

# CIMAM 2011 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

MODERNA GALERIJA LJUBLJANA | MUZEJ SUVREMENE UMJETNOSTI ZAGREB | ARS AEVI SARAJEVO  
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## MUSEUMS AND THE CITY

14 – 17 NOVEMBER, 2011 – LJUBLJANA, ZAGREB, SARAJEVO

Moderna galerija Ljubljana, Muzej suvremene umjetnosti MSU Zagreb and Ars Aevi  
Sarajevo

*CIMAM 2011 Annual Conference 'Museums and the City' 14 –17 November, 2011 – Moderna galerija Ljubljana, Muzej suvremene umjetnosti MSU Zagreb and Ars Aevi, Museum of Contemporary Art Sarajevo – Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia – Herzegovina. A three-day conference examining these three cities as special case studies that are both interesting in themselves and in many ways comparable to other places in the world. [Published on the occasion of the 2011 CIMAM Annual Meeting 14 –17 November, 2011 – Moderna galerija Ljubljana, Muzej suvremene umjetnosti MSU Zagreb and Ars Aevi, Museum of Contemporary Art Sarajevo – Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia – Herzegovina]; texts edited by Josephine Watson; sessions transcribed by Mireia Bartels; publication coordinated by Inés Jover. The video recordings can be found at [www.cimam.org](http://www.cimam.org).*

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## **WELCOMING REMARKS**

Dr. Boštjan Žekš, Minister for Culture, Republic of Slovenia

Ladies and gentlemen, there are certain rules here which I do not understand; therefore, I will speak Slovenian. And the lady here will translate. I shall be brief but you will have a rare opportunity to learn a few Slovenian words.

Ladies and gentlemen, may I welcome you most cordially here to this lovely conference in Ljubljana. You are still a young organisation, twelve or thirteen years old if I'm not mistaken, and although you are dealing with problems and questions that are not new, you are introducing something new into them, especially in the area of art and culture.

I'm very pleased that you have made the decision to hold this conference in Ljubljana, in Zagreb and Sarajevo. In the past these various nations have lived together although, due to some historic events that we will not discuss here, we sort of broke up and are no longer living together. We come together now, however, to speak about questions that are common to us all in various areas in the field of art and culture.

For us here in Slovenia, holding this conference is very important, because it is a mark of recognition for our country. In this regard, I should really like to commend the director of the Moderna galerija, Ms. Zdenka Badovinac, who in fact plays a triple role as director of the Moderna galerija, head of this organising board, and chief organiser and president of your organisation. I must say I'm always happy to see somebody perform three jobs for the same pay!

As I was saying, this conference is important for Slovenia, and your presence is important, because to us it means a connection with the rest of the world. Our country still faces a few problems. After obtaining our independence twenty years ago and creating a new state, a new country, we have moved from a closed system to a more open system. We no longer have any borders, and yet I believe that we are still afraid of crossing borders. Another problem we face is that there are obviously quite a few areas that are still under the domain of the state, such as culture, art, science (science is my own area of work) and education, all of which are financed by the state that is responsible for culture, science and also taxes.

In case I have not made myself clear enough in Slovenian, I will repeat what I've said in English: people here in Slovenia believe that it is right for the government to finance culture, sport, science and everything and yet they want to pay as little tax as possible, which doesn't work. As a result, there is no private investment in culture, science and the like.

This afternoon you will be visiting several cultural institutions, which will be a good opportunity for you to see that Ljubljana is indeed a city of culture and is also apposite to the theme, the topic, of the conference, 'Museums and the City'. You will also be visiting the new gallery, the new museum, which will be inaugurated shortly. I do hope you will like it or, let's put it otherwise, you will have to like it! Thank you.

## WELCOMING REMARKS

Zdenka Badovinac, President of CIMAM, Director Moderna galerija, Ljubljana

Dear colleagues, CIMAM members, Minister Žekš,

Welcome. It is a great honour for me to be one of the hosts of this year's CIMAM conference. My colleagues from Zagreb—Tihomir Milovac and Snježana Pintarić—and I are delighted that the annual conference is at last being held in our region.

The theme of conference, 'Museums and the City', concerns not only the working conditions for museums in the host cities of Ljubljana, Zagreb, and Sarajevo; it also opens a debate about how the museum should function in the city of today, which has lost its traditional population and doesn't know exactly who it belongs to. How can the museum escape the pressures of politics and economics? How can it enter into global dialogues as an equal partner and resist the various hegemonic positions of knowledge? How does the museum contribute to the *polis* as a space of commonality? At least one answer springs to mind right away: there is power in unity, in the unity of city residents who share similar urgencies.

