

Komikaze at Radio Helsinki celebrating 20 years of artistic and cultural engagement

Komikaze is a network of creative individuals coming together as a collective active on the international scene with DIY comic books, illustrations, and graphics production. Started with grassroots in Zagreb, Croatia in 2002, Komikaze celebrates this year 20th anniversary by presenting a new publication and exhibition on the tour now visiting Radio Helsinki in Graz with the artistic concept by Ivana Armanini.

Promoting independent strip authors for two decades predominantly in the Ex-Yu region with worldwide collaborations, Komikaze has received numerous awards for their achievements, including the Angoulême, one of the largest European comic book festival based in France.

Regarding the local scene in Zagreb, Komikaze collaborates over the years with AKC Attack! Autonomous Cultural Center Zagreb as a program with a focus on street art, independent comics, city mural actions, workshops and artist residencies reflecting on the social and political reality through surreal artistic expressions.

Concerning the background of the alternative and the underground scene where Komikaze is highly recognized, it is relevant to say how members and people form the collective are coming from the cultural spheres of punk, techno, rave and noise culture with discourse in feminism and philosophies of anarchism, often connected with social movements and activism engaged in the public space.

The artworks of Komikaze, we can frequently see in self-organized galleries, streets, occupied spaces, squats, independent zones, festivals, info-shops, zines, books and of course, imaginative places creating wonderful worlds as a meeting point for creative forces.

Using the drawing as a medium, Komikaze discusses social norms implemented by the establishment with the class, gender, race, and national inequalities coming from the patriarchal governing structures.

Rebellious audited towards such hierarchical constructs which create a capitalistic society of consumerism, Komikaze reacts with art content based on humor but also grotesque style as tragicomedy extracting the people's voices and laughs as an ultimate weapon against repressors.

Historical background on the printing strategies refers to the 19th century independent underground channels often used for the purpose of informing people about political actions.

So-called SAMIZDAT (eng: self-published, Russian: самиздат, BKS - Samo izdat, Ukraine: samviydav, Polish: drugi obwieg) are printed text pamphlets circulating from hand to hand among working class often in social and anarchist anti-authoritarian movements in Eastern bloc. This method was used as self-organized production activity to avoid censorship by the ruling class.

Today such activities refer to the subcultures in DIY activities opposing the mainstream commercial sector and corporate production which are the strategies of Komikaze in the concept of independent authors publishing.

Under the parole ...

“There is no action or art that is not socially engaged. and non-commitment is also a form of action.”

... it is evident that this collective has wider streams and a network of people which we could characterize as an anti-art movement, the terminology associated with the Dada movement.

By it means, Komikaze is definitely challenging the cultural scene by questioning the meaning of art from the perspectives of professional vs non-professional - commercial vs alternative positions - as well as formal labor sector vs non formal labor sector rejecting conventional standards defying criteria as a means of what art is, and what art should be.

Discussing the position of public space engagement and its relevant presence in today's time, it is interesting to host an exhibition of Komikaze at the space of Radio Helsinki which has a long tradition of independent radio stations focused on social topics and cultural genres sharing the content discourse directly in the homes of the citizens from 1992 till today.

The nomadic body of Komikaze visiting the pirate station of Radio Helsinki in Graz attends to open the public space for dialog, music, art, and creativity as a space for sharing ideas, knowledge, and skill in this collaborative temporary autonomous zone.

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