

## HAVE YOU MET... BLACK PALM

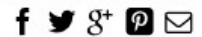


The second edition of Friends with Books is opening its doors this evening. This time, the art book fair will take place in the Hamburger Bahnhof from 11 to 13 of December and will include lectures, performances, talks, panel discussions and book presentations. On that occasion, Bpigs has a series of chats with some of the main artists invited by the curators and founders, Vanessa Adler and Savannah Gorton, to take part in the exhibition running during the fair.

by Lisa Kosak

7 Dec 2015, 20.19h

1033 reads



📷 Text and pictures by Bpigs, Sonja Cvitkovic, Michaela Meiser

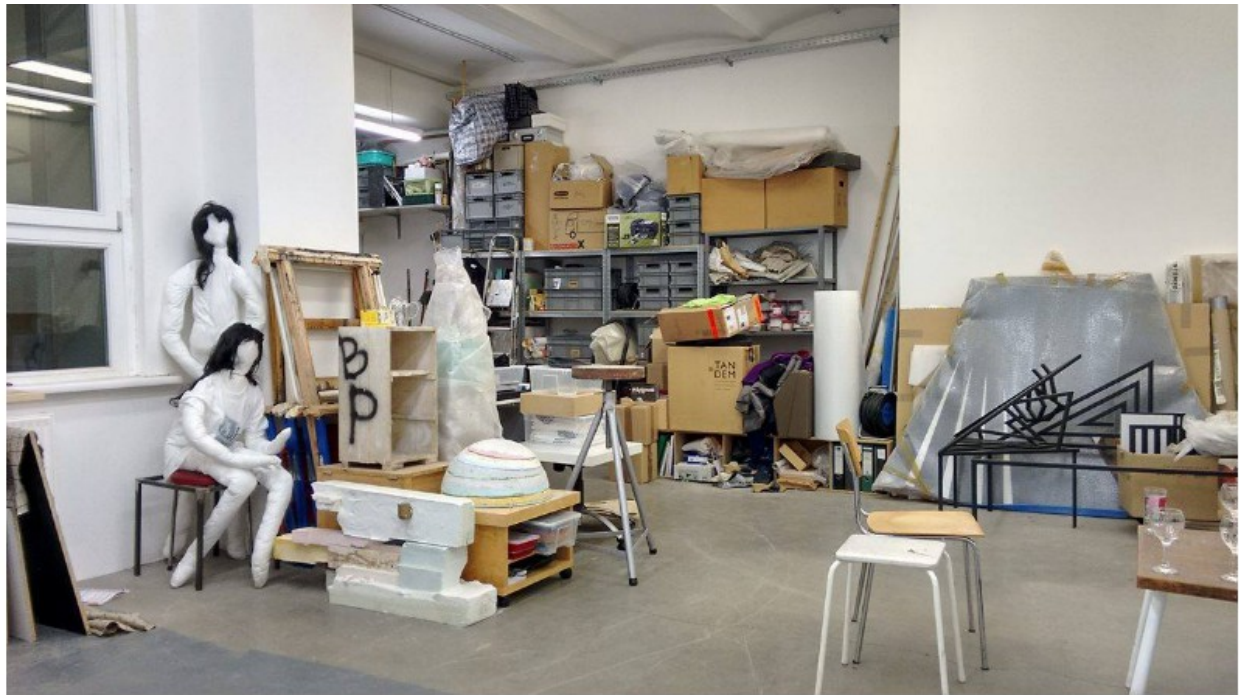
📺 INTERVIEWS

📍 ONLIN, PLATFORM, CURATOR, SONJA CVITKOVIC, MICHAELA MEISE, PERFORMANCE, FRIENDS WITH BOOKS, ART BOOK FAIR

For our second round, we had the pleasure to meet Sonja Cvitkovic and Michaela Meise in their studio. The first one is, among many different lives, the artist and curator behind Black Palm, while the latter is one of the artists represented on the platform. Read on to know more about the platform, tarot reading and field trips in Northern Germany.

### Can you tell us about Black Palm?

SC: I started Black Palm in 2014 as a digital platform for practical reasons mostly. We would like to organize more events and exhibitions but don't have a space yet. We still try to have regular events. The first presentation Black Palm had was at abc contemporary last year. Then we had a show at ACUD, and a couple of months later, I had a lecture performance about the services we offer at Image Movement. We are also working on a music labor for next year.



### **How do you choose the artworks and how do you approach the artists you want to feature on Black Palm?**

SC: Sometimes I approach people, and sometimes, people contact to collaborate on Black Palm. Some of the artists selling on Black Palm are also friends of mine. For example, Michaela and I are sharing the studio space and this is where the idea of working together popped up.

MM: In my opinion this is something totally individual, it has to do with that particular artist. I would say that when you approach an artist for Black Palm, you already know his/her work and have an idea of which direction the collaboration should take.

SC: It is hard to define. Usually I always know in the beginning what I want from that person, it is an extension of one's own artwork and this is where the "negotiation" starts. At first, we have an intense meeting. After that meeting, I sometimes I discover something completely new. I am on negotiation with an artist doing mainly drawings and just lately, I got to know that she is also doing a school for shiatsu massage and I thought "I love this!". Of course there are some artists who don't want to feature their work... but actually I don't have a real master plan. It is a collaboration between me and them.

MM: You are an artist too and you can easily recognize quality in a someone else artwork. Any change you suggest is for making an object or artwork into a useful product... and, of course, some artists don't want that. Not everyone agrees with your suggestions, but this is a very typical and interesting way to work together on something. It is bit like curating, but in a more playful way.

