



Photo courtesy of artist and OK - Centrum - Offenes Kulturhaus Linz, Austria

MARIA ANWANDER

Hail to the Thief

26/09 – 18/10/2009

PV Saturday the 26th of September 4-6pm

general store

2/11 Hughes St Potts Point

Sydney 2011

12 – 6pm SAT / SUN only or by appointment

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Starting her own 'private collection' in 2004 by *illegally acquiring* objects, Maria Anwander herself became part of a world-wide culture of ownership. Now Anwander's collection consists of over 60 acquired works of art all sourced from some of the highest reaches: private galleries, institutions and biennales.

Many of Anwander's ideas and works involve the '*unincluded*' and the '*overlooked*'. She erases and displaces codes and systems in order to highlight their original meaning and purpose. In this case, taking a souvenir of a system, which support some of the most influential artists on her own artistic practice.

Perhaps the intention of this theft was simply to articulate her devotion to these inspirations; or perhaps to challenge and contest the culture of ownership, which institutions and viewer alike seem to delight in. This gesture of theft could be perceived as a metaphor to highlight the inherent politics of representation, status quo and ownership of art itself.

After a few visits to an art institution we as an audience, become more aware, and potentially intrigued with the phenomena of other visitors. We as visitors are dramatically influenced by the authority of the curatorial card. Without even giving ourselves a chance to discover, we seek to find the explanation provided for us. Unknowingly, the contemporary art lover finds themselves at the mercy of this subversive political machine of representation: the systems methodology and the curatorial cards continued use makes it almost impossible for us to view art in the public domain without it.

Furthermore, the information provided on the card now days is so complex in referring to the political systems and how the work of art came to be in front of the viewer, we become more intrigued with looking at the contacts, age of the artist and where they are from than the actual artwork it is representing. Like a life support system, the cards sit by watching over the artworks, embodying an authority without logic as an accessory to the artwork, almost as a new frame.

The principles of authority through the representation of ownership governed by art have been dismantled and overlooked for the importance of arts place in society. Its role as a place to be in dialogue with the audience instead of in the place of authority over the audience. Bearing this in mind, an alternative approach evidently displayed in the actions of Maria Anwander is simple: just as, to the art institution, the disappearance of the curatorial card is the disappearance of ownership, of authority - so the disappearance of the curatorial card system altogether is to him identical with the disappearance of ownership culture.

Anwander lives and works in Vienna as both an artist and as a set designer. In 2009 she was awarded the *Bilbao Arte Center for Contemporary Art - Fundación Bilbao Arte Fundazioa* in Bilbao, Spain and in 2008 the *Exchange-grant Bilbao Arte – Kunsthaus Bregenz, Austria* and the *Pfann-Ohmann-Group-Award*. In 2009 Anwander has featured in group show '*A Vernacular of Dissent*' at the *Champaign-Urbana Independent Media Art Center*, Illinois USA. *Am Sprung*, at the *OK-Centre for Contemporary Art*, Linz, Austria and a solo exhibition at the *Bilbao Arte Center for Contemporary Art*, Spain amongst many other exhibitions. Receiving recognition as an Austrian emerging artist Anwander's artworks are in numerous public and private collections throughout Austria and in Bilbao.

The next solo exhibition **general store** will present '*Mobile Nature*' a body of work by London artist *Irene Perez Hernandez*. 24/10 – 22/11/2009. www.the-generalstore.net / general@the-generalstore.net