The topic 'Museums and the City' raises questions about how the museum communicates with its own local community and how it communicates within the global city. Working in the global city should mean not only the universalisation of museum work standards, but also the recognition of different kinds of institutional models that are better suited to the specific conditions they face. In areas where there are undernourished infrastructures and still unconstructed histories of the local tradition, it does not seem wise to invest more in extravagant buildings than you do in knowledge. In the former Yugoslavia, the years that followed the collapse of the common state and the ensuing wars meant more difficult working conditions for our museums, but this also compelled us to look for alternative and more creative ways to operate. In this effort, the synergies between different groups in the cities played a decisive role. This was true not only in the former Yugoslavia, but also in other countries where, after the collapse of Communism, opportunities appeared for creating stronger international ties, which were followed—although not at the same speed—by the development of an art system and its infrastructure. In the Balkan region, in areas where there were no adequate museums, the artists themselves often took the initiative to fill the gap. In Sofia, for instance, Nedko Solakov and a group of artists and curators launched an entire platform for contemporary art; in Bucharest, it was Dan and Lia Perjovschi; in Tirana, Edi Rama, a painter who became the mayor, had the entire city painted, so that it became, in its own way, a work of art. Recently, in Prishtina, the artist Erzen Shkololli became the director of the National Gallery. In Ljubljana and Zagreb, where there exists a significant tradition of art museums, the museums have forged ties with artists as well as with smaller, more flexible spaces, to create new platforms for contemporary art. These common work platforms are in many cases

the only way to resist inert policies, new forms of ideological pressure, and the ever-increasing privatisation of the public sphere. The NSK art collective's experience with their own economic systems, as well as the self-organised operating methods the members developed in Ljubljana in the eighties, helped the curators of the Moderna galerija, at the start of the nineties, to transform a Socialist museum into an institution whose model today represents a kind of 'museum in the expanded field'. Think of this as an expanded infrastructure for networking on the local, regional, and international levels. In creating such collaborative associations, various formal and informal platforms have been developed, based roughly on three main priorities: to historicise Eastern European art, to historicize Yugoslavian art, and to find alternative models of collaboration on the international level. Today, the Moderna galerija is part of a network of five European museums and archives—which also includes the Július Koller Society in Bratislava, the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA), the Van Abbemuseum (VAM) in Eindhoven, and the Museum van Hedendaagse (M HKA) in Antwerp—a network that combines the representational and the performative aspects of the museum. A joint exhibition by these five institutions, entitled *The Museum of Affects*, is the opening show at the Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova. This new museum operates as part of the same institution as the Moderna galerija; this afternoon you will have a chance to see it before its official opening. You will also be visiting other spaces this afternoon that operate as self-organised entities in the spirit of the local tradition. In Slovenia, self-organisation has served, among other things, as an important corrective to the dominant methods of organising the cultural and educational spheres. For example, art history and art academy students can attend lectures in theory at the Workers-Punk University—lectures they wouldn't normally hear in their regular studies. The artist-run P74 Centre, meanwhile, is an important space for institutional critique.

The experience of belonging to a collective body—which is something we all had during the Socialist period—today adds a specific imprint to various operating methods on the local level. At the same time, it presents itself for consideration in the new forms of collaboration that are trying to become an alternative to the networks dictated by global capital.

Before I give the floor to my Zagreb colleague Tihomir Milovac, let me in conclusion say a word of thanks to everyone who has helped us realise this conference.

I wish to express my gratitude especially to Snježana Pintarič and Tihomir Milovac, the Director and Deputy Director of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb; to Enver Hadziomerspahić and Amila Ramović, the Director General and Executive Director of the Ars Aevi International Project in Sarajevo, and Dunja Blažević, the Director of SCCA Sarajevo; and to my colleagues at the Moderna galerija Ljubljana. Without their help, this gathering could not have taken place.



I would also like to thank the Erste Foundation for their trust and support, as well as the Getty Foundation and the Fundación Cisneros/Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros for the twenty-four grants they provided to support professionals from lower- and middle-income countries who are participating in this year's conference.

Finally, we are all very grateful to Pilar Cortada, CIMAM's Executive Director, for her dedicated commitment to making this conference a reality.

