

# École du Magasin/Session 22

## Project proposal

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## Conceptual Framework

Our time is characterized by the systematic use of violence, physical or intangible, resulting in a general climate of fear and intended to serve a political objective. Indeed, it is being deliberately implemented in differing degrees in almost all nations by for example, the misuse of media and the use of alleged national security measures.

We are constantly fed with images of war, terror and catastrophes of all kind. The contemporary mass media has emerged as the largest and most powerful machine for producing images, its scope and effectivity outdoing that of the contemporary art system. Images circulated in the media networks symbolically relate to the political sublime and in their being visual representations are subject to all forms of art criticism. In contrast to the mass media, which shows us images of today, art allows a historical comparison between past and present, between original promise and contemporary realisation of this promise and, thus, possesses the means and possibilities to be sites of critical discourse.

Today, we are confronted with the ambiguous nature of usage of new technologies. Our thirst for knowing is informed through "contact windows" provided by media such as TV, internet and radio. From one point of view the web, search engines and television are influenced in accordance with the power aimed at centralization of control and imposition of certain models of consumption. However, from another side the web plays on our essential instincts to share with others our thoughts and information, thereby driving notions of academically exaggerated multitudes and widening the scope of opinions and viewpoints.

Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek in the essay *Robespierre or the "Divine Violence" of Terror*<sup>1</sup> describes our civilization as post-modern era of "emerging properties," chaotic interaction of multiple subjectivities, of free interaction instead of centralized hierarchy, of a multitude of opinions instead of one Truth. The way of understanding and exploitation of the notion of truth as the intangible highest virtue that is not a moral and hardly exists is applied to the phenomenon of political terror. Terror promises the establishment of the unique and peremptory Truth. As french theorist Alain Badiou<sup>2</sup> states, truth is almost unrecognizable, however it can become discernable for a second in the event, so the truth needs a process. In his idea, truth could be noticed in four such processes: love, politics, art and science. So, it is mostly considered and discernable in the spheres of emotions, manipulation and openings. Along with that, truth remains an incompletable and hypothetical phenomenon, a fiction, but a very strong one.

It could be relevant to emphasize that the only true element in the process of terrifying seems to

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<sup>1</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Robespierre or the "Divine Violence" of Terror*, [www.lacan.com/zizrobes.htm](http://www.lacan.com/zizrobes.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Alain Badiou, *On the Truth-Process*, [www.lacan.com/badeurope.htm/](http://www.lacan.com/badeurope.htm/)

be the emotion of personal and collective fear. According to Anthony's Kubiak ideas<sup>3</sup>, media constructed fear derives from terrorism and its utilization is a central impulse in international policy. Our fascination with such propaganda shadows our mind with a sense of terror exemplified by threats of global holocaust, natural disaster, viral infections of failed immune responses and the like.

The insecurity of future economic and social conditions concretely affects the stability of the present. Western economical crisis in recessionary times goes into dangerous social questions, like massive unemployment, loss of hope, disinterest towards the others and desperate suicides. Precariousness of human existence and habits are often stimulated toward paralyzing, anaesthetising, freezing and barring responses: survival in the economic system is a predominant logic nowadays that can be represented by the model '*ethics : solidarity = hopelessness : isolation*'. Selfishness, instinctive and primordial reactions are what govern the state of terror.

The rise of an unhealthy interest in the experience of terror, increasingly witnessed in the last few years by 'war tourism', further reiterate the glaring social necessity for primordial instincts. Is there then a need to seek what is true and if so, how do we through human faculties, and/or limitations of circumstance define this truth?

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<sup>3</sup>Anthony Kubiak, *Stages of Terror*, Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism, 1989, 3-30

## **Intent**

The thrust of our project lies in delineating the power of the mind through the faculty of emotions and memories to control and influence the body and the physical world. We intend the focus of our exhibition therein to address and/or explore the notions of the sublime, of tension and terror and the potentialities of risk through a collection of artworks, both existing and commissioned for the same.

We imagine the range of artworks to draw from socio-political currents (Norma Jeane, David Ter-Oganyan, Omer Fast), suggest an alternate perception of reality through narrative soundscapes (Dominique Petitgand), redefine forms of personal and social trauma (Mladen Miljanovic) and address the ambiguity between fiction and reality (Agnès Geoffray).

