

# Fareed Armaly

Artfan 3, 1991

Lately I was in the east

*What east?*

Germany, what used to be DDR and I went to, there is a village, somehow near Karlmarxstadt. There was a local club and on Saturdays for the kids they would make dancefloor, everybody in the village goes there. It was up the street and I thought it would be funny, you know in an ordinary Gasthaus so I went there. It was so weird, the music was heavy metal, commercial heavy metal the thing you get on the radio, there was a dj playing and it was not like these djs on the radio talking, but he was just playing this mix of heavy metal style but weird it was a mix, totally like aggressive. It was in the way aggressive like this is our one night. The girls were standing in groups and the guys were coming up like Hahaha poor women I'm sure they thought: this is what we are up.

It wasn't a nice Heavy metal concert where everybody is into something but it was this „this is our night“.

Then the band came, an east German band and they played again heavy metal, this typical, typical thing, but what they did, that was strange to me, they mixed together Schlager, acapella Schlager, where you just sing these bier songs and everybody knows them, then heavy metal again, and it was so weird you didn't know, who brought this and this and this together.

*Germans are very much in this Chor singing*

klar

What I was interested with the DDR story, when I was doing the idea for the next issue, I was asking people about Neue Deutsche Welle

There was this one moment, they thought was interesting, as they heard popular music in German language, which is a strange thing. But not the only thing, it was also underground which was another strange thing. There is German language, germangermangerman, then stops and then there is this whole period with another kind of music coming in from England and America, now what happens is this Volksmusik. And WDR 4, which is only playing this music now, promotes it like this: only German language music. It's a very strange market.

So you had that notion when German language was such a different sign for the younger people then and now comes back again but in a much different form: it's about Volksmusik, it's about Schlager. If you read a newspaper about what they kept from the east German stations, what programs, it's two, one is more ancient music and the other one is a Volksmusikshow. They keep this shows, they really use it as signs.

I was talking with Diderichsen, Diederich saying that now there is a market which has never been before a strong market of old people that actually buys records, that actually buys music.

*- but there was always this Volksmusik market. They sell more of this music than of any other music*

I would think, but what's interesting, it's funny how the German language question always comes around in terms of culture, young culture. Because you are always listening to an English self. We never had that problem we never had that interest we couldn't even buy German records if we wanted to, 30 Dollars or 40 Dollars if you get them and you couldn't get them anyway and it's funny because then you didn't have that different idea why language, why in German and all this.

That was this year, all these questions coming. I originally wanted to do this three years ago. I thought I would like to do Kraftwerk, i would like to talk to the people of Neue Deutsche Welle I would like to see, when was this thing that we didn't really know in America. And in a way it's interesting to me because it's like, this was somehow a moment, a moment happen and than it's gone. And then there is this music of England and America and then there is again this new scene on Volksmusik.

*-and you think that's a real thing, Volksmusik?*

I think the promotion is real when you do a whole radio station for it.

In Germany as an outsider any time you speak about something that is pro German language, pro German culture, pro German it's always got a problem they don't just do it for nothing and they must have to deal with the problem like promoting too much. I think the criticism of Spex is always that they are talking about other culture than German, it gets its criticism always here from younger people, they say we don't want to read about these bands you can't find and they always criticise it because they don't find something from their own culture and the argument from Spex is based on showing that stuff.

I talked to the Richter class students, Düsseldorf two weeks ago

- *How is Düsseldorf*

The academy or the city

- *The people?*

It has a scene, a much different layout, the academy is interesting if you want to talk to people. Ratinger Hof is closed it's in a moment of change.

But when Josef and Stefan went to visit Thomas Ruff, they went to some places, totally crowded, lots of advertising people if you go to the right club it's totally like in the old days of New York, cocaine, it's completely different world than here.

You always know, this is the advertising city, this is the city for music and economywise totally different.

I was talking to the students, first they asked about Mike Kelly because Dieter had been talking about Mike Kelly before and we got in conversation. It was about subculture. They were saying: you can't imagine, we don't have subculture in Germany and I thought that was you know ok I thought to understand better maybe what Spex was trying to do. But there is always this problem I think this is like to look for subculture like it looks in America. You look for your model on another country and I always argue you can't imagine for America what it is subculture you don't see it the way we see it and also you really can walk to the wrong place, you can really find yourself like where are you suddenly if you don't know your way.

It's different it's not subculture maybe but then again I guess that was this interest for Neue Deutsche Well. Suddenly everybody spoke about the fact they identify with the thing, its language, that's something like identifying with subculture, that would come up with signs and codes. But here in the one thing it is in German language, which is very funny, it's the basic language it's not coming up with its own language, in fact it's actually using the language that you use everyday.

