



# LAND GRAB

# As the price of real estate

has skyrocketed throughout cities of the world, it has become increasingly difficult to sustain a place. Some artists' responses to this situation mirror those of many practitioners in the sixties and seventies who moved to the margins to seek out an abandoned or still-undeveloped site to live and work on an expanded scale. By contrast, no piece in *LAND GRAB* has involved a real estate transaction or finding *that* prime location. Instead, the show brings together a range of actions, including semiotic redesignation, under-the-radar alteration, parasitical squatting, dissident occupation and fantasized ownership. Every exhibited practice draws attention to the specificities of the relationship between art and the ground on which it is conceived and perceived. As the works reveal, this is by no means an imminent relation of groundedness; the pieces do not simply belong. Although each piece is transposed on a specific place, this relation is often one that is characterized more by contradiction and conflict than by a "natural," and nostalgic, sense of home. Each affiliation of artwork to site (figure to ground) is not just a matter of object placement. The pieces all implicitly question the connection of the human subject to a specific location, in turn demonstrating that there are no "objective" places, only relationships to them. Produced under an enduring condition of an inflated real estate market, disappearing affordable housing, increasing mobility and forced displacement, as well as a global homogenization of built space, the pieces all exhibit an urgency of maintaining a position and space from which to live and work. However, as the artworks suggest, claiming a place of one's own does not solve the problem of modern (and spatial) alienation. Every act of taking inevitably involves the displacement of something/someone else, and that piece of ground will never cease to conjure specters of past inhabitations.

*Curated by Sarah Lookofsky and Lillian Fellmann*

**Strategies of Occupation: Grabbing Land and The Political Agency of The Artist**  
Thursday, November 29, 2007, 2:00–6:00 p.m.  
The New School, 66 West 12th Street, #510  
Public workshop with Amy Balkin, eteam, Andrea Geyer, Jens Haaning, John Hawke, Vyjayanthi Rao, Sergio Muñoz-Sarmiento and Felicity Scott  
Co-organized with the Vera List Center for Art and Politics, The New School

**Lars Vilks discusses *Ladonia***  
Friday, November 9, 2007, 6:30 p.m. at apexart

**Visit to *Benchmark* with John Hawke**  
Sunday, November 18, 2007  
1:00 p.m. departure from apexart

**Amy Balkin and Jens Haaning on art and public domain**  
Friday, November 30, 2007, 6:30 p.m. at apexart

**Landgrabonline.org**  
Web site features a selection of works drawn from submissions by artists working within the domain of claiming land  
In collaboration with the participatory art platform Wooloo.org

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November 7–December 22, 2007



**NATURE RESERVE OF KULLABERG, SKÅNE, SWEDEN**

1980, artist begins Nimis sculpture. 1984, Joseph Beuys buys Nimis. 1986, Christo and Jeanne-Claude buy Nimis. 1991, Arx sculpture begun. 1996, one square kilometer declared independent nation of Ladonia. Today Ladonia has 13,500 citizens. Since 1982, legal battles over property have involved local landowners, police, district and supreme courts.

Lars Vilks. *Ladonia*. 1980 – present. Mixed media installation.



**CETINJE, REPUBLIC OF MONTENEGRO**

Ethnographic Museum of Montenegro, formerly Embassy of Kingdom of Serbia. Cetinje Biennale, Kosovo-based artist installs Albanian flag, naming building “Embassy of the Republic of Kosovo.” First to react: Serbian political parties in Montenegro and Serbian Orthodox Church. The work was quickly dismantled.

Albert Heta. *Embassy Of The Republic Of Kosovo, Cetinje, Serbia And Montenegro: The Work Which Killed One Biennale And One Prince*. 2004. Digital prints, video



**DERELICT FACTORY SITE, FÜRSTENBERG AM HAVEL, MARK BRANDENBURG LAKE DISTRICT, GERMANY**

Nearby Ravensbrück. During WWII largest concentration camp for women and children, forced to labor at Daimler-Benz, Siemens and Fürstenberg's munitions factory. Now described “lakeside town.” Artist proposes timeshare estate with discos, tennis courts, dining and a marina. Jens Haaning. *Das Faserstoff Projekt* (Architectural Proposal). 1998. Architectural design and visuals by Vertex Arkitekter m.a.a. Digital print, sales contract



**H.C. ØRSTEDSPARKEN, COPENHAGEN DENMARK**

Authorities removed shrubbery in Copenhagen parks known for gay sex. One night, queer group DUNST anonymously and autonomously planted “bush of hearts.” The tree was subsequently mysteriously removed. Packets available for public use.

