



Performance "Am I You?", Mirzaani, Georgia 1998

Artisterium VI
4-14 October, 2013, Tbilisi, Georgia

Am I You?

The only difference between me and you are the choices we make.
Unknown quote

The Artisterium VI, the annual international contemporary art exhibition and series of public art events, opens in the Georgian capital of Tbilisi on October 4th, and runs through October 14, 2013.

"Artisterium" is an evolving curatorial platform. Each year its overall theme always responds to prevailing social concerns, such as alternative ways of development ("Modus Operandi – in Quest of a Different Way", 2008), changes within general and personal levels ("The Manifest of Changes and an Inner Experience", 2009), artistic reflections on re-envisioning the future ("Imagine the Future", 2010), the willingness to embrace open-ended subjects as a way to critically engage with important social, political, urban, private and aesthetic issues ("Free Fall", 2011) and research artistic and theoretical reflections on a wide range of PROTEST ("The Protest that Never Ends", 2012).

The theme of the Artisterium 6 / 2013 is "Am I You?" Acceptance of the unfamiliar is a crucial aspect of today's life. There are many kinds of philosophical, social and psychological theories to describe our relationships to minorities, other nations, other religions, or people who think differently – The Other. In the words of Jacques Derrida, "the other can never be understood as presence, but only with concepts like traces and exteriority. He has completely broken with the phenomenological metaphysics of presence — the other can never be understood in a theoretical act, but only by means of ethical responsibility: I take responsibility for the other." The uneasiness of this kind of responsibility triggers moments of cultural misunderstanding, religious, territorial or personal conflicts.

The theme takes as its source of inspiration a performance by the Georgian artist Ilko Zautashvili "Am I You?" (1998). In the performance the artist uses four participants divided into two pairs and asks them to make attempts at understanding each other. However obstacles are placed between them, like an eye bandage that limits vision while the pair touches each other. In another case the participants recite texts in different languages simultaneously. The work shows the impossibility of communication when fixed within one's own language, the formality of words and cultural or behavioral stereotypes. It also explores the difficulty in discovering a mutual understanding even when the information is purely sensual.

The Artisterium 2013 theme of "Am I You?" encourages participants to research the phenomena of the Other and the ecology of our relation and responsibility to the Other. We wish to explore possible ways of coexisting with unfamiliar, different or even disagreeable ideologies and lifestyles, while at the same time calling for participation, understanding and empathy. Through the year's theme we hope to reveal modes of exploring the influence that shape our connections to diverse thoughts and attitudes – and even the life forms – living next to us on this planet

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