- *In Vienna it came at the same time as punk, and you had to be on one side - there was no relation*

That's what I love about when I do this two issues ROOM and Terminal Zone. My interest was to talk about that it's not the musicians getting up to do any shit (it's not bad when musicians just get up to do shit if they know what they want to do) but there are people who think there is an old history of why they got to this point of a certain decade.

So for the issue of ROOM I took all these people that were not especially underground but were really major hit people Gang of Four, Scritti Politi, Raincoats and then you say you find out that they had this going to art school thing and leaving art school, about wanting to do something in the time when Thatcher came in. That were all these problems in England and then when you done you don't just read about the music you read about the whole story of the whole group, the whole feeling that was around, like what it meant to them when they first saw punk, the idea of doing it yourself but it's never like people were just picking up their instruments.

Andy Gills had a funny interview

- *who is that?*

from Gang of Four

he was in art school but they were making speakers instead of art. So the teacher would come in and say what's this and he didn't want to lie to him and say it was sculpture so he said it was speakers.

That's exactly what we know from everybody, being in art school and saying I can't take this, let's go and get out.

For the people who are reading the first issue and then the second issue, they will find repeats, they will find people mentioned in this one that would come from the first one. I know there is relations I don't want to say it but they all say it.

- *In the first issue I didn't like the comparison between Brecht and Yello Biafra*

- No? I thought it was good to do because of a reason.

- *I really don't like what Yello Biafra is doing*

- But he stood for something. The middle guy, Lenny Bruce was good.

- *I didn't get what that was*

- All those were about, when you are doing something in art and you get in trouble, you get in trouble because you somehow get questioned by the court about what's basically always about America, about what you are allowed to do and what you are not allowed to do. It's not about politics. Brecht is about politics. They say, what do this lyrics mean? It's song it's just a song and they say no, they are coded and he says no, and they can't get it right.

With Lenny Bruce it is because he said things. The court is saying listen you can't laugh about us, if you hear these tapes you can't laugh. That's the court you are not allowed to laugh it's kind of crazy you are going to hear these jokes, but you are not allowed to laugh because it's a court.

The same thing with Yello Biafra. He is there for a very particular thing but basically he is there as a sign and they are trying to accuse the whole music industry.

What I was trying to show: in America this is always something about puritanism, morality and music and that makes no sense. In England it's totally about politics and class, each one makes his own story but this is not just about music ever.

- David Thomas was in the first one and in this one they mention again David Thomas. He saw David Thomas the first time in concert and he thought he is so spontaneous and really great, and then you see him the second time and he does the same thing and then he understands it's a perfect act. It's not bad it's not good it's just an act. And then it really is an industry promoting an idea. It's not so different from trying to discuss art in different terms, so i use music as a way to discuss it.

And of course it's a fanzine too. It's what you like to do, who you want to talk to. It's not an analysis.

And if you want to talk to somebody. I want to meet this guy.

- *That's our problem in Vienna the people we want to talk to never come.*

- But at least in the art scene you know from the shows they come for these days, you can get them. When I went to England to meet everybody, then suddenly we had all the interviews in three days. I have been there for two weeks, but it is only in this three days you had everybody in a row it's totally hard to keep it in mind.

-*How do you feel after the interviews?*

- strange always. I wonder what is on tape? What's funny is when you finally meet the people, who have always experienced in this music production for so long and then you meet this people it's so different and that is so great. I want to show people that really you know they were just talking. George Clinton is a good example. He is totally smart, totally hip, but not in this field of music. He tells you about the music business he tells you about black people. It's very concise and he knows what he is doing, why he is doing it.

For me there is a point I was thinking about whether I would do current day things or wether I mean who wants to read about the eighties?

- *You couldn't imagine if it was to come or if it was past a long time ago.*

- I think that's another strange thing, when thinking about music, I was always thinking about, what do this guys do when it is over? They start at 23. What do they do when it's like five years. We always think everyone disappears and it's finished. It's not.

The final think was when I was talking of the next issue, as an American coming here I have to learn a lot about German history. I didn't know anything about the eighties, so I had to learn about Oehlen Büttner Kippenberger this group, but also about for instance Beuys, because you really don't know much about Beuys in America.

- Here it is so stated.

- In fact that's what I was asking the class, it is a Richter class.

