

Another Small World

Eliane Bots



Another Small World. Eliane Bots (2008)

'Another small world, Alexandrescu 9b' is a video installation, made during a work period in Chisinau, Moldova. The video consist out of 9 short video's, together they form one work of 24 min. From a voyeuristic point of view, behind a window in an apartment, daily rituals and moments are shown in three screens. The attention is focused on the beautiful, surreal and melancholic moments. In this video-installation I research and recreate the small stories in this Post-Soviet yard.

'Another small world, Alexandrescu 9b', Video installation, 230x60 cm, loop, 24 min. 2008

Moldova

After some visits to Russia, I went in 2008 for the first time to Moldova, to do research for my thesis "A hidden land, an introduction to the state and conditions of the art sector in Moldova". I became intrigued by Moldova, found many inspiring places and met the most wonderful and kind people. Since then I have stayed in Moldova several times to collect material for new video-works.

To give a little bit of an idea about Moldova, here are some words taken from the introduction to my thesis:

Moldova is situated between the rivers the Prut and the Dniester, on the border of Europe between Ukraine and Romania. In the history of Moldova, the borders have changed many times due to annexation, occupation and partition. Moldova has been ruled by different nations and rulers and it belonged to several countries. From 1538 until 1812 Moldova belonged to the Ottoman Empire and was also controlled by Greek nobles for a certain period. In 1812 the Russians annexed parts of it and transformed it into a province of Russia while other parts belonged to Romania or were under the control of the Habsburg principality. In 1918 Bessarabia united with Romania. But in 1940 the USSR occupied the territory of Bessarabia (Moldova). Transnistria was added to Bessarabia. Bessarabia and Transnistria became "The Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic". The borders of "The Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic" have not changed since.¹

On August 27 1991, Moldova became an independent country.

Becoming independent was a shock and caused major changes in economy, life and culture. The stability and security in the lives of people changed; communist control, social protection and a steady income disappeared, the collective farms were ended and replaced by a market economy. An economical crisis occurred and caused the emigration of intellectuals and specialists to other countries. The gap between poor and rich became bigger and bigger.

Moldova is not (yet) a member of the European Union and therefore does not have the advantages Romania has. It is a country which misses the positive influence of Europe as well as Russia but experiences the negative influences of both "empires". Like other countries that are situated between Russia and Europe there are double feelings: Are we part of Russia or Europe? On which direction do we want or have to focus, East or West?

1 Rapport of the East European Reflection Group, "Culture and Change in Moldova", Yael Ohana

Statement

In my videos I am looking for the hidden stories of people and places. This can be oral stories, but also the atmosphere of a place, rituals and happenings can contain these stories. The big and world shocking can be found in the things and moments we might consider as ordinary. I want to show the visual cinematic beauty within reality and the daily life surrounding us.

Observing and recording are key words in my work process. Therefore I use video and photography in my work. These media give me the possibility to experience and explore the world. I often use material that captures an unexpected moment or story, material that could be called "documentary". I take the freedom to experiment, rearrange and stage elements in my work and in the way I present it.

Connecting and interacting with people, obtaining their trust, is important in my work. I depend on the people I work with, to find the stories and be able to stay at specific places. To work independently and to be able to improvise and have a flexible work process, I execute all steps of the process of video making myself.

The stories of people in the context of their surroundings and society become more and more important in my work.

Lacune

In the video 'Lacune' an older woman tells about the memories of her youth in context of the Soviet Union and her parental home, while the camera very calmly observes the details and atmosphere in the house. Sometimes the interior and the story of the woman become one. At other moments the text and image clearly follow their own storyline. As the film progresses it becomes clear what the exact relationship is between the woman and the house and how important this place is in her life. The video is shot in the village Butuceni in Moldova.

Lacune, Moldovan/Romanian spoken, English subtitles, 8.17 min., 2010, 16;9, stereo)



"Lacune," Eliane Bots (2010)

At the Top of This Hill

In the video 'At the top of this hill', time passes by. The resemblance of a place arises, where all elements are connected; the landscape, the different characters, the wind.

The sound of the surroundings is clearly present, the characters move silently through the landscape. The video is shot in the village Butuceni (Moldova) and the surrounding fields.

'At the top of this hill', video, 8.48 min, 2010



At the Top of This Hill. Eliane Bots (2010)

Het landhuis

The photo-installation 'Het landhuis (The manor)' consists out of photos made in an empty hotel located at the main road in the city centre of Chisinau, Moldova. In Soviet time this 'Hotel National' used to be an expensive hotel, especially used by foreign guests visiting Moldova. Now it is already for some years an enormous empty building, still containing some of its former grandeur. In the photo-installation photos of the hotel are combined with images of another area in Chisinau; a place with ruined neo-classical stairs near a muted lake. Within the storyline of the photo-installation the viewer can wander around and the hotel changes from an empty building into a manor.

'Het landhuis (The manor)', photo-installation, 2011



Het Landhuis, I. Eliane Bots (2011)



Het Landhuis, II. Eliane Bots (2011)



Het Landhuis, III. Eliane Bots (2011)



Het Landhuis, IV. Eliane Bots (2011)



Het Landhuis, V. Eliane Bots (2011)



Het Landhuis, VI. Eliane Bots (2011)

Zoete Mais

In the video 'Zoete mais' (Sweet corn), I follow and register a saleswoman on her route to sell corn in her area and on the local fun fair. She meets several customers, tells proudly about her small business, deals with her clients and gives some interesting opinions on life and society. Besides her story the video gives an impression of the typical streets and atmosphere in this part of the city Chisinau.

'Zoete mais (Sweet corn)', Video, Dutch subtitles, 19 min. 2009



"Zoete mais," Eliane Bots (2009)

About the author:

Eliane Esther Bots (www.twosmallthings.com) has a bachelor's in visual art/design and education from the Academy of Visual Arts in Utrecht. She lives and works in Amsterdam.