

Strangeness of Things

Kolkoz does it with a smile

The duo called Kolkoz definitively have a cheeky streak. It is as though a contrary context brings out the best in them. In Miami recently, they offered a whimsical, snow-covered chalet floating in the waters of the lake-like Virginia Key, immediately opposite the giant disused stadium. In Mexico, it was a mobile desert on a truck roving through town, whereby the locals could experience a holiday in passing while going about their business. Next up is a work in Hong Kong, where prime property is to be converted into an underused space by way of a basketball court decked out as if for a prom-like occasion. DAMN° asked them to explain themselves.

ANNA SANSOM



Kolkoz's Swiss chalet, perched opposite Miami Marine Stadium during Art Basel Miami Beach in December, was an alien presence in tropical waters. Aptly titled *Curiosity*, the snow-capped, inflated object had an exterior evoking wooden logs and an interior warmed by an electric fire that recalled Dan Flavin's red neons. This embodiment of incongruity was exactly what Kolkoz – the French artist duo of Samuel Boutruche and Benjamin Moreau – were seeking. The multi-media pair is known for inverting situations in unexpected, witty ways, with conceptual works often themed around displacement.

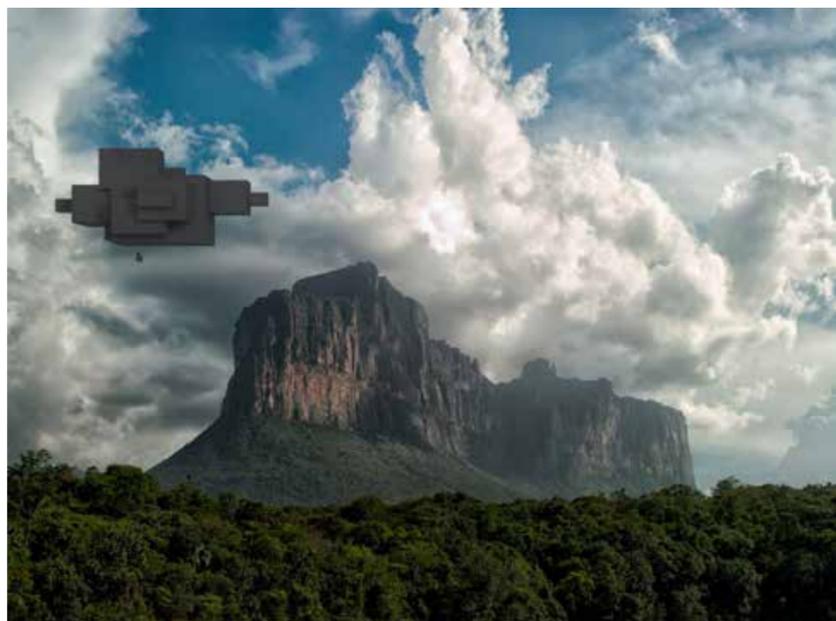
Sponsored by Swiss watch brand Audermars Piguet, in collaboration with Galerie Perrotin, *Curiosity* inadvertently took on a political significance in the South Florida context. Miami Marine Stadium, the first structure designed by Hilario Candela, then a 28-year-old architect newly arrived from Cuba, was built on Virginia Key in 1963, as a venue for watching powerboat racing. But after a popular debut, the Modernist stadium with its long, cantilevered roof was pretty much abandoned by the time Hurricane Andrew hit in 1992. Since the waterfront stadium sits on prime land, property developers wanted it razed to build condominiums, and in 2007 the city

asked contractors to devise a plan for its demolition. In protest, Candela, along with fellow architect Jorge Hernandez and preservationist Donald Worth, formed the association Friends of Miami Marine Stadium, in a bid to restore it. It was duly added to the World Monuments Fund 2010 Watch List, along with such sites as Machu Picchu in Peru and Old Jerusalem. After having the edifice designated a national treasure in 2012, the association won the right to convert it into a multipurpose waterfront venue for sports and concerts. Projects such as *Curiosity* are contributing towards fundraising the \$30 million required to renovate and transform the decrepit,

CURIOSITY, 2013
Art Basel Miami Beach

Facing page:
MIAMI MARINE STADIUM, 1963
Built on Virginia Key by Hilario
Candela as a venue for watching
powerboat racing

