



No subject (A Conversation with Working People), a participant of an empowerment-drawing workshop in SDZ Merseburg.

NO SUBJECT (A CONVERSATION WITH WORKING PEOPLE)

A Communication Project and Cultural Archive, Halle, Germany, 2004/05

A Multimedia Installation, Expanded Documentary Cinema, Shrinking Cities Exhibition,
Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst Leipzig, 2005/06

By Kristina Leko in collaboration with: AWO Leuna, Arbeit und Leben Training Center
Schkopau, and Sozialdienstleistungszentrum, Merseburg

The project was developed in the region of Halle over a one-year period. Three social institutions were involved in the project, as portrayed through the involvement of their beneficiaries. I offered the three institutions a presentation within my future exhibition room¹, as well as producing video documentaries for their different presentation purposes.

No subject is an archive of experiences, statements, thoughts, and reflections of three groups of working people related to the notions of work, working class and unemployment. It was realized through workshops, meetings, and discussions with people in situ, in three social institutions situated in the industrial region of Halle. Involved institutions were: The Education Center "Arbeit und Leben" where non-qualified unemployed youngsters get their second chance to complete an education; "Arbeiterwohlfahrt" Social Center in Leuna where a group of women which was forced in 1990 to an early retirement gather; and a Merseburg based social service center for the unemployed, run by the unemployed. In collaboration with the three social groups a multimedia installation consisting of video and sound documents, photographs, written and hand-written documents, drawings, objects and personal belongings, where individual biographies meet their social context, was created. Three video documentaries about the three institutions are part of the installation, and were created as gifts to the institutions in order to serve their documentation and marketing purposes.

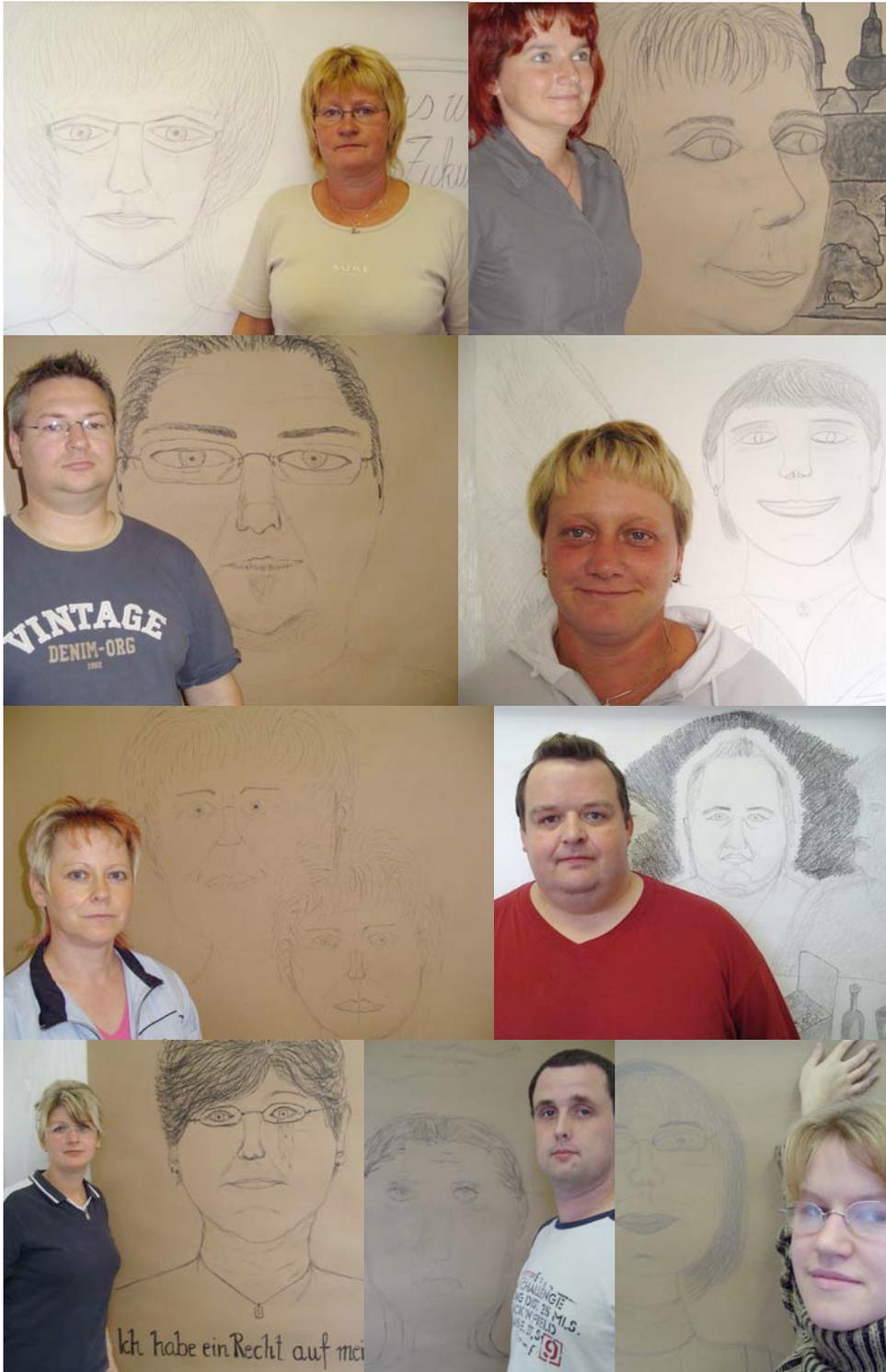
Beside creating video documents, and thus enabling reflection on a general and particular social situation, for me, this project was very much about how to be useful. My feeling of usefulness culminated through the drawing workshop held in Merseburg.