## **WELCOMING REMARKS**

Tihomir Milovac, Senior Curator Muzej suvremene umjetnosti, Zagreb

Dear Minister, dear colleagues and conference participants. On behalf of the Museum of Contemporary Art of Zagreb, as the host of the Zagreb part of the conference I wish you a pleasant and fruitful stay. I shall be brief in order to leave time to Renata Salecl.

Today, impressively, museums continue to exist in the context and tissue of cities. If we agree that the city is a public space that we all share and that belongs to us all, we should be prepared to accept the existence of the museum in similar terms. Museums are no longer places for the elites to cherish the void, and yet they are not places for feeling the emptiness of the world either. In our age, the function of museums is not limited to embodying memory. In fact, they play a much more important role as a platform for generating new ideas.

I recently heard a young activist commenting on the global crisis, who said, 'The fact is that we have different perceptions of the economic crisis. The crisis is felt by those who planned financial profit. For the others, there is no crisis'.

As public institutions, museums are not profit-making places. While the pressure of capital could standardise museums as profit-oriented companies, it could also weaken the chief role played by museums, i.e., the development of culture. Contemporary society is shaped by the relations between the media, politics and economics, processes in which the presence of culture and art is rather weak. In our opinion, it is obvious that museums should contribute increasingly to the quality of public space, and come up with adequate answers to our ever challenging social and political dynamics.

We hope that the conference programme we have prepared will meet most of your expectations and that it will increase your interest in museums and the art community in this part of the world. Thank you.

## **KEYNOTE I - *Art between Violence and Identification***

**RENATA SALECL**

We are living in times in which everything is changing pretty much on a daily basis.

How do we react to this crisis? Well, with enormous anxiety. The media has been discussing almost every minute what other catastrophes we might still experience. We're also anxious about what kinds of changes we are really undergoing, the uncertainty of what is happening now and of what can possibly happen in the future. Where we are heading as a society as a whole has played a particularly significant role in the domain of art. Today it is very hard to determine what is art and what isn't. At the society level it's also hard to distinguish what are actual political events and what are only semblances of events, sort of performances that look like events.

Recently walking down a street in New York, for example, I was observing a line of people obviously demonstrating against something; they were all dressed in black and shouting something that I couldn't understand, so my first question was: is this a political demonstration? Then I thought, 'Maybe they're part of the Occupy Museums group which has just been formed', because everyone was dressed in black and usually people in the art world dress in black. (We all look the same wherever we travel, I'm dressed in black too!) Then I thought, 'Oh, but it's also Halloween'. So I was pondering three completely different events which could have been represented by those people marching on the streets.

In philosophy, the question of what is an event and what is just a semblance of an event has existed for a long time. French philosopher Alain Badiou, for example, perceives events as ruptures, as moments when something radically shifts and old interpretations cease to exist, such as happens, for example, in revolution and in love. In these situations we are given new and even completely different hopes for the future.

Alain Badiou pointed out that it is very difficult to distinguish between what is real and what is a semblance. He came up with a provocative thesis, according to which the real, as it is perceived in its absolute contingency, is never real enough and in some way could be perceived as being just a semblance. He also stated that the passion for the real is always necessarily a suspicion, and that nothing can in fact declare that what is real is real, only a system of fiction that displays the role of the real.

This dilemma of what is real and what is a semblance was not long ago in a rather amusing way raised in America. One day, a giant Lego man appeared on the shore of a beach in Florida. This was quite a shock for the village. The first question that emerged was whether it were perhaps a lost treasure from a ship transporting Lego men from one Lego land to another, and therefore who might be the owner

of this forgotten piece. The second question that emerged was 'Is this a form of pollution?' So there was a huge debate when the Lego man was found of whether it were an act of violence, because there are strict laws that forbid depositing plastic on beaches, and this was a giant plastic figure.

The Lego man was huge and became a source of great enjoyment for those who found him. The third idea that emerged was that the Lego man might actually be a work of art. When all those debates were going on, the local sheriff decided to arrest the Lego man and put him in temporary confinement, in an undisclosed location. It immediately sounded as if a new Guantanamo prison had emerged in which Lego men would be deposited, and of course that very same day a new Internet site was created, Free Lego Man and Facebook started a Free Lego Man campaign. The sheriff said that he would keep the Lego man for ninety days at the most in this undisclosed location until its owner claimed it back. Otherwise the person who had found would be allowed to take it home. That's the law.