First we talked about for instance Kippenberger and they said Yes we like it, they could tell me why, they could relate to it, at least try to do it, they have a way in. I asked about other people and then I said what about Beuys. Then a really strange silence. It wasn't extreme not a physical silence, no one had anything to say, but not because they didn't like it, as I found out later, but because it's sort of in the programme what to say, and you don't want to say the programme, so you don't say anything.

I said, you like the Kippenberger thing, that attacks on the social, so how come one doesn't do this to Beuys? Even the work itself isn't just one work you can take parts. It wasn't that they weren't interested, but no one ever asks such a question, because like you say, it seems like it's stated, it's finished.

The other point, which to me is very German. When you want to use terms in terms of politics, if you use chauvinism, if you use imperialism, if you use these words, it's coded immediately, as to come from a certain group. It's so peinlich, don't use these words.

It's the same thing to Beuys, it's somehow way of peinlich and you certainly don't want to talk about that. And they know all that, they know these peinlich parts, but there was no discussion. That's the academy in Düsseldorf of all places.

I'm not saying, that one should have Beuys as a matter, I'm saying, why is it missing is a good question. When I say Beuys I don't want to talk about Joseph Beuys, but about why is he untouched. This one and this one is touched. In this class on the other hand they like öhlenbüttnerkippenberger but no one will touch that.

That's the thing that got me back to the story about like maybe what's interesting when you don't hear people talking about something and especially when it's considered pro .

And then that they can't use these terms, in German that's a certain thing you can't do, immediately it's commented and hassled. In English it's absolutely different, we use these terms.

*There is something like this in America, too. In Vienna there was a young artist who comes from New-York, he stayed in Krinzinger downstairs, his name I can't remember but the name he gave himself was Candyass, he used to be an assistant of Richard Prince. His name is somehow polish, anyway, the gallery had a leaflet, an article from a Newyork magazine, a woman had been writing about him and an other guy, they are always showing together, they are working on this gay homosexual thing, like art work for teenage boys. This article was about that you can't put down black people anymore so you choose women another time. So I asked him about the article, I mean it was like the explanation for his work in the gallery, but he was not concerned at all, he just knew too well where it came from.*

This is in a way to say, we don't want to have these terms, because we say, it puts us in a ghetto, it puts us in a cultural margin. Then the conversations is always rotating around the same terms.

When I went to the Richter class I started with a newspaper from the day, because I was actually reading it, I thought the newspaper would be a good start to explain, what it means to be in Europe as an American. You can read the Herald Tribune and than maybe an English one.

*You read the Herald Tribune?*

What other newspaper can you get.

*Once I was sitting in a cafe in Barcelona, and someone I was interested in, sat on another table reading the Herald tribune, so I asked a friend, who that was and he said: He is reading the Herald Tribune must be an idiot or an American.*

Genau, but it's an amazing tradition to be a part of the Herald Tribune.

In a Tati film there is a great scene, when a guy comes in selling Herald Tribune very loud, like a big sign, and in Paris in this time that meant something

*In the Godard film she is also selling Herald Tribune.*

In France of course, that's where their headquarters in Paris are it's really a big deal. Maybe I wanted to work on it for that reason, it's all the new national articles you get in Europe. Herald Tribune is our one kind of resembling fact.

In the Richter class, there were two articles that were really up to date about what's happening, one was about history, the new history in America being written and the other one was about – you know Felix the cat? There is a new book on Felix the cat.

It was a funny combination I wanted to show them first of all, how we would see our stories here, and what's going on there, the newspaper is really strange. It's not a newspaper, it's something else. It's something about how you write history, how to write official history, for this is official histories. And there are not this young left writers, but people from Harvard. And imagine someone from Harvard or Yale saying, writing it officially, they want to combine personal narratives and lies and stories about their uncle and all in one book. This used to be cross, but now they are saying, there is a reason into this, and it should be done, and it's exactly a very old left strategy, a very old critical strategy.

I thought that's very America. It's immediately corrupted but it's also used like somehow they use all the right devices, but end up with the same point. It won't be a critical book, a very good story maybe, interesting in-between things maybe, but the reason you do this book is not to question out of a personal level.

It's exactly the strategy we have been talking ten years ago and now it's becoming like an official strategy. I'm reading about this in the Herald Tribune, something which has really been talked about in left journals from about fifteen years ago. In art discussions in New York.

Then there was this book review of the new Felix the cat book. The author was writing about the two guys, that made Felix the cat, this is the other strange thing about Felix the cat. These are two different people. The one who wrote Felix the cat is total this character you can't imagine, he was spreading syphilis, he was convicted of raping young girls, in jail. On the other hand the illustrator who was a nice guy at home. Felix the cat was never kids comic, but a really heavy adult thing.

