



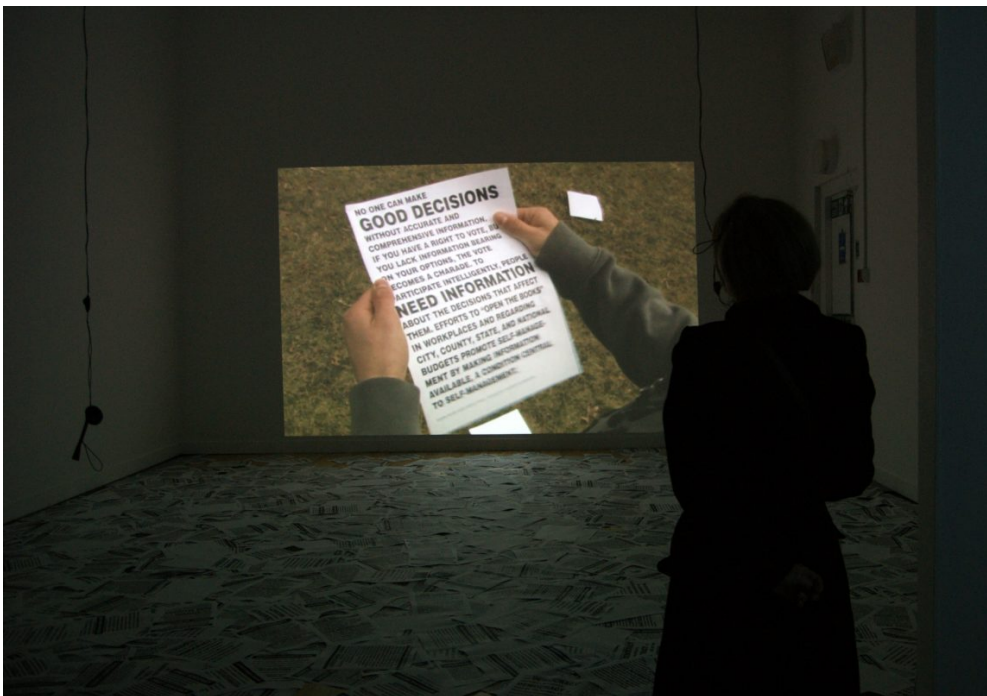
Fly Democracy

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An installation by Oliver Ressler

2007

Although the real stakes behind the attacks on Iraq and Afghanistan had to do primarily with geo-strategic interests and control of the oil deposits, the preferred official line to legitimize the wars in the eyes of the public spoke of their being waged to bring “democracy” to those countries. This political discourse was maintained as long as victory still seemed feasible to the armed forces of the United States and its allies. In the meantime, however, the emphasis has shifted more towards achieving “stability” in Iraq and “peace” in Afghanistan.



"Fly Democracy". Installation view: "What Is Democracy?" (solo show), Peacock Visual Arts, Aberdeen, 2010

At the start of the military campaign, the US jet fighters did not drop only bombs: they also showered down leaflets containing messages intended for the population. These called upon the enemy soldiers to desert, warned civilians to keep at a distance from military targets, defined the pattern of behavior in case of contact with the invaders, or else relayed a general political message explaining the alleged reasons and goals of the military attack.



"Fly Democracy". Installation view: "What Is Democracy?" (solo show), Peacock Visual Arts, Aberdeen, 2010

The "Fly Democracy" installation represents a re-enactment of this shower of message-bearing flyers, but symbolically transfers the drop's target point to the territory of the United States. Specially drawn up for the "Fly Democracy" piece, ten flyers set forth current political arguments on behalf of direct or participatory forms of democracy, all of which stand in contradiction to the model of formal democracy that – embedded in a neo-liberal, capitalistic State – is imposed by the United States. The stance that "Fly Democracy" adopts contrasts with that model by interpreting the term "democracy" more in its original sense, as it was understood in Ancient Greece. At that time, it meant – at least for full age male citizens – more direct involvement in the decision-making processes than what exists in today's representative democracies. "Pseudo-democracies" is how the theorist Paul Cockshott would label the latter, as measured against the word's original meaning.



"Fly Democracy", Installation view



"Fly Democracy", Installation view



"Fly Democracy". Installation view: "On the outside", ACC Galerie, Weimar, 2007

The installation consists of a five-minute video loop showing the flyers on their downward trip from a shining blue sky to the ground, where they are read by people who pick them up. The original English-language flyers are strewn on the floor in front of the video screen, together with the exhibition-destined flyers in German, French or Romanian. Visitors are welcome to pick any of the flyers up, read them and take them home.

DIRECT DEMOCRACY

**REQUIRES AND ENHANCES DEGREES OF
MUTUALISM, DIFFERENTIATION, AND
DEVELOPMENT MORE THAN DOES**

REPRESENTATIONAL DEMOCRACY.

DIRECT DEMOCRACY

**IS A PROCESS IN WHICH MEMBERS OF A
LOCAL COMMUNITY ARE EMPOWERED TO
PARTICIPATE DIRECTLY IN CREATING THE
PUBLIC POLICY THAT GIVES SHAPE TO THEIR
EVERYDAY LIVES, BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE.**

**UNLIKE A REPRESENTATIONAL DEMOCRACY
IN WHICH**

CITIZENS

ELECT A

CENTRALIZED BODY OF "POLITICIANS" WHO

MAKE DECISIONS

**ON THEIR BEHALF, A DIRECT DEMOCRACY
IS ONE IN WHICH DECISION-MAKING POWER
IS DECENTRALIZED AMONG CITIZENS
THEMSELVES.**

SOURCE: CHAIA HELLER, ECOLOGY OF EVERYDAY LIFE, 1999

"Fly Democracy", flyer, 29,7 x 21 cm

Concept, Camera, Film Editing, Design, Production: Oliver Ressler

Image Editing and Sound: Rudi Gottsberger

Production Assistants: Meghan Hartman, Brandon Ives, Gaby Ruzek

The installation has been produced by ACC Galerie, Weimar; Fri-Art – Centre d'Art Contemporain,

Fribourg; Kunstverein Wolfsburg, Wolfsburg; 2. International Photo Festival Mannheim,

Ludwigshafen, Heidelberg 2007;

and < rotor >, Graz in 2007.

The installation “Fly Democracy” was presented in the following exhibitions:

“On the outside”, ACC Galerie, Weimar (DE), 2007

“Retracing Territories”, Fri-Art – Centre d’Art Contemporain, Fribourg (CH), 2007

“Work Fiction”, Kunstverein Wolfsburg, Wolfsburg (DE), 2007

“Reality Crossings”, 2. International Photo Festival Mannheim, Ludwigshafen, Heidelberg 2007 (DE), 2007

“Fly Democracy” (solo show), Protokoll Studio, Cluj (RO), 2007

“Land of Human Rights: Raise the Voice Here and Now”, < rotor >, Graz (AT), 2007

“Nothing to Declare”, 4th Triennale of Contemporary Art, Oberschwaben, Künstlerhaus Palais Thurn & Taxis, Bregenz (AT), 2008

“For A Completely Different Climate” (solo show), Galleria Artra, Milan (IT), 2008

“Reciprocidad”, CCEBA – Centro Cultural de Espana en Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires (AR), 2009

“What Is Democracy?” (solo show), Peacock Visual Arts, Aberdeen (UK), 2010

“Why do you resist?”, Pori Art Museum, Pori (FI), 2010

“Catastrophe Bonds” (solo show), Bush Art Center Galleries, St. Norbert College, De Pere (US), 2018

“Dämonkratie”, A.K.T, Pforzheim (DE), 2019