## **Statement**

From Burke to Kant, from Lyotard to Zizek, the notion of terror and the sublime has shifted and changed, and we can clearly see similar shifts of focus in the language of contemporary artists.

Described as focusing on darkness, obscurity, privation, vastness, magnificence, loudness and suddenness, the sublime evokes reactions of pleasurable terror. We assume this terror as an underlying pulse in today's existential reality, perpetuated in mechanisms of governance, economy, socialization, culture and artistic production. We intend to investigate the ambivalence of this reality driven by subliminal emotions underlying individual and collective actions, as a means of comprehending the truth of our times. Demonstrations of terror have most certainly infiltrated our daily lives, whether they come from the media, or from national security systems, natural disasters, and even our most common personal fears.

Largely imperceptible until realized, terror is implicit in the spectacle of its manifestation, often through manipulation. For this reason, our selection of artists relies on works that draw from and/or express moments of uncertainty, vulnerability, vacancy, doubt, violence, resistance and instability described within a narrative or in repetitive, dramatic and poetic imagery. Each has a strong physical presence paralleling the power of the impulse to affect and mutate.

## **Project format**

The project will consist of a group exhibition and an online project. Collateral programmes will include a screening room and a performance cycle.

### Screening room:

- Peter Watkins

*La commune, Paris 1871, 2000*

- Amar Kanwar

*A season outside, 1997*

*A night of prophecy, 2002*

*To Remember, 2003*

### Performance cycle:

A series of performances (scheduled during the exhibition or on the opening day) will be organized in order to evoke psychic interaction of the participant, concerning the issue of the exhibition.

## Artists proposal

**1/Dominique Petitgand (FR)** - b. 1965, lives and works in Paris

**Selected work:**

*Quelqu'un par terre*, 2005/2007  
sound installation

**Plan B/Ange Leccia (FR)** - b. 1952, lives and works in Paris

**Selected work:**

*Fumée*, 1995

Betacam numérique, couleur, silencieux

Double vidéoprojection en angle

or

*Le jour des meurtres dans l'histoire d'Hamlet/Night in white Satin*, 1997

video DV, 12 min

**2/Mladen Miljanovic (BiH)** - b. 1981, lives and works in Banja Luka

**Selected work:**

*Show Where it Hurts With Your Hand*, 2012

Series of 22 photos

Installation, glass, photos

**3/David Ter-Oganyan (RUS)** - b. 1981, lives and works in Moscow

**Selected work:**

One or two works from the series *This is Not a Bomb*, 2011

**4/Omer Fast (ISR)** - b. 1972, lives and works in Berlin

**Selected work:**

*CNN Concatenated*, 2002

DVD, 18min 17sec

**5/Agnès Geoffray (FR)** - b. 1973, lives and works in Brussels

**Selected work:** a selection made in consultation with the artist

**Plan B/Eric Manigaud (FR)** - b.1971, lives and works in France

**Selected work:** a selection made in consultation with the artist

**6/Norma Jeane (IT)** - b.1962, lives and work in Milan

**Selected artwork:** new commission

**Plan B/Micol Assaël (IT)** - b.1979, lives and works between Greece and Rome

**Selected work:** new commission

## **Online project**

The website will function as the collateral project of the exhibition. The idea is to create a collection of images, texts, and videos, approximately 20/30 in number intended as the theoretical ground of the notion of terror in support of our exhibition statement.

The intent of the digital project is to foster a debate around the notion of terror by submitting our online collection to both our interpretations and those from critics, iconographers, artists and historians invited for the same.

As regards the website's architecture, we imagine it as a homepage with our collection, perhaps as a slideshow, each image/ video/ text as a window leading into a conversation with our invited contributor. We propose to also include a summary of our project, a 'backstage section' as part of this discourse.



## **Location**

Ideally, we propose one of the following exhibition spaces located in **Lyon**:

- 1/La salle de bain** - 27, rue Burdeau
- 2/Néon** - 41, rue Burdeau
- 3/L'attrape-couleurs** - Place Henri Barbusse
- 4/BF 15** - 11, quai de la Pêcheurie

## **Attachments**

**Artists proposal (attachment #1)**

**Budget (attachment #2)**

**Calendar (attachment #3)**