

Unfurled: a Public Exhibition of Flags
a satellite event for the MoKS annual summer symposium,
PostsovkhOZ 5: Public/Private

participating artists

**Nene Tsuboi | Deric Carner | Elizabeth Beer & Brian Janusiak
Ann Chamberlain | Marc Cooley | Cheryl Coon | Harrell Fletcher
democratic innovation | Barbara Garber | Max Hattler
Caleb Larsen | Reuben Lorch-Miller | Otto von Busch
Forster David Rudolph | Kevin Radley | Rigo | Mike Henry
Kevin Radley | Shannon Spanhake | Jackie Sumell
Jeannene Przyblyski for the San Francisco Bureau of Urban Secrets |
Randall Sinner | Sirja Liisa Vahtra | Michael Swaine**

Opening Reception: Friday August 12, 2005

Exhibition Run: Aug 1 – Sat Aug 14, 2005

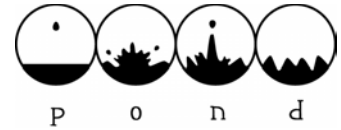
**Location of flags: Galerii Y, University of Tartu, Estonia
Küütri str. 2, Tartu, ESTONIA 51007 | Gallery Hours: Mon-Fri, 12-5 pm**

Unfurled is an exhibition of flags that presents critical responses and alternatives to the recent rise in nationalism and its fanaticism. Formerly exhibited in 2004 at Pond's gallery space in San Francisco, California (USA) *Unfurled* makes a European appearance at Galerii Y at the University of Tartu, Estonia, as a satellite event to MoKS residency's annual summer symposium. This year's symposium, entitled *PostsovkhOZ 5: Public/Private*, situates the exhibition within a larger discourse that questions notions of 'public' and 'private' as constructions shaped by both local currents and larger geopolitical forces. In its second incarnation, *Unfurled* will present selections from the first exhibition alongside additional works by international artists. The exhibition includes flags mounted on the exterior of Galerii Y with additional interpretations of flags inside the gallery space. The works selected for the exhibition, ranging from overtly political to intimately personal, surprise and challenge traditional understandings of the function of a flag.



Max Hattler, *Collision* (video stills)

Max Hattler's video entitled *Collision* features a frenetic psychedelic kaleidoscope of colors and shapes resembling the United States flag and permutations of the iconography seen on the flags of various Islamic countries. On the one hand, the abstracted patterns and dynamic soundscape proffer a form of aesthetic comprehension to a complex political morphology between the US and the Islamic world—on the other hand, the continually shifting patterns remind us that a static reading is by nature elusive.



Unfurled: a Public Exhibition of Flags (cont'd)



Elizabeth Beer & Brian Janusiak,
Stand By

Elizabeth Beer and Brian Janusiak's *Stand By* depicts the SMPTE color bars, the television test pattern used in countries where the NTSC video standard is dominant, such as those in North America. As a known standard used to calibrate the color and intensity of video monitors, *Stand By's* conflation of TV color bars with statehood wryly comments on the role of the television as a means of social calibration, a mode of social formation whose ubiquity supplants other nationalist, political, ethnic, and cultural alliances.

A U.S. flag painted white, Mark Cooley's *White Flag* plays on various cultural resonations. In the United States white flags signify a surrendering – but exposed to natural elements (sun, wind, rain, etc.), *White Flag* will crack and fade, eventually returning the artwork to its originary incarnation as a piece of cloth. We are left with an open ended question about the evanescent nature of art and the axiomatic character of symbols in the political imaginary. *White Flag* also alludes to various monochromatic paintings in 20th century Western art (Rodchenko, Robert Ryman, Malevich, Yves Klein, Rothko) that position themselves as the death of painting, a non-painting painting, a blank slate to which we impute meaning. In Cooley's piece, an actual flag underlies the layers of paint — as if to expose the political and social underpinnings of a Modernist 'neutral field'.



Siirja Liisa Vahtra, *Good Old Swedish Time*

In *Good Old Swedish Time* by Baltic artist Siirja Liisa Vahtra, a bleached white Swedish flag will be flown alongside an Estonian flag, referencing the two countries' imbricated cultural histories. Occupied by Sweden from 1561 until the early 1700's, Estonians still fondly recall the presence of a centralized authority which resulted in beneficial reforms (peasant-friendly policies, a reduction of taxes, the establishment of the University of Tartu, etc.) Succeeded by a period of strife (heightened class antagonism, plagues, the outbreak of the Great Northern War among countries in Eastern Europe, Russia, and Baltic countries), the previous era under Swedish reign was retrospectively referred to as 'the Good Old Swedish Time.' Faded and tattered, Vahtra's flag is suggestive of an icon that has endured the passage of memory throughout centuries.

An understanding of the artistic process allegorizes the historical problematics of the Swedish occupation: the chemical used for bleaching – chorine – is a greenish-yellow gas combined with nearly all the basic elements. Discovered by Swedish pharmacist Carl Wilhelm Scheele in 1774, chlorine is one of 90 natural elements. Its dual properties to both *disinfect* or *cleanse* and, in large doses, function as a lethal toxin to humans invites a discussion about the Swedish occupation's effects on native Estonian culture and identity.

This project made possible by CEC Artslink and supported by MoKS sponsors: Eesti Kultuuriministerium (Estonian Ministry of Culture) ja Kultuurkapital (Estonian Cultural Endowment)

For complete Project Descriptions, Artists' Bios, and images contact Marisa Jahn at the contact info below.

Pond: art, activism, and ideas.

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