O.K., America!

Feeling the taste of Coca Cola on one’s lips for the very first time
Pronouncing the name of the President
Touching the computer keys
Reading a newspaper on one’s own
Setting a passport
Opening a bank account
Buying a car
Having one’s photo taken at the Statue of Liberty ...

Escape Group, Moscow

PREVIOUS
Police control and ubiquitous surveillance on each and everybody makes one insecure whether to go into hiding or start spying on somebody oneself. For the very sensitive, this situation is not without fascination: it is reminiscent of childhood fun, of games and naughty boys’ tricks, like peeping at the girls through a secret hole in the toilet wall.

If a normal human being, not a movie cop or TV detective, is spied on or shadowed, all he wants to do is lie low, duck or hide his head in the sand like an ostrich, or in a well or wherever; what else could he do? This is not any different from the somewhat contract atonement of the socially harmless figure of the artist with him; you also never know whether he wants to be in hiding, or rather keep an eye on somebody. Feepers, a project by The Blue Noses Group (Dmitri Rybkov, Vincenzo Mazzi, Alexander Shubrov, Konstantin Skripony), captures this situation for the exhibition O.K., America!

The Blue Noses Group, Novosibirsk
Art is always about the experience of boundaries, and about transcending them. It is about how identities form, prove themselves, and transform along their boundaries. This is what makes art a critical part of society, and what makes it so important. Almost all boundaries are existing, changing, sometimes even vanishing, and new ones are just being created. In globalization, genetic engineering, nanotechnology, inside and out, the subjective experience is in dealing with physical matter as in dealing with information, the one thing today that is certain in that nothing is certain.

It is a true time of uncertainty; the prerequisite mindset ‘anything is possible’ is enforced by a purported, powerful, but also bewildering, idea about reality, namely that in fact anything is possible—both freedom and repression—and that there are no established criteria or categories at hand to relieve us from this responsibility at the one unalterable boundary, that of decision.

The work of artists from widely different cultures and aesthetic backgrounds from all over the world that is presented in Peter Koevoets’s current exhibition, entitled O.K., America!, casts some light on this situation. It makes it imaginable, visible, and, above all, manageable. It also makes palpable its spatial and subjective globality, thus also making it clear there is no longer any possibility of opting out of experiencing oneself through some technical terms. Moreover, it technologically appropriates money, technology, work in, by the standards of traditional individuality, an unlimited possibility. On the basis of electronically generated real-time information, personal identity is defined by the laws of nature is deemed to fail as a control unit. Where nano- and meta-units are being manipulated, there is nothing left for human hands to do. Any typical computer upgrade program incorporates more experience or experienceless, purposeful interaction than all the world’s brain trusts could ever contribute to a discussion, which would in any case be thrown into chaos.

Assuming the role of the sorcerer’s apprentice is no easy task, either. Technological progress, it is true, seems to have thoroughly done away with the myth of nature as an independent normative force. However, this is precisely what reinterprets culture as a form—five function, not merely a descriptive, and thus perhaps nature-defining, one. Unlike nature, which is common to all, there is no single thing one culture has kept virginal; no one culture can serve as an objective criterion of standards. After the death of God, other gods have returned in various guises and under many different names, and there can no longer be punished by enlightened reason or its nano-technology. However appealing the invocations of “tolerance” and “correctness”, these are no universal values.

With the “new global order” both the unity of the body, and of language have been lost. Or, at the very least, it has facilitated the insight that neither unity ever really existed; they were but a projected goal. It is the same old story: it is in debate or in that civilized form, competition. In technical terms, concerted work—that is, however different, are united. It is victory, that disrupts unity.

Identity is contradiction, not affirmation. It is the palpable experience of confronting arbitrary limits, distinctions, established truths, and decrees. The culture of this contradiction is art, which also contradicts anything it is imposed, or desired, to be, in favor of the sake of the nomologic power of affiliation: entertainment, amicable,螺丝 and self-realization. Art is not a myth, nor a mythological force, but only the ritual of such a force, and thus an expression of the reality of the myth.

This enables an experience of the reality of the mythological force, or the continentality of dream unanchored in the everyday.

O.K., America! presents varying views of this dream, thrown into perspective through art. This is a dream the world has come to call the American dream—a dream of freedom from contradiction, of identity by affirmation, of sovereignty as omnipotence—or of the possibility.