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VICTORY OVER HORSESHIT

In our late teens, sometimes in the beginning of the 70s, me and a friend of mine decided to resign from the nation of Finland, and from all other nations while we were at it. To make it official, we went to the register office, where an official explained to us in a friendly manner that we did not meet the qualifications for receiving an alien's passport. You don't just go around resigning from nations. What is their purpose?

A nation is meant to protect rights and preserve justice. But which rights, and whose? What brand of justice? History reminds us of the communal movement created in France in 1871 by workers and anarchists, with the most significant commune established in Paris. The communes demanded a reorganization of the entire society according to the commune system, distribution of government and applying the cooperative principle in production ownership. In less than three months, the communes were destroyed with the help of the French Republican army and Bismarck's troops. The number of victims, unarmed men, women and children alone, reached tens of thousands.

The principles of the freedom and judicial relationships between individuals and governments have been studied diversely through art. In the

mid-80s, an artist from Finland's Ostrobothnia region declares his lot an independent nation in the *Taide* magazine. Nomad Territories, a nation without territory or government, grants passports to its artist friends through consuls in various countries. In 1974, Norwegian-Swedish artist Kjartan Slettemark designs himself a passport with a picture of Richard Nixon, the U.S. president at the time, enhanced with the artist's long hair and beard. Slettemark travels to several countries with the passport without being caught. Two artists from the communist Eastern Europe traded passports with each other on their journey to the West. The prank resulted in a prison sentence of six years for both of them. The insignia of nations, flags, stamps and money, have probably been made by several artists; in Finland, for example, Ilkka-Juhani Takalo-Eskola has printed "money without exchange value".

Art has also had an effect on a more general social level. For the situationists revolution was art, and art revolution. In the Paris Spring of 1968, the situationists led the way to a revolution of everyday life, a surreal virus which infected everyone. Public transport did not work for three months, and no one showed up at work for three weeks.

George Maciunas, the organizer of the Fluxus Group, created an artist town out of nothing in the Soho district of New York in the 1960s. He



"White Man Passes by the White House"

bought entire industrial buildings, 27 in total. They became cooperative "Flux houses", which were renovated and sold to artists, filmmakers, dancers, designers, architects, etc. for close to cost price. Among other things, this ensued a game of cat and mouse with the legal department of the state of New York, which took an interest in the business transactions which were mainly conducted in cash. Simultaneously, at the other edge of the continent in San Francisco, the flower generation settled into the Haight Ashbury district. The New Age movement, among other things, started there, as well as the ecological movement amid the carnivalized, LSD-driven way of life. Within a few years the area became quite exotic. With the assistance of the CIA and media, the activities in the area soon led to disaster.

Hippies, as a part of the countercultural movement of Denmark, declared a part of downtown Copenhagen, the Christiania district, which the Danish military had abandoned, a free state in 1971. Although its existence has been threatened, it is still in operation. The residents of Christiania govern their own district and draft their own rules, compensate the city of Copenhagen for the water and electricity, but do not pay taxes, for instance. Some 1.000 people live permanently in Christiania. When East Germany ceased to exist, artists, political activists and other misfits of society took over more than 6.000 buildings in East Berlin: factories, dairies,

bakeries and so on. Only few of them still exist. Recently, I participated in founding the International Association of Performance Art Organizers in Germany. The organization has no board or office. It is based on voluntary cooperation, and operates in various countries (www.iapao.net).

In addition to the approaches presented earlier, leading a life that maintains the freedom of art and legitimizes it has been attempted in the form of religion...The "mad monk" of Millbrook manor, Arthur Kleps, founded the Neo-American Boohoo Church in 1966. The Boohoos claimed that their use of LSD was sacramental, similar to the peyote rituals practiced by Native Americans, and should therefore be protected under law. The church lost their case in court when the judge ruled that its theme song, "Row, Row, Row Your Boat", was not serious enough. The bible of the Boohoo Church consisted of comics, "true or false"-tests and liturgical content along the lines of "How to conduct a sitting of maximal mind loss" and "The bombing and destroying of planet Saturn". The motto of the church: "Victory over horseshit".

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