Images courtesy of Audermars Piguet



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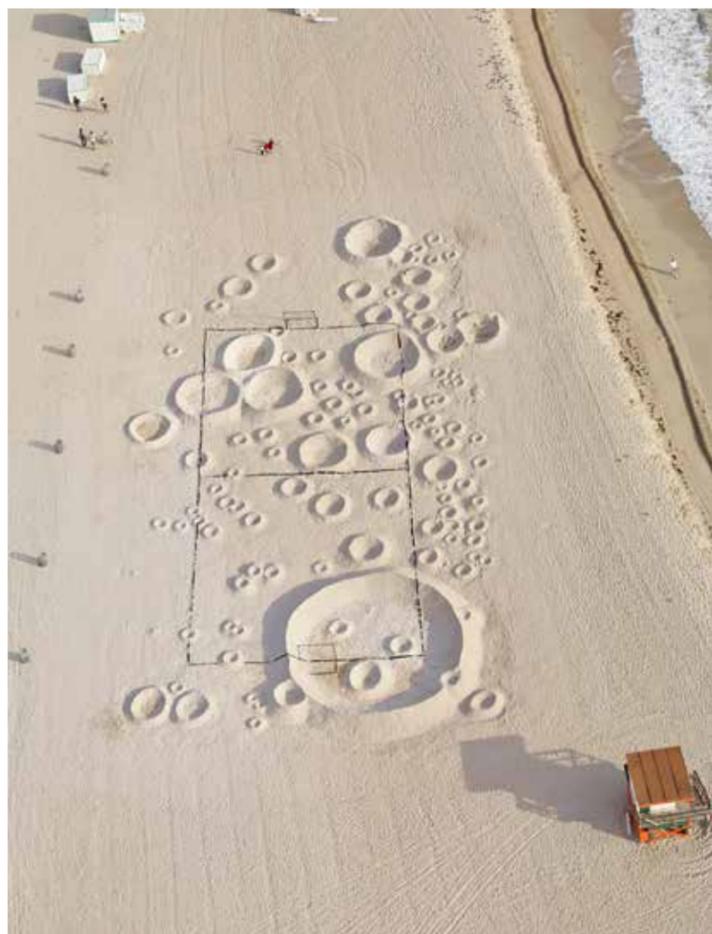
days. The event saw four teams, consisting of artists, collectors, curators, critics, and gallerists competing with each other, the lunar image being redrawn each day. As with Curiosity, Kolkoz is keen to restage Lunar Park elsewhere. "I like the idea of danger and think it'd be interesting to do it on a coal mine", enthuses Boutrouche.

DESERT ON WHEELS

Kolkoz's works are artistic puns, inverting the negative and the positive, or mirroring a condition. Take, for instance, Ubik, which took place during the Zona Maco contemporary art fair in Mexico City last February. A trailer loaded with a landscape of cacti was pulled around the city by a truck for a week, driving from the former cinematic studio where it was set up, to the suburbs. Instead of watching the changing scenery while travelling on a train, people could stand still and watch this mini desert moving past on a truck. The humorous stunt made the locals smile. "People spontaneously posed in front of it and had their photo taken, as if they were tourists somewhere", recounts Moreau. A similar principle applies to their series of artworks made from assemblages of picture frames fitted into each other. Rather than serving to enclose a painting, the multiplicity of frames becomes a visual, decorative object in itself.



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graffiti-covered site. "The Curiosity project was terrific and generated enormous exposure for our effort to restore the Marine Stadium", says Worth. (A Maritime Centre that will include a Maritime Museum, estimated to cost \$45 million overall, is being constructed separately through private developers).

CHALET IN A BOX

For Kolkoz, being able to install Curiosity opposite the stadium was fortuitous. "We'd seen the stadium on Google Earth, where it looks like land art", explains Boutrouche, 41. "We were looking for a place with an imposing scale. The building is crazy and has an incredible presence. Even during its abandonment it was an important place for graffiti artists, and people skateboarded on the roof. When we received confirmation that it was going to be preserved, we thought it'd be perfect to do a chalet there." As Moreau, 40, adds, "It has a ghostly side that makes you feel a little afraid." Kolkoz created a computerised simulation of the stadium and positioned the chalet across from it. The inflatable, vernacular object that ensued was sent to Miami in a 2m-by-2m box. "The box seemed so small when it arrived that we wondered whether we'd mistakenly received a children's game instead", chuckles Boutrouche. Since having Curiosity dismantled, Kolkoz is contemplating its next destination, maybe Mexico or Asia.

Boutrouche and Moreau have been collaborating since their 20s, having become friends at art school in Arles in the south of France. The notion of foreignness that's encapsulated in Curiosity follows on from their ephemeral project Lunar Park, presented during the previous edition of Art Basel Miami Beach, in 2012. In the sand, Kolkoz simulated Apollo 11's lunar landing site, on which they organised a beach-soccer tournament lasting three consecutive



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Looking ahead, Kolkoz is planning to make a project called Ballroom during Art Basel Hong Kong in May. As one might guess, it encompasses another play on words – this time referring to the venue of a high-school prom. Art-world participants won't be donning their tuxedos for a dance but for a game of basketball. "The idea is to have the ground covered in marquetry flooring, like in Versailles", says Moreau. The reference to this opulent chateau is intended to comment on the extortionate cost of Hong Kong property. "The fact that there are basketball courts in the centre of Hong Kong is amazingly bizarre when you know the price of real estate there", continues Moreau. Indeed, Kolkoz's playful and nomadic projects belie an aesthetic research that interrogates the strangeness of things. <

COMME D'HABITUDE, 2012 (1)
Wood, paint, dye
148.8 x 148.8 x 10.5 cm
Courtesy of Galerie Perrotin

SAMUEL BOUTROUCHE AND
BENJAMIN MOREAU (2)

UBIK, 2013 (3)
Images courtesy of Audemars Piguet

ROCK IN A HARD PLACE (1)

LUNA PARK, 2011 (2)
Art Basel Miami Beach

Images courtesy of Audemars Piguet

perrotin.com

Ballroom will be presented at Art Basel Hong Kong, 15-18 May 2014
artbasel.com