gran Madre, Turin



tions: there is a focus point where the project can be discussed and contextualized. With reference to the *Urban Bivouac*, I would like to better understand what is more important for you: the functionality of the bivouac; the design; or the communication, awareness, and new forms of sociability it can produce? What is the message you want to transmit? Would you accept the reproduction of the project inside a successful commercial gallery in Turin or Milan?

Progetto Diogene —

As you said, we do have a critical attitude, and that was one of the starting points of our project. When we said that criticality was not our main goal, we were referring to the fact that we are not interested in becoming socially responsible designers; we just try to work with the strictly necessary, which is the main reason for using disposable waste to build the bivouac. In such a frame, we think that this attitude has in itself some elements of criticism. We do not want to be a replacement for something that already exists, like galleries or museums, but at the same time we don't criticize *a priori* the art system. We prefer to act in practice, activating processes based on alternative dynamics, to show that it is possible to act in different ways, furnishing new points of view. To be critical for us means working together through individualistic behavior, focusing the attention on the work of the artist and on the role of the artist in the society. For us it is important to work together and, through our practical engagement, to give a new life to an interspatial space of the city, creating places of exchange. Above all that, our collective work is a proposal, a new way for producing culture and for sharing ideas, works, and projects with other artists. Concerning the possibility of presenting the project in a successful commercial gallery, we think it would be possible, depending on the kind of intervention. We could, for example, hold a lecture in a gallery to communicate our project to a larger number of people, or have a theoretical discussion with a small number of experts, but what we are doing, as a collective, is not for sure something that can be sold.



Cecilia Cenzoli
Progetto Diogene /
Mari Björnson
Amex. A dialogue

Progetto Diogene —

Researching the Peripheric Biennial, we think that we focus both on the economic processes in the art field and on the construction of self-organized projects. From our side, we are working to create a dialogue space that focuses attention on an artist's work and poetics, offering the possibility to an artist to work in a good situation with a budget and a space, without any complex structure. What do you think about the economic situation of artists nowadays?

Mari Bojancă —

I live in Iasi, Romania, a university city of 400,000 inhabitants situated in northeastern Romania. There, at the end of the 1990s, with a group of visual artists and philosophers, I founded Vector Association, which produced the Peripheric Biennial, and Vector, an art-and-culture-in-context publication. During the past decade, we ran a four-year gallery program as well as different residency programs involving artists and theorists from southeastern Europe, Turkey, and Lebanon.

Art has different functions according to context and historical time. In our post-communist society, the main function of art is social and emancipatory. In other words, art relates to social and political issues in a time of deep transformation from a totalitarian regime to a neoliberal society. Also, different from the spirit of the 1990s, when artists' discourses were critical to the human condition under communism, after 2000 the critical discourse shifted to the "passengers" of the newborn society: consumerist, corrupted, full of contradictions, socially polarized. In communist times, independent artists were producing art as a strategy for intellectual survival. In the 1990s, they (including me) came down to the street to promote social change and to invent institutions. Since 2000, most artists produce art to sell, and to get international visibility and recognition. The Peripheric Biennial developed a local art scene and put the name of Iasi on the map. Its presence also applies pressure within Romania toward the development of a professional infrastructure for contemporary art, which is still very weak in Romania twenty years after the fall of communism. That is why, in comparison with the artistic strategy of the Progetto Diogene, our aim is to get financial and logistical support from the existing power structures for the development of an institution that is needed but that is not yet born. We do not have a museum or a center for contemporary art, and there are only two commercial galleries in the city, which primarily promote traditional forms of art. This is the main reason why a priority is to enhance the quality of art education in the university, as well as to have a professional center for contemporary art with medium-term secured budgets to help stabilize the personal subsistence of artists.

I took a look to your website and I liked the way you presented the project. For me, your artistic approach (building a living economically independent structure in the post-industrial city

■ *Resettlement*, 2008, Piazza
Gino Mandri, Turin



and offering it as a residency program for artists) is the dominant part of the project. I also like the idea of building it from found material from art institutions and events (Artissima or the Venice Biennial, for example). It gives a necessary criticality to the project.

Progetto Diogene —

Our art scene is quite different from the one you describe. We start from different seeds, but in some ways we work in the same direction. We work into a structured art system composed of museums, foundations, commercial galleries, and not-for-profit spaces, all of which, except for the commercial galleries, are promoted by public or private institutions. From the beginning of our project, we felt that some things are changing, that the sensitivity to cultural producers from public or private institutions is growing. There is more interest in new projects with low economic budgets. We try to work in this moment of transformation with a practical proposal for the creation of a network of artists who work on different types of research. We work as a collective and try to do something different from institutional work, and that in Italy is still missing. We attempt to use our economic and intellectual resources for selected artists' work. The goal is to give value to the selected artist's work and approach through discussions and meetings. The 2009 edition of *Diogene Resettlement* will be located inside a small self-contained module—the Bivouac—an out-of-use tram carriage car on an abandoned section of track at the corner between Corso Regio Parco and Corso Verona in Turin. The tram could be seen as an empty shape of the city that will the starting structure from which the living and working place will grow up. This organism, at the end of the residency, will become a platform that welcomes and develops an international artistic network. We are not sure, however, that the criticality of the project, which you highlight, is our main goal; to build the bivouac from found materials is mainly a practical necessity but is also linked with our intention to cut the surplus.

Mari Bojancă —

What are the criteria and the procedures for selecting the artists? Do you expect them to produce new work? For this, in my opinion, they need a longer period of time, or to come several times to Turin, starting with a research visit, and moving to realization and presentation of the project. Very personally, I think that it is more important that you create a space for artists to listen to other artists, than for the artist to produce a new piece. I can imagine that it is difficult to live in the bivouac for more than a few days and that this can affect creativity. By the way, how do the artists go to a toilet or go to have a shower?

Progetto Diogene —

The competition is open to all artists currently working in the specific sector of the visual arts, without restriction of approach or medium. Usually we require a portfolio, artistic curriculum, statement of the artist's work, and description of a project that the candidate intends to develop during his or her stay at the mosca



Cecilia Cazzani
Progetto Diogene /
Mari Bojancă
Annex: A dialogue