The reviewer then complains that the cartoon is homophobic, violent and against women and then he says in the end God protect us from a liberal proved cartoon.

This is liberal, you know, and all this things in America always come up again Oh you being liberal, or you being ... , or come on, it's just jokes, and in the same paper there was one story to really open up history and on the other hand someone writing a book review about what's obviously history and not seeing it.

It's the same world and they are all existing somehow in America, trying to figure out what's the correct way. You only get information like that. Are you liberal, are you this are you that, where is your politics.

*- That was strange about the article too, about the two young artists, someone writes this long article about him, and he was not concerned at all, because he knows where that comes from*

But we have a whole other history in America, of bad boys. This is a subject, not just for Yale culture, the younger generation which comes up is very much, where your fanzine is exactly on key. The real subject lately in the art world has been about the art world, about being a member of the tour of the art world, about hanging out in the art world, about the society that goes around the art world and all these things where Cologne is interesting and you not far from. It's not isolated in Cologne only

*- we are isolated in Vienna*

Ja, but not because of the communications there is more than between Chicago and New York.

It's funny there is this whole other thing – this whole notion of younger ones they just gonna hang out, they gonna be assistants, be part of the scene, and where does the work come in exactly, with somehow not about that? It is about that, and it's even more internal acts, more about hanging out, being part, referring to, it's the society, it's the life style, you talk to other people, and then you suddenly find a strange relation like in these pages. They don't give a shit about what someone writes, they don't have to, because it's not about trying to prove anything, it's not about even caring if they gonna be wrong or right, because in fact the life style stays, sociality stays, all these things stay. It doesn't matter what you get written on, it's just the matter: are you working or not. Next year you are going to work and it's a kind of response that comes out of a lot of bad criticism but there is also this really big badboy thing in America, which has its meanings.

*- But you should have seen him he was so not a bad boy*

That's also very true I think, I'm only telling you what I think, I don't think that they would love to it, I don't want to comment on anybody, that's the problems I have with trying to figure it out, sure you meet this people, they never like that. When you meet really anybody most of the time they are pretty conventional

At the first interview in this number, which is with an old friend of mine, we were talking about friends, and afterwards we tried to make an interview about his work and work, then I had been thinking if I want to leave all of these names in the interview and then I didn't.

That's not wrong, when it's a fanzine people like to have a certain kind of conversation. I think, what I would argue, it's always been going on for years. Everybody knows there is another conversation going on in the art world, do me a favour, show my friend, this guy is the assistant of so and so, look this is the boy friend of so and so, it's always been not based on something other than that. Sometimes you can also talk about work and you can also be valuable or considered valuable on another level. But on the most part everybody gets the relations, looks for so and so, knows so and so, maybe they just hang out, and you know them from hanging out. And so they are present. That's somehow potentially, it's interesting. There can be a time when it's interesting maybe now there is a time when it's interesting, it wasn't for years. So you have places like Friesenwall, which would not have kind of like come together, had there not been some kind of let's say, flow of people, and now there is a reason you say it's so strange form but it comes together because it matches the community it's in, I don't think it can be exported like all over the world or to America, and that's because the situation here is very geared on what around here makes it. And it's how the society is maybe interesting you can actually say you know this fifty people and you know how they are friends and you know how it works and it's all about this who's who and whose relation and whose personalities. And trying to use it in a way that it works with it, not against it, not ignoring it. It's based on that. If this disappears that doesn't disappear, if that disappears maybe this will disappear because you know it needs to have that feeling, and that's where the sociality and all that stuff can be actually interesting, and there is a lot of people coming through from different places and they have art school finished and work. They discover for whatever reasons all different sociality and hanging out, and maybe they want to make something but they don't know why. It's a total different set of priorities and questions. I am not sure if they invented it, it's being this way done, it's kind of the art system out and not the other way round. That's not my own interest but I think there is something going on. And one has to be able to define it therefore the fanzine is something that had to come out now, the philosophy is correct people want to have, they not want to keep track on superstars but they want to know what's going on who is why, who is where and this is more the reason for a fanzine. It's not about qualifying if it's good There is a lot I wouldn't want to tape. But that's another thing about an interview or when you are talking to me, like when you are speaking, you are speaking, you can always take out and everybody knows, this is what I was really angry at with Cash-Flow, I made this interview and I made it on the point, we were going to talk about.

- with Draxler

and I said, do you read the questions or not?

I guess for Austria it's a pretty good project and I liked the project, you really should look at it.

