

LIUBA

Chelsea sabotage

WEISSPOLLACK GALLERIES - 521 West 25th Street - New York NYC 10001

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Liuba is a young Italian artist who slips into the art world mechanisms to tease it and its protagonists through ironic performances. In this solo show she presents videos of the actions she did during the Venice Biennial (2003), the Italian Bologna Art Fair (2004) and the SOFA Fair in New York (2005).

During the opening of the 2003 Venice Biennial, she decided to visit the whole show wearing sunglasses covered in plaster that made her totally blind. It is particularly interesting to observe the different reactions of the typical contemporary art audience in this performance. The blindness of the artist, which of course is not only physical but reflects the audience's superficial desire to be seen during an art event more than the interest in art itself, makes for a premise that generates hilarious interactions. The audience's reaction and the art world clichés serve as a basis for the artist, who shows them recorded as video (the "Cieco di Gerico", from the Luke's gospel episode of the blind's healing).

In the series called *Virus*, the artist is a sort of living sculpture. Dressed in a black outfit with red dots, the notorious sold stickers, the artist went to art fairs and placed them under several works under the noses of upset gallerists and stunned visitors. The sold dot is a universal sign that makes the difference. You judge a work in another way if it has been sold. Red dots mean money, power, and often fame. The same performance in Bologna (Italy) and in New York had extremely different results. Liuba's main interest in doing this provocative performance is the social aspect of the reactions, a sort of anthropological point of view. The audience's reaction, in fact, provides a direct and immediate take on a country, a people, and its issues. At the SOFA, Liuba generated such an angry reaction that she was forced by the Show Management to leave the fair. The ironic aspect of this strong reaction is that security guards spent at least 20 minutes explaining to her what the red dots mean in the U.S. before they pushed her out, confiscating her cameraman's ID and passport "because people pay for having a booth and people pay for visiting the fair," as they kept repeating in the video. They could not even imagine that she was sticking red dots on purpose – to the security staff she was a silly woman acting pointlessly. In Italy the gallerists at the fair were really annoyed by her, but it was clear to everybody that she was playing with the art system and this provided a degree of entertainment at the same time. Liuba's works are based on the direct comparison between the artist and the audience, the live performance and the recorded video, the rules and the illegal.

In the hilarious video "Rimini, Rimini" Liuba depicts a typical day off on the notoriously overcrowded beach on the Adriatic Sea in the center of Italy. Wearing a bulky cardboard box, she mingles with the lotion-drenched beach-goers relaxing, on a hot, sunny day. This video ironically comments on the craziness of the mass tourism, exhibitionism, and the dream of a Hollywood body: perfectly in shape and tanned. At the end when you look at the artist bathing in the sea with her head peeping out of a cardboard box, you can't tell if she is the fool or one of the people spending their holidays crushed together like anchovies in a can.

(Irina Zucca Alessandrelli)