

urban occupation : ACTION

experiment : urban occupation



*Image: Dr. Josef Ackermann, formally chairman of 'Deutsche Bank' shortly after his conversion to socialism. Note the mien of relief.
Source: Photo taken by Tillmann Götze.*

authors / actors / participants:

Monster **R**egieren dieses **P**lanet (Shaun Motsi, Catalin Werb and Niklas Kuhlendahl) respectively the reincarnations of Wladimir Iljitsch Uljanow, Josef Ackermann (ignoring the fact that Ackermann is still somewhat alive) and Ernesto Guevara / participants in capitalism passing by on Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz

title: **W**orld **T**rade **S**upermarkt

location: Frame of temporary 'cube' on Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz, Berlin, D **date:** May 7, 2009

manifesto:

Ackermann, 'Ché' and Lenin have, maybe because of the current crisis, buried their political differences and become friends. Their willingness to compromise has been rewarded with: a new job! They've become the mascot team of a supermarket chain called "World Trade" which has just recently opened their newest affiliate in Berlin, at, of all places, Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz. Like Zombies subsisting on the living political leaders and theorists, they flutter around the place, reminding us of the popular accusation that our generation/time was 'apolitical'. Here we are at the pivotal point of the installation: We want to further inquire this common assumption and find out if it is rightful, or if not just the means or the appearance or the sphere of political struggle has shifted. If not so; where does the famous "Politikverdrossenheit" ('political sullenness') come from? Is it the time that is unpolitical or is it the people? Why do the huge, threatening and highly urgent issues of climate change, data protection/privacy, economical and financial crisis etc. not raise more protest? Here we hark back to our three alter egos, who each carry a trash can referred to as "bad bank" and a shopping basket, reminding the passers-by of the discrepancy between the ways that financial institutions on the one hand and the suffering citizens on the other hand are treated during the crisis. With this in mind, they are invited to leave a political slogan of their choice in our 'supermarket of political vanity', eventually creating a 'zeitgeist-collage'.

techniques / tools: The actors transform into historical and current political figures. The 'World Trade Center (Supermarket of political vanity)' is set up, consisting of huge signs, space for the participants to comment, a mirror and a soundtrack to evoke the supermarket room.

action: The passing participants in capitalism are asked for anything disposable (apple core, piece of paper, etc.) which they can deposit in the 'bad bank'. This litter is immediately turned into credit for the shopping basket. After having chosen a give-away (cigarette, chewing gum, condom), they are invited to engage in our supermarket and choose a flyer that represents their attitude.

actual outcome:

As expected, the 'cold calling' of the participants worked fairly well. One could argue that we almost cheated by raising attention with give-aways, but that idea emerged during the discussion and was chosen more because it fits into the concept rather than because of the prospect of success. Fortunately, almost everybody who took something out of our shopping baskets was also willing to dedicate a moment of his/her time to our supermarket, choosing a flyer with slogan and attach it to the bill. Of course, it is a bit big-headed to declare the resulting collage of stickers a representative compilation of present political attitudes, as the repertory of slogans was limited and predetermined (and because sadly we forgot to offer pens to express other views). However, as a general reminder of a time (that we don't want to uncritically glorify) when people actually dared taking a chance and trying to change the course of the processes affecting them, we hope it might have worked.