I'm not particularly interested in what point there is in it for Cash-Flow but I'm interested in how we used it because it eventually comes back to the artwork.

- But Cash-Flow is already this weird mixture of art and economics

There is not so much art, I wished there was more that would be to me the thing. A fanzine on economics and art that would be good

They use this little art as basic talk afterwards

- In terms of the project you mean

No generally, this is Cash-Flow patterns

The photos in the first section, the social thing party here, party here. I took them as having more sense, than they do have, they really don't know what to do with this project, they could have probably used it but in fact, any other magazine would promote it and would use it, would turn it, and market it, no they absolutely don't, and that's not an economic thing, an economic magazine would say, oh we use it, so I wonder what kind of magazine it is if they don't know how to use sponsorship.

- a very weak economic magazine

Eben, I read for about twenty times who is the richest Austrian, there is at least four Lauda interviews, I

never knew Nicki Lauda before, who is the top ten richest, but anyway that's normal I think.

but the other thing I like is the Standard, I was invited doing the Standard too.

- *as a newspaper oder was?*

what is there in austria better

- *a better newspaper?*

that wouldn't make it better?

*in fact all newspapers, are going to collapse*

You think so?

*I know*

I thought it's the second selling

- *they don't concentrate, it becomes less and less reliable for the people who were buying it for economics people who bought it for the economics*

what the Cash-Flow

- *the Standard, Standard is an economic newspaper*

no

- *yes, from the daily newspapers it's the only that is concentrated on that. They wanted to make a business class newspaper but you can also get information about all other things but it's basically on economics, it doesn't have a real sport page*

I wondered about that

- *and also about tennis more than about football*

klar

- *and the cultural part is very bad so bourgeois*

well newspapers is a newspaper is a newspaper

you should just change your fanzine to economics and culture

- *then they have some very bad supplements in it you are going to come out in the sunday magazine, in this art pages*

oh is that a sunday

- *ya it's in the extra*

supplement you say, always the other place for us. It's never in the real right place

that's what I was trying to do with Cash-Flow, I was trying to buy my way into the correct part of the place, and you know they weren't so happy, I said, I give you back this pages but I want to move into the right pages and of course they file you like next to the letters, and you know this is this funny jump, that you don't want to be in this art section

- *and the advertisement in texte zur kunst*

this for the Standard and Cash-Flow?

It's everything I liked to talk about in this project because i thought this was a good point you know they say it's called the message is the medium and what I wanted to sort of bring back is the real message is we get this pages and you don't. This is a very important point to say about the freedom the artist has to do work wherever they want to say we get two pages every month and that's if you look at the prices, what we are getting.

- *is it in hundreds or in thousands?*

Auflage? It's in thousands

This is what we are doing, we are comparing the Seitenpreise. We are going to add value to this pages but at the same time we are looking at things that cost. A Cash-Flow page is some thousand marks and we are playing with this thing. I don't say we are guilty. I just say this is the relation and when I just talk we get this subjects on page. The point is we are working in a system we are invited to this things, to this project and

this is the message too. We appear inside of these magazines but how come?

- *this is not going to appear in the Cash-Flow*

in the final- final one that comes out ? I think it's the poster that comes out. Ja, it's a poster. I didn't make it, you saw it, when you go to Nagel you see it, on the door. Somebody wrote- for it is for the world expo- cancelled on there. Because at that time they thought there would be this world expo

- *and you are all friends?*

I don't know Steven Prina

- *and you didn't go to the exhibition either*

Actually I even stood next to him but I didn't meet him and noone introduced me, but the rest I know, we actually seem to be on a list for a lot of things. People think this could go together and they always come with the same we are either from New York or mostly Cologne

- *How old is Thomas Locher?*

thirty and something

- *I thought he is a little bit older. Do you have the Fraser video?*

No, the gallery has it, but they might have taken it but they have an index here

- *we haven't seen it,*

but you reviewed it anyway

- *we read the script*

you have to see it, it's so much different

- *we wanted to print it, it appeared in Durch but that's so expensive, but we didn't dare to print it*

You should have made photocopies

- *We said, this Durch is interesting for that, the others you don't have to buy*

I saw the piece in Graz, when she did the presentation of the video and it's funny it's difficult she has the video is in English and you had to read the catalogue, I wondered most of German people must have problems not awful problems but it's good they have the script to read, to get it more that way I think to see the video, you really have to listen to get these jokes, language play, you should see the video, I guess they have it

- *Do you know why they put her here? (Claudia Schiffer poster in Friesenwall)*

They have a certain sense of humour

To make it more friendly