The puzzling thing about this Lego man was what was written in front of it, 'No Real Than You Are'. On the back was the name 'Ego Leonard'. Some journalists quickly looked on Google for the information who Ego Leonard might be. They discovered that the owner of the Internet site called egoleonard was the Dutch guerrilla artist Leon Kerr. The journalists then called Leon Kerr, asked him if he was the owner of the Internet site and whether he was behind this whole idea.

Leon Kerr said 'For years I have been close friends with Ego, together we have made some amazing journeys. He asked me to create this website and I did'. Leon Kerr also said that he was worried whether Ego would get too much publicity. He declared, 'For such a person as Ego, who just wants to bring some peace and happiness to the world, it's not good that all the newspapers are now writing about him'.

Following more research into this problem, the journalists learnt that very soon in the same town there would be a huge Chalk Festival, at which artists would be painting very interesting things on pavements, that would fool the eye and have surprising depth and perception. It was also discovered that Leon Kerr had been a famous chalk artist for some time. Last year he won the second prize for his *Alice in Wonderland* painting and this year he submitted a sketch for a painting that features Lego figures.

The mysterious Lego man opened up a variety of questions about the real and the semblance. In the first place, the figure is already a semblance of a human being. Secondly, the giant Lego seemed to be a semblance of Lego toys, which is why the Lego company wasn't too happy about its appearance. Thirdly, the Lego man raised the question about what is art and what is just a joke; surprisingly, as soon as the Lego man was actually linked to art, all anxiety over its appearance was appeased.

When the Dutch artist said he and Ego had been friends for years, he raised yet another problem concerning semblance. Ego is a spoof we create in our daily lives. The relationship between the subject and the ego is a relationship between the real and the semblance. Sometimes we're friends with our ego, sometimes we're not, but what is sure is that we have made some amazing journeys together, even though egos are often washed away and get quickly broken. But the depositing of the Lego man on a public beach also made people consider whether a beach could become an art space without there existing a previous agreement with the municipality. Paradoxically, the prison cell into which the Lego man was placed also became a temporary museum, since images of him were suddenly distributed all over the place.

The question of the role that the gallery space plays in today's world and what can be perceived as art was at the same time being played out in New York, to be precise in Microscope Gallery in Brooklyn, where a woman had decided to give birth. In the last weeks of her pregnancy, Marnie Kotak, a performance artist, occupied the art gallery, which she decorated with memorabilia from her relationship with her husband in connection with her future child and future expectations about motherhood. She said that she wanted to show that giving birth today could be perceived as the highest form of art.

At 10.17 on Tuesday, 28 October she treated a crowd of about twenty gallery visitors to her new creation. The atmosphere inside the gallery was magical, wrote blogger Katerina. Another blogger said that all participants were deeply moved by this emotional, raw, true piece of art.

Everyone was extremely helpful. Another blogger said, 'There is a history of people who will do stuff like this in an art gallery. This guy shot a dog in a gallery. This guy shot someone else in an art gallery. But this wasn't someone being hurt, this was actually a positive thing. While some people agree that giving birth in an art gallery can be perceived as a work of art, others objected that it can be taken as a form of violence, especially violence towards the future child'.

A child too can be perceived as a work of art. When my son was a tiny baby I remember walking down a street of shops in Ljubljana when a famous Slovenian artist stopped, looked at the baby and said 'Wow, you have produced a work of art!' I was surprised but he said, 'Yes, this is your genetic sculpture'. Marnie Kotak decided that she would continue with these performances, and she announced her next performance work of art, which is called 'Raising Baby X'.

What is perceived as art and what not has always formed a part of the prevailing ideology in society. Over the last decades we have witnessed important changes in ideology, as well as in perception of subjectivity. The ideology of post-industrial capitalism, for instance, relied highly on the idea of choice. In this ideology, the

subject has been perceived as a self-creator, as someone who can become whatever he or she wants to be. Often life has been perceived as a work of art; occasionally as a kind of corporation, a business project: we make plans about our future, we plan how to look, we make all kinds of emotional investments in our children, our relationships, etc., as if we were adopting some sort of business approach to life.

And of course, we want to have an ideal life, an ideal body, an ideal relationship and yet quite often we blame ourselves for not coming close to this ideal. The subject who takes the idea of choice seriously, often feels anxious, inadequate and guilty for his or her failures, which is why the ideology of choice has paradoxically served the dominant ideology very well.

People have been continuously blaming themselves for their failures and they're not engaging much in the critique of the society in which they live. My idea is that basically this individualisation and the illusion of choice, which is often very limited, have actually formed a perfect ideology that allows post-industrial capitalism to perpetuate itself.

