

STEFAN NIKOLAEV

Riding The Gravy Plane 2005

“All aboard. The Gravy Plane is an artwork by Stefan Nikolaev that offers you the one and only chance to take a “smokers only” cross-Atlantic flight. With your ticket you will receive an artwork by the artist and the chance to smoke at altitude on a flight from New York to Europe. To receive all the information you need and dates of departure please email us at: thegravyplane@noos.fr

The Gravy Plane: an artwork, an expression of freedom in a world gone mad or the ride of your life. This is your chance to decide.”

(Paul O'Neill for the poster announcement of The Gravy Plane Project)

Riding the Gravy Plane was a project I submitted to Jennifer Flay and Martin Bethenod, directors of the 2005 Fiac art fair in Paris.

The proposal was to make an edition of an artwork that will act as a flying ticket for an Airbus A320 flight from JFK to CDG airport. The main difference with any other regular flight between New York and Paris was the possibility to smoke anywhere onboard of the flight “except at takeoff and landing” (as was the case in the past until early 80s). On the whole, a flight backwards to times of casual collective unconsciousness and cheap luxury that was somehow supposed to make time fly beautifully.

It also had the practical advantage of “attracting” more American collectors, art critics, museum directors... to reach the Fiac (a constant concern of French private and public art event organizers).

The reply of the Fiac directors (here attached, french and english version) was extremely positive. They were ready to collaborate and show the work in a special booth at the fair, offer a VIP treatment and passes to all of the participating persons in the project, etc...Following those optimistic beginnings, the project did involve a team including a NY based lawyer and partners and a Paris based team working on the funding of the project, a figure that amounted to approximately 150 000€ for the flight of 100 passengers.

Unfortunately, the outcome was that eventually the American authorities were totally unwilling to let takeoff or land a smoking flight on US territory.

Two posters were produced to advertise the project (reproductions hereby attached).

S.N

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FIAC 2005:
Paris, 6-10 Octobre 2005

Monsieur Stefan Nikolaev
47, Boulevard St Jacques
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Paris, le 28 juin 2005

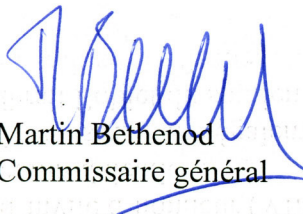
Cher Stefan,

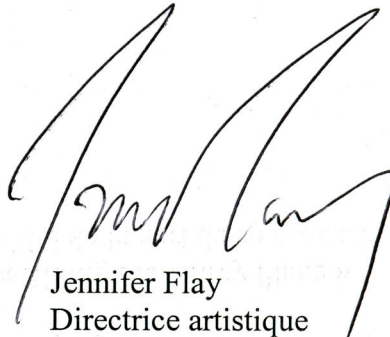
Nous tenons à vous confirmer tout l'intérêt que nous portons à votre projet « Riding the Gravy Plane » et notre souhait de voir ce projet associé à la prochaine édition de la FIAC. Nous serions, à ce titre, notamment intéressés que puisse être présenté, dans un espace à déterminer, le matériel (documentation, vidéo, multiples....) constitué à son occasion. Nous serions également favorables à ce que les passager du vol soient bénéficiaires de notre carte d'invité d'honneur (VIP), et prêts à faire bénéficier l'ensemble du projet de nos outils de communication.

Je vous rappelle également que, dans l'hypothèse où le projet « Riding the Gravy Plane » ferait l'objet du soutien d'une compagnie de tabacs, toute visibilité de la part de ce sponsor devrait se conformer strictement à la réglementation en vigueur.

Dans l'attente du plaisir de vous revoir, nous vous prions de croire, cher Stefan, à l'assurance de nos sentiments les plus amicaux.

Amicalement, et ... bon vol !


Martin Bethenod
Commissaire général


Jennifer Flay
Directrice artistique

Paris, June 28, 2005

Dear Stefan

We are most interested in your project "Riding the Gravy Plane", and are very keen to see it associated with the next FIAC. In this regard, we would be interested to have the material (documentation, video, multiples...) put together for its exhibition presented in a space to be decided upon. We would also be in favour of the passengers on the flight having our VIP card; and we are prepared for the entire project to take full advantage of our communication tools. May I also remind you that, on the hypothesis that the project "Riding the Gravy Plane" would be backed by a tobacco company, all visibility on the part of this sponsor should comply strictly with the rules and regulations in effect. Looking forward to seeing you again.

Best regards

Martin Bethenod
Jennifer Flay

Fiac directors reply letter.
Translation Simon Pleasance