¹ December 2005 – January 2006, in the context of the *Shrinking Cities* exhibition.

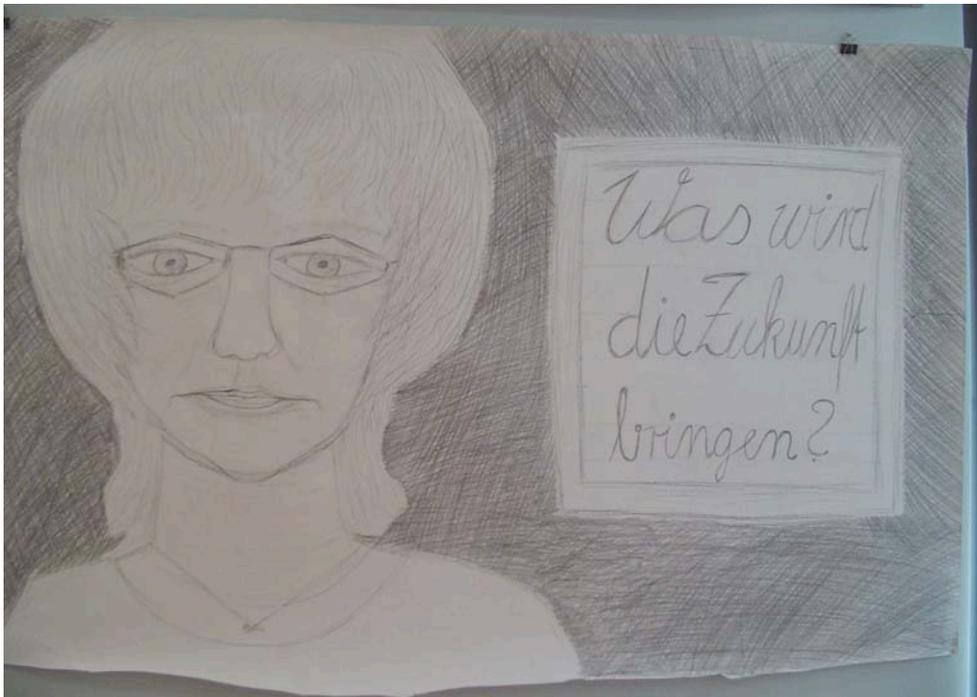
Sozialdienstleistungszentrum (SDZ) came into being in 2005 and represents a new type of social solidarity. It is the first institution of its kind. The employees, long term unemployed, work as 1€-jobbers giving free or 1€-services to the other unemployed: breakfast, lunch, children's playroom, secondhand clothing, grocery store, hairdresser, laundry, cosmetic treatment, help with job applications, and advice on social issues. The goods are provided through donations from local companies. When I offered SDZ to make a video documentation about them, the employees decided they did not want any cameras around. So, in order to present the institution I made a sound documentary. The sad fact that the video was not welcome, as some felt ashamed of their position, led me to offer another free service of mine: A workshop on large format self portrait drawing with self-empowerment as its goal. There were thirteen participants: SDZ employees and customers. For a week, we worked in a small room, three people at a time. Each person spent at least five, and some even nine hours drawing. The atmosphere at the workshop was somehow special. The photos you can see here were made during the working process in order to show to the person how well he or she was progressing. Then, as I printed the photos to mail them to the participants, I suddenly realized this was in fact proof that everyone is an artist. Later, nobody had any objection to the photos being published. Some were even proud. And I wished there would be more proofs like this in this world.



No subject (A Conversation with Working People), workshop in SDZ Merseburg.



No subject (A Conversation with Working People), participants of the drawing workshop in SDZ Merseburg.



No subject (A Conversation with Working People), expanded documentary cinema, installation views, Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig, 2005. The area dedicated to the SDZ Merseburg: a sound documentary, drawings.



No subject (A Conversation with Working People), expanded documentary cinema, installation views, Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig, 2005. The area dedicated to the AWO Leuna: a three channel video installation, a sound installation, photo-reprints, objects, handwritten notes.



No subject (A Conversation with Working People), expanded documentary cinema, installation views, Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig, 2005. The installation area dedicated to the Educational Center Arbeit und Leben: a three channel video installation, photo-reprints, objects, handwritten notes.



No subject (A Conversation with Working People), expanded documentary cinema, installation detail, photo-reprint, from the photo-archives of the project - photographs of the reconstruction of the Educational Center Arbeit und Leben.



No subject (A Conversation with Working People), expanded documentary cinema, installation views, Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig, 2005. The installation area dedicated to the AWO Leuna: a three channel video installation, a sound installation, photo-reprints, objects, handwritten notes.



No subject (A Conversation with Working People), expanded documentary cinema, 2005. Video stills from the video documentary about AWO Leuna.



No subject (A Conversation with Working People), expanded documentary cinema, installation detail, Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig, 2005.