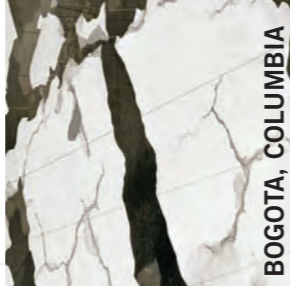
Lasse Lau. *Secret Bush Planting*. 2005. Seed packets



**REYKJAVIK, ICELAND, NEW YORK CITY, SAN FRANCISCO, BERKELEY**

New York's Central Park, San Francisco's Golden Gate Park, Reykjavik's Miklatún... 17 compartments with models constructed from memory of parks or nature reserves near artist's former homes. Valise made in transit. Often checked as luggage, suitcase also functioned as mobile studio. Katrín Sigurðardóttir. *Green Grass Of Home*. 1997. Plywood, landscaping materials, hardware

CLAIMING AS MEMORY PROJECT



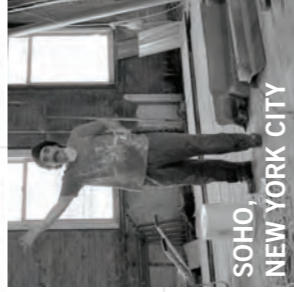
**BOGOTA, COLUMBIA**

Materials removed and peeled from urban ruins and former domestic environments in Bogotá. Attempt to record transformation and reconstruct past, revealing futility of creating narratives from ruins. “Coming from a place that is falling apart (not metaphorically), it seems there is no option but to work with its fragments.”

Leyla Cárdenas. *Withholding*. 2006. Paint, mixed media, plexiglas, pins, and thread

NATION BUILDING

EXCLUSION/PRIVILEGE



**SOHO, NEW YORK CITY**

1970s' economic crisis gave rise to “loft movement.” Artists converted industrial lofts into live/work spaces. In subsequent decades SoHo became desirable, causing artists to move elsewhere. Mike Smith, an artist who has lived and worked in loft for twenty years, is “cashing in” on his property. Michael Smith and Joshua White. *Open House*. 1999. Video

22.3'



**DIVINA PASTORA STREET, SEVILLE, SPAIN**

Cultural and financial capital of Southern Spain, undergoing constant beautification. General Urban Zoning Plan allows placement of temporary scaffolding. After applying for “minor façade alteration,” “Urban Reserve” was mounted atop framework, providing shelter for indefinite period. Recetas Urbanas. *Strategies For Subversive Urban Occupation: House Enlarging With Scaffolding*. 1998. Laminated manual

SINGULAR ACTIONS/COLLECTIVE PROJECTS



**CHRISTIANIA, COPENHAGEN, DENMARK**

1971, group squatted abandoned military facility, declaring it a free town in protest of government and lack of affordable housing. Christiania today has 850 inhabitants. Mobile trailers turned permanent abodes. In 2004 Danish government passed law to abolish collective, spurring ongoing protests.

Søren Holm Hvilby and Pernille Skov. *Skurvagnsmorfologier*. 2006. Digital prints and booklet

3.5'



**TIMISOARA, ROMANIA**

City where anti-Communist revolution began two years earlier. Neo-Communist government kept postponing return of land nationalized after WWII to people, making way for companies and privatization. Artist “sold” one square meter of his country in small soil packs. Slogans read: “We want land” and “We don't sell our country.”

Dan Perjovschi. *The Appropriation (Of Land) Committee*. 1991. Vintage b/w photographs, ink on paper

OCCUPATION AVAILABLE AFTER POST COLONIALISM?

STATE-DRIVEN PRIVATIZATION



**BUS SHELTER, BEDFORD-STUWESANT, NEW YORK CITY**

New York just signed 20-year contract with CEMUSA to build street furniture in exchange for exclusive advertising rights. Artist intervention suggests alternate possibilities for urban built environment.

John Hawke. *Benchmark*. Present moment. Mixed media

GRABBING BACK: MAKING PRIVATE PUBLIC

OCCUPATION BEYOND CAPITALIST DESIRE?

9.5'

NEW "DEVELOPMENTS" CONTRIBUTE TO HISTORICAL AMNESIA?

WHO'S YOUR ALLY, WHO'S YOUR AUDIENCE?