SC: We are not producing our proper design objects, it is not about that. The topic is still the object, but it does not have to be necessary functional.

### **Do you manage the distribution and the selling part of Black Palm by yourself?**

SC: Yes, I do everything. Everyone can order and buy through the website.

MM: The contact is always trough Sonja.

SC: We have quite some requests of Michaela's Tarot reading. At the end the practical aspects are very simple, people ordering a service like a reading pay me and Michaela writes me a bill. We fix an appointment, I offer a safe surrounding.

MM: You started the Black Palm concept much earlier than the time it went out. A lot of preparation was before that, at the beginning the shop was pretty non-functional. It has to do with the gallery idea, but without having to follow all the rules of a gallery.

S: Yes, it is a hybrid. I try to follow my instinct, I really enjoy to do it and want to be with artists, but I don't know yet what it is coming in the future.

M: And of course the prices are more affordable than in galleries. On one hand it is the same like in gallery, she is taking percentage on the sales of course, but on the other hand it has to do with the choice of working on editions. Edition are usually cheaper.

S: I want to create a kind of platform where artists can sell smaller works like editions. It is always a problem of money: a lot of artists can live from their work but most of the artists, even who have a good career, cannot live from that. It is crazy. Somehow I thought that I had to do something and to investigate about it. I wanted also to point this money topic, it is very important for me as well as the functionality topic. I consider that right now the art market has a functional system, from the compare identity of the artists to all the marketing strategies, it is about selling a product.



BLACK PALM

**Could you tell us about your contribution to Friends with Books?**

SC: We will have a Black Palm stand, with some new editions and an "artist" cat calendar. I have two amazing cats, but only one is photogenic... she is a celebrity of her own, so we decided to make a calendar with her. On Saturday 12 at 18:00h we are doing a tableau vivant, "Gradients-Gradients". We are preparing animations, that is a something I have never did before, and music as well. I will act as a director and I also compose the music. We will gather with the artists involved beforehand and then we will present the performance during the fair. It is never 100% prepared because I like to react really intensely on the surrounding.

**But you are both composers, aren't you?**

SC: Indeed. We composed once together, it was for the "Sappho" record.

MM: Yes, but they are separate things. Sonia has her own music project; for example, I am not involved in the making of the tableau vivant.

**Michaela also offers her services of tarot reading for Black Palm. How did it come up?**

MM: It is a private thing that I have been doing for a long time. I started to learn about it and practicing in 1999, and it was a Sonia's idea to sell it on Black Palm.

SC: When I met Michaela, ten years ago, I already knew that she was doing tarot reading. I thought it would be good to offer that knowledge!

MM: You need a lot of practice in tarot reading, especially with people you don't know. With Black Palm I can do it for people I don't know at all, and this is a very interesting aspect of it.

SM: Michaela also hosted a tarot reading session during the closing party when we had the Black Palm "pop-up shop" in ACUD.

**What other services do you offer on Black Palm?**

SC: Etienne Descloux offers his architecture consulting.

MM: He inspects your home and tells you what needs to be changed...

SC: Once the inspection is completed, you receive a brass plate that he will install. We are also planning to make some sort of "guided tour/field trip" in collaboration with an art critic at a Kunsthhaus/residency in the North of Germany, which was the first artist community in Germany. I come from a very close area and I went there when I was a child. The art critic is also an expert of ecology connected to art, so he will have also a speech on that topic as well.





### **What do you think of the state of self-publishing today?**

SC: The self-publishing is the future. For me it is also a way to get our work back in our own hands.

MM: Years ago, it was more made of fanzines and things that you could easily do with a photocopy machine, but now the possibilities are immense. You do not need a big amount of money to make something "professional".

SC: But it is however still tricky to finance smaller editions. Sometimes it is much cheaper to produce en mass. Anyway, I think it is really important to make this way of production more transparent and to know who is involved in it. I feel like people and artists are taking more control over publishing, and thanks to the progress of technologies, the processes are getting more transparent.

MM: I also think that people want to have something physical in their hands, like the vinyl return... it never really disappeared, but it is growing bigger and bigger today.

SC: Materiality and physicality also play a big role in Black Palm. Some artists joining Black Palm also do performances, which is also important for me, because we still own our bodies.

MM: Speaking of "body", I would like to add that the 70% of the artists list in Black Palm are women...

SC: More! It is the 90%, there are only two guys.

### **Is this proportion of female artists just a case or a specific purpose?**

SC: For me it is natural. It is easier for me, nothing more than this.

MM: It didn't start as a female artists' platform. It is also because of a kind of background. We discussed about the fact that until the past few years, only half of the galleries had an equal quota of men and women represented, but usually there were two women and eight men. Since then, the situation has changed, but female artists are still underrepresented by galleries. I would say that the case of Black Palm is a result of this issue.

SC: For me, everything related to Black Palm has to be natural, in the sense of "not pretending anything."

### **What are you reading at the moment?**

SC: I am currently reading a psychology book called "The Betrayal of the Self" by Arno Gruen. It is about how to be and to stay authentic; how much you are doing for the others and for yourself. I usually read many books in parallel and always have a Marvel comic on the side.

MM: I am reading a Jules Verne's book, I have already read ten books by him. I use it for distraction, it is a very entertaining reading.

*You can find Black Palm's stand at Friends with Books, 11-13 December, Hamburger Bahnhof. Black Palm will also host a performance, "Gradients-Gradients", on Saturday 12.11.2015 at 18.00h at the fair.*