KOUZMINE-KARAVAÏEFF

IN KIND OF EXCHANGE – SERGEY BALOVIN

EXCHANGE YOUR PAINTED PORTRAIT @ IFA GALLERY ON 7-8 MARCH 2015 FOR WHATEVER YOU FEEL USEFUL*, AND HELP THE MONEY-FREE WORLD TRIP OF THE ARTIST

**FOOD, DRINK, ART PAPER, TRAIN TICKET, LIFT TO NEXT DESTINATION EINDHOVEN (NL), ETC.– NOTHING DIFFICULT TO BRING DURING A TRIP*

BY SERGEY BALOVIN

In 2010, I moved to Shanghai and rented an empty apartment. I decided to save money and published an announcement that I would make portraits for anyone in exchange for something useful for my apartment. In two months my house had everything, from candles and dishware to furniture and household appliances. Moreover, I had made a mass of interesting acquaintances and new friends. I started to take photographs of all the gifts and to write down stories of people coming to me. So a humorous experiment turned into the big project.

I decided to refuse money and began to define objects of exchange based on their practicality. For travel, I suggested things that can come in handy on my way. I received a backpack and all that was necessary – from matches and a first-aid kit to a compass and a mobile phone. Other objects of exchange include “food”, “clothes” etc. For “children” people can bring something for orphanages and boarding schools. I make portraits as a fast sketch by ink. Giving, instead of drawing something utilitarian, the person confirms the importance of the artist’s work. In turn, I, as the artist, emphasize the importance of each participant, representing his or her portrait and history at an exhibition.

Some of the actions of the “in kind exchange” project started to take place in China, Russia and the Balkans.
In March 2011, in Novosibirsk (Russia), at the gallery Nepokorennye, there was the debut exhibition of this project. It was an installation of over a thousand portraits of participants, as well as the same number of photos of exchanged gifts.
In preparation for an exhibition of “A portrait for a dinner,” where I received portraits in exchange for food, I lived in a city for one week without using money.
Then, I went to the Balkans, and to the subject “food,” I added “housing” as an object of exchange. I paid for everything with only portraits.

In 2013, I decided to start a money-free worldwide tour with this project.
At this stage, I completed the tour going through 39 countries all over the world making over 5,000 portraits and receiving the same number of gifts.
However, there are still many countries to which I did not go, and I decided to continue the trip.
On 7th March 2015, I will be in Belgium for the first time and I will make portraits at **ifa gallery** in Brussels.

On the one hand, “In Kind Exchange” experimentally proves that it is possible not only to survive, but also to live very interestingly without using money. On the other hand, the project offers the opportunity to anyone to become the owner of the work of the artist, who is independent on both a financial and social level.