I Like You and You Like Me
A three-day project at Orchard
Dec. 29–31, 2006
Hours: 10 am – 6pm

Characters/Roles:
Artist: Rafał Betlejewski (Betlej)
Curator: Barbara Piwowarska

A curator meets an artist. The curator happens to be a WOMAN and the artist turns out to be a MAN. The WOMAN curator is married and the MAN artist has a family with two children. Curator and artist begin working together on projects. Instantly they discover that they like one another, even maybe beyond the formal professional relationship. The fact of their mutual interest is obviously inappropriate and exploring it on a personal level is absolutely forbidden. They decide to turn that relation (perhaps one they only imagine) into a piece for an exhibition. The project begins on a day when this idea is being related to the curator's and artist's spouses, as well as to other people. For the two parties involved it leaves behind comfortable space, *the space of banal hypocrisy*. From that moment on, all their reactions in regards to the project become the substance of the experiment. But where does it end? The artist and the curator set a limit: they will enter the gallery space for three days. Three days that will put the once intimate curator-artist relation to the test: what is it, was it worthwhile, will it obstruct their future work, will it influence their lives beyond the point of no return — or will it be just another gimmick? Was the truth important for its own sake or was it the corrupting force of the public eye that made them do it? And finally, how what we call 'private life' and the middle-class standards attached to it influence (limit or enrich) the freedom of artistic expression? Is the artist still a question put to society or is he/she just another member of the establishment earning his/her money in a different profession? The gallery space will be a laboratory of the space between MAN and WOMAN, the artist and the curator. One may associate the project

with Mircea Cantor's film *Departure* (2004) and Joseph Beuys' action *I Like America and America Likes Me* (1974). Who becomes the wolf, deer or coyote is as yet unknown.

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Rafał Betlejewski (Betlej), born in Gdańsk 1969, lives and works in Warsaw.
Enterpreneur, specialised in marketing and brand strategies, activist, author of social and artistic projects in non-artistic spaces, including: *Here and Now* in Zielona Góra 2001, *Burn your Shame* in Warsaw 2002–2004, *I prefer Poland* 2002, *Unfinished* in Konin 2004, a poster campaign on the occasion of the anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising, *Would you go as well?* 2004, stickers *Sorry, Water* 2005, virus *Euro AGD* 2005, *Milk – Order The Theater by The Phone* in TR Warszawa 2005, *Workshops in Constructing the Self* (as Father, Manager, Writer) in the framework of the Mobile Academy Warsaw 2006. Since 2006 he has been running the project *Everyday Life Theatre* in public spaces, examining the the border between true and false, turning his task to elaborating technologies for constructing identity through unmasking the mental and material props used by people for this purpose. The actor-director first appears in the title role of a character he is attempting to make as realistic and convincing as possible, then unmasks the illusion created by brutally negating it. Before an oblivious, astonished audience who think they are discovering the truth, the actor constructs another illusion, with himself as the director of a fleeting theater which in cunning fashion leads to an investment of the space in which the presentation is taking place. By unmasking his borrowed identity, he

introduces a further artificial identity, the illusion of which is, for the spectator, significantly more powerful. The dénouement depends on the gradual unmasking of the second illusion in the hours and days after the performance, after leaving the space where it took place. In his work Betlej examines the social oppression of given roles, mystification and contemporary identity understood as a contemporary *ready-made*.

Barbara Piwowarska, born in Warsaw 1976. Art historian, curator and art critic, interested in avant-garde, post-avant-garde and contemporary artistic strategies. In 2001-2002 she was a recipient of a fellowship at The Museum of Modern Art in New York granted by The Kościuszko Foundation, where she worked on the exhibition *The Russian Avant-Garde Book 1910–1934* in collaboration with the Judith Rothchild Foundation. She has worked with IPCNY in New York; the Zachęta National Gallery, Center for Contemporary Art Zamek Ujazdowski, and the Batory Foundation in Warsaw; Krzysztofory Gallery, Cricoteka, and the Starmach Gallery in Cracow; and has co-run the exhibition program at the Adam Mickiewicz Institute in Warsaw, including shows at Kunsthalle Wien, the Hilger and Charim Galleries in Vienna, and the Kulturzentrum bei den Minoriten Galleries in Graz; in 2000 she curated *Similarity* (in collaboration with Hilger Gallery) at the Austrian Culture Forum in New York. In 2005 she published *Kolekcjonowanie Świata: Jadwiga Maziarska: Listy i szkice* (*Collecting The World: Jadwiga Maziarska, Letters and Sketches*) a book on the work of Jadwiga Maziarska, an artist of the avant-garde Cracovian Group) and the problem of the collection, the archive, and storage in art and artists' self-interpretations. She is the author of numerous publications and reviews in art magazines: *Praesens*, *Obieg*, *Art in America*, *Art Margins*, *Orońsko*, *Opcje*, *Sekcja*, *Latarnik*; the newspapers *Nowy Dziennik* (the Polish daily news in New York), *Ozon*, and *A4*. She has also been a contributor to several exhibition catalogues. Since 2006 she has worked for the Mobile Academy Warsaw/TR Warszawa (*Ghosts, Spectres, Phantoms and The Places Where They Live*) and co-organized the *Blackmarket for Useful Knowledge and*

Non-Knowledge, a project-installation of lectures and performances by 66 "experts" (including artists, critics and scholars).

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Orchard is located between Hester and Grand St.
F train to East Broadway or B, D to Grand
Gallery Hours: Thurs-Sun 1 to 6 pm