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## ART ON THE ROAD: ALEKSANDRA MIR

**Artist - New York, USA**



*Aleksandra Mir, Palermo, 2009. Photo by Mark Baker*

Aleksandra Mir is an artist, born in Poland but with American and Swedish citizenship. She studied Communications, Media Arts and Cultural Anthropology. In much of her work, Mir solicits the participation of friends, acquaintances, and strangers in playful upheavals of social norms. The work's course of events is often started by Mir as a situation-bound joint between specific events and location. Solo exhibitions of her work have been mounted among others at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia (2004), P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, New York (2004), Kunsthau, Zurich (2006), Printed Matter, NYC (2007), Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt (2009), Laurent Godin, Paris (2006, 2009), Magazzino d'Arte Moderna, Rome (2010). Her work has also been included in major group exhibitions such as the Sydney Biennale, Sydney (2002), GNS (Global Navigation System), Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2003), the Whitney Biennial (2004) and The Shapes of Space at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (2007), and 53rd Venice Biennale (2009), "Born in Dystopia" exhibition at the Rosenblum Collection in Paris (2010-11).



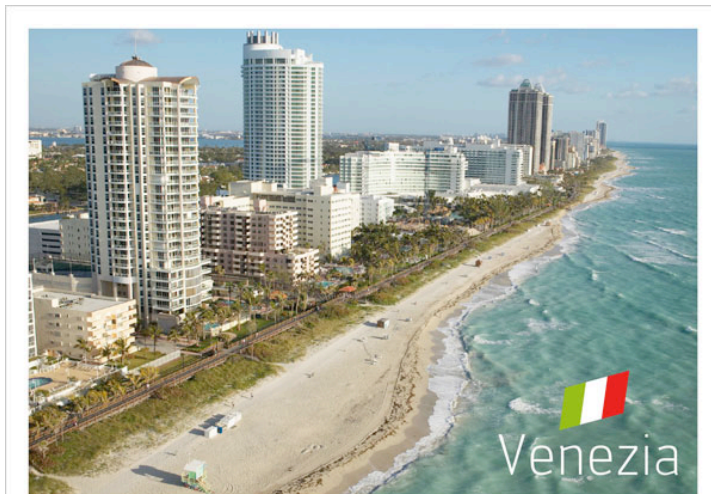
*Aleksandra Mir, Antarctica, performance, 2005*

**Your work develops through different media and techniques, what was your “first love”?**

I started making zines very early on. When I was around 10, I made a serial a publication that came out in one single handmade copy and circulated between the readers in the classroom. I still love every aspect of publishing and have by now put out 25 small press artists book and one mainstream publication, *The How Not To Cookbook* that came out with Rizzoli last year and that is distributed worldwide. My process, love and engagement with print media has always been the same and continues alongside my gallery shows and public projects.

**Could you please tell us more about *The How Not To Cookbook*?**

It started as a small artists project on commission from the Collective gallery in Edinburgh that originated from on my own disasters in the kitchen. I invited 1000 people to send in their advice on what NOT to do, based on their own experiences of failure. I was interested in how we are taught or teach ourselves through trial and error, and how, by making our guilty failures public we may even be creating an original and subversive form of art, rather than simply be aspiring to obvious and repetitive results. Apparently the idea is very appealing. The book now sells in 23 countries so I gather it serves as catharsis for anyone out there who is sick of celebrity chefs and the whole good advice industry.



*Aleksandra Mir, VENEZIA (all places contain all others), postcard, 2009. Photo: George Doyle/Stockbyte, Getty Images*

**Do you think that art could bring any kind of effective social change? Why?**

I have never been part of any visible revolution so I don't know what that would feel like. I experience my own process as a sharply pointed but extremely slow reaction to what is going on around me, so it is hard to detect its impact right away. When interviewers ask for “social change” in art, I always feel they are effectively looking for a scoop. Art serves journalism very badly that way. I am sorry. I think social change through art works more like rings on the water. The effect is greater the further away from the epicenter you are.



*Aleksandra Mir, Coppia, 2 collages on board with gold leaf frames, 43 x 33,5 / 43,5 x 33,5 cm, 2009*

**What is a typical work day like for you? Any special perks?**

No day is the same. I am not a studio artist so every day I do different jobs in different locations. It ranges from doing library research to lugging heavy boxes in storage, going to meetings or installing shows. The perks are probably the nicer aspects of the social life I have created and have access to in so many parts of the world, but it is a hard earned luxury. After 18 years on the road with work, I no longer see travel itself as a luxury but a necessity to be able to see the people I work with face to face.

**Are you interested in fashion? Do you think that fashion could be considered art?**

Not really, I am not quite getting the point. I need clothing to keep me warm and be comfortable in any situation and so I go for utilitarian stuff with reasonable price tags. When its hot, I rather go naked. I do enjoy dressing up, occasionally, but only on my own terms. The fashion industry's insistence on impossible beauty ideals and novelty verges on fascism. I greatly admire people who can function within that world and still get away with their own thing. Andrea Crews in Paris are a good example, but they are essentially artists. And although I couldn't care less for the exploitation of the label today, I can see the importance of what Coco Chanel originally did.



*Aleksandra Mir, Beauty Free, marker on paper, 190 x 120", 2005*

**What does bore you and what does get you excited?**

Long waits on airports are pretty boring. My work and my friends are always exciting.

**Do you like to collaborate with other people? What would be your perfect kind of collaboration?**

Yes, I do, a lot. A perfect collaboration is where the maximum intensity of a project does not ruin the relationship between the people who give it their all. To come out of a passionate experience with a life long friendship is truly a challenging objective.



Aleksandra Mir, Buttons, marker on paper, plastic, metal, 2008 (detail)



Aleksandra Mir, White House, exhibition view, Mary Boone gallery, NYC, 2008

**What is the place that you would like to travel to in the future? Why?**

It would be nice to find a permanent home one day and just stay there.

**Who is the woman you'd like to see featured / interviewed here?**

Maroussia Rebecq of Andrea Crews would be very interesting to hear from.