

‘Hungary extended’, Funzine

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It is the country with the most Nobel Prize holders in the whole world and a Guinness World Record in preparing the biggest egg sunny side up: 10.005.000 inhabitants, a history of more than 1000 years, a member of the European Union, the NATO, the OECD and a Schengen state. We can cite a whole lot of more facts about Hungary, but a new approach is needed when it comes to describing the country's cultural identity. After an idea of a Dutch designer, a team of young visual authors created a Subjective Atlas of Hungary to collect the different visions of Hungary as it is today.

Sometimes it is the huge range of breaded food or the characteristic embroidering on a tablecloth, which describes best what Hungary is special for. Other than that, everyone who is bound to Hungary – whether emotionally or physically – has his memories and an individual history connecting him to the country. The Subjective Atlas of Hungary includes all these ideas and stories. It is innovative and traditional, humorous and determined, true and absolutely subjective – and all that at the same time. The volume was just presented at the last WAMP market on August 14th and is published by HVG Books and Kitchen Budapest. Latter is a 'new media lab', as the organizers call it, which opened in June 2007. Sponsored by Magyar Telekom, it features workspaces, a gallery, a conference room and, of

course, a kitchen, so the young designers, photographers and artists coming there can realize their creative projects. In 2010 the organizers of Kitchen published an open call on their website to search for 50 young Hungarian artists, photographers and other creatives to take part in the project of creating a subjective publication about Hungary.

The idea of the book came from Annelys de Vet, a Dutch designer who already created five subjective atlases beforehand: of the EU from an Estonian point of view, of the Netherlands, Palestine, Serbia and Mexico. When she was invited by Kitchen Budapest to make a Hungarian edition, she gladly agreed, being aware of the discussions the media law fueled at that time and knowing about the difficulty to separate nationalism from cultural identity. But not only does the Subjective Atlas of Hungary indeed contain all kinds of different points of view and opinions, it also succeeds to draw a loving, ironic picture of this beautiful country, without even a hint of extremism. This book doesn't tell you what to think about Hungary, but simply presents what 50 creative young Hungarians appreciate and criticize about their home country. As Annelys de Vet says herself, "this book does not tell the story of Hungary but an extensive collection of them".

If you flip through the volume you notice, how personal the content gets at certain points. This already starts at the beginning of the atlas, where the contributors paint their very own maps of Hungary. Some of the artists remember the old times before the Treaty of Trianon of 1920, when Hungary was three times as big as it is now. Petra Polányi, for example, shows her interpretation of Hungary's old and new borders in her work "Swallow it?". The old national borders from before the treaty are made out of tomato sauce, while the current Hungarian map is made of alphabet shaped noodles. The ambiguity of the work makes it super interesting to have more than one closer look at it. A similarly personal point of view is presented us by Roland Korponovics with his work "People we don't want to see". It shows photographs of people, most of them probably homeless, sleeping or offering things for sale in the metro subway. But instead of looking away from those people, Roland faces himself with their fate: "I always try to look into their eyes and smile. It might make it easier for them to survive the moment."

Another artist, painter Judit Navratil, describes the city area surrounding her in "The Hood". A part of the painting is also featured on the book cover. It shows a quarter of Budapest, painted from above in a sweet and detailed style. We can look inside the houses and read descriptions of certain scenes written by the artist herself. Works like that – and like all the works in the Subjective Atlas of Hungary – are prompting the reader to think about his surroundings as well, to think about Hungary or whatever he calls his home country. With a volume like that full of incredibly refreshing ideas, it is certainly not hard to get inspired. Those with a

personal connection towards Hungary and each and everyone, who has ideas, dreams or knowledge related to the country will definitely love this book

The Subjective Atlas of Hungary comes with texts in Hungarian and English.