

*Nedko Solakov  
Mixed Media  
(in at least four directions and one center)*

Opening                    Friday, 29 August 2014 6 - 8 pm  
Exhibition                30 August - 1 November 2014

*The things we like (shall I say, the good things) invariably drive us to reflect on ourselves. [...] In this sense, liking is an egocentric feeling, pulling the world (the artwork) towards oneself. All of this can of course be articulated using another, more elevated style. Now it suffices to say that Nedko Solakov's works urge me to reflect on myself, my fears, and my pleasures.*

Georgi Gospodinov

"Once upon a time ...," or "One day ..." These are the words that fairytales generally begin with. They evoke long gone eras or an uncertain future, a time that a story took place in or will take place in - not as fiction but, at least in a child's imagination, as factual report. They conjure a different reality, a reality that stands in relation to our own actual experience, yet radically extends on the suspension of rational regularity. Fairytales, it follows, are both deeply disturbing and liberating. The same applies to the drawn "stories" of the Bulgarian artist Nedko Solakov (\*1957), that come in often multi-part cycles of delicate wash drawings combining picture and text, as most recently in *Attempts* (2013) or *Routines* (2014).

"One day (and he knows this for sure), he will step out of his life's routine and will move beyond this sheet of paper's edge. Somewhere beyond from here ..." An arrow marks the exact spot at the sheet's edge where the stickman, perpetually turning in circles in the drawing, wants to break free from everyday routine. Or is it perhaps the drawn line itself that looks to escape the restrictions of the paper square, of its own routine? As usual, the ostensibly funny, yet subtle ink drawing from the *Routines* series can be understood on various levels, as an everyday story of existential hope, and also possible disappointment, or as an intellectual reflection on the artistic medium and thus, basically, as a commentary on the conditions in which art is created.

Nedko Solakov is a highly gifted storyteller. His drawings talk about everyday occurrences, but also turn out to be caustic commentaries on human existence, while, at the same time, shedding light on its absurdity. Simultaneously, the artist, in his highly varied oeuvre comprising drawings, paintings, videos, performances or large-scale installations, questions apparently collective truths or the state of the art industry. He reflects on failure as a metaphor of human existence and in the political ways of the world discovers antinomy as a ruling structure. His ability to relate various themes in the form of stories, which keep a fine balance between the poetic pleasure of narration and an ironic twinkle, make this oeuvre quite unmistakable, and highly entertaining.

# *GALERIE BOB VAN ORSOUW*

“By entering this particular area, you, dear visitor, have agreed to withstand (with no complaints whatsoever) any kind of harassment other visitors may subject you to.” This warning welcomes visitors to the Galerie Bob van Orsouw. Nedko Solakov has posted it on the four concrete pillars that dominate the centre of the exhibition space and form a room within the room, as it were. The note transforms the space between the pillars into a presentation platform, where visitors, by entering, exhibit themselves: “By entering the space, in between the four columns, the visitor agrees that any other visitor could start harassing him/her: kicking butts, pinching their ears, tickling them, absolutely open for misbehaving.” (Nedko Solakov)

Nedko Solakov, the great storyteller, is also a highly unorthodox conceptual artist who approaches the world, and also the art world, with burlesque humour and ironic distance. In his wonderfully absurd picture-and-text stories this alert observer of human shortcomings speaks of a world that has gambled its ideals away a long time ago, yet hardly ever seems to lose his (black) humour.

Konrad Bitterli

Since the beginning of the 1990s, Nedko Solakov (born 1957, Tcherven Briag, Bulgaria; lives in Sofia) has exhibited extensively in Europe and the United States. His work was featured in Aperto'93 (Venice Biennial); the 48th, 49th, 50th and 52nd Venice Biennial; the 3rd, 4th and 9th Istanbul Biennial; São Paulo'94; Manifesta 1, Rotterdam; the 2nd and 4th Gwangju Biennial; the 5th Lyon Biennial, Sonsbeek 9, Arnhem, the 4th and 5th Cetinje Biennial, the 1st Lodz Biennial; the 7th Sharjah Biennial, United Arab Emirates; the 3rd Tirana Biennial; the 2nd Seville Biennial; the 2nd Moscow Biennial; documenta 12; 16th Sydney Biennial; Prospect 1, New Orleans Biennial, Singapore Biennial 2011 and dOCUMENTA (13). Recently he had solo shows at Museu do Chiado, Lisbon; Stichting De Appel, Amsterdam; CCA Kitakyushu, Japan; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; The Israel Museum, Jerusalem; Centre d'Art Santa Monica, Barcelona; Kunsthaus Zurich; Castello di Rivoli, Rivoli; Sofia City Art Gallery and Galleria Borghese, Rome. In 2003-2005 an extensive mid-career “A 12 1/3 (and even more) Year Survey” was presented at Casino Luxembourg, Rooseum Malmö and O.K Centrum Linz, and in 2008-2009 the “Emotions” solo project was exhibited at Kunstmuseum Bonn, Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, and Institut Mathildenhöhe, Darmstadt. In 2011-2012 his retrospective “All in Order, with Exceptions” was presented at Ikon Gallery, Birmingham; Fondazione Galleria Civica Trento (“All in (My) Order, with Exceptions”); S.M.A.K., Ghent and Fundação de Serralves, Porto.