Sigmund Freud, in his *Civilization and its Discontent*, points out that the changes in society always bring changes in the individual and vice versa, which is why he said that malaise in civilisation and malaise in the individual are always mutually influential.

I have already mentioned one source of malaise—this anxiety, the feeling of guilt, the constant feeling of being unsure which choices to make. I was very nicely surprised recently at the London art show *New Sensations* presented by Chanel 4 and Saatchi Gallery which showed the art work of recent graduates of art academies. Julia Vogel's work nicely reflected on the idea of choice. She asked the visitors of the show to pick up a badge which designated why they had come to the show. On some badges it was written 'I'm an artist', 'I'm a curator', 'I'm an observer ... and on some 'I only came for the booze'. (I took all of them, since I couldn't decide why I had come and I actually liked all the different colours of the badges.) Vogel's next project also involved choice. Considering that nowadays people are obsessed with germs and their dangers, she decided we should make a choice about what kind of soap we use, which would depend on what we would be afraid of that day, what germs we should be attacking.

This idea of perfection has very interestingly opened up our possibility to look at the logic of failure, especially in the field of art. Jeremy Hutchison, another artist in the aforementioned group show, wonderfully looked at how failure can be represented in art. He had asked producers all around the world of various objects to create an object which didn't work. He said that he wrote very nice letters, especially to Chinese factories, asking them to please send him whatever they were producing but with a failure that prevented it from being used. The kind of

failure had to be the choice of the workers. He then gathered the responses, and the responses were hilarious because most of the factories wrote back in shock, 'We don't understand what you want'. Although he tried to convince them that he would pay for their product, the majority of the producers just couldn't play the game. But some did. So, at the exhibition there were shoes that you can't wear, a hat that you can't put on, a trumpet that is cut in the middle, a skate board that you cannot use, etc. There was also a very nice response letter, where someone just basically pointed out 'I don't understand what you want from us'.

So if art has been reflecting on this idea of choice, success and so on, somehow the subjects themselves have also reacted to this ideology in their own particular way, in their own bodies, their own lives. To return to Freud's idea that we always create new malaises, let me briefly address what kind of sufferings people are actually experiencing today.

In one of his public lectures held in Milan in 1971, Jacques Lacan pointed out that as a system, capitalism is functioning quicker and quicker. It is not only that we are constantly speeding up our lives, but we work more, consume more, and so on. The paradoxical thing is that this speeding up also creates a particular kind of illusion of how the person, the worker, perceives himself or herself. So a proletarian slave at some point started perceiving himself or herself as a master, as the one capable of making endless choices—someone who has life and the direction of life in his or her hands.

Lacan, however, points out that on top of creating this illusion of mastery, this sort of speeding up also produces all kinds of new symptoms, so subjects do not only constantly consume but also begin consuming themselves, which is why their new symptoms are often anxiety, anorexia, different forms of self-mutilation, addictions, workaholism, etc., almost as if we were coming to the unfortunate point of discovering new ways of self-destruction.

These forms of self-destruction took new shapes recently. Not long ago I encountered a Japanese psychoanalyst, who told me that a lot of young girls in Japan have a problem with looking at themselves in the mirror. We know that looking in the mirror is not easy. This problem first appeared in Greek mythology where from the story of Narcissus we know that looking too much at one's own reflection can become deadly. Many people who suffer from anorexia see in the mirror someone who is incredibly fat even if they are thin. I also have a friend who is very fat, but she sees herself as quite slim, which is why she always buys clothes that are too small. Some girls in Japan are actually breaking the mirrors in which they look at themselves. One particular patient, for example, always breaks any mirror she has in her flat. It's not only that she can't see herself in the mirror; she can't deal with the mirror as such.

Of course, we have also created the illusion that we can choose mirrors. For some time now the art world has been playing with the idea that we can look at ourselves in mirrors any way we like; that we can look at the reality around us in the way that we choose.

This idea extends to the sort of social mirror we choose and how we see ourselves in that social mirror. Often when we go through the process of socialisation it's the first responses of others that influences our self-perception and we are always seeking this kind of outside mirror to try and see ourselves in the most favourable way. As a result of increasing individualisation, however, this perception of society is changing. More and more people are looking inwards instead of at society at large. And yet this individualisation did not only produce these narcissistic or grandiose feelings on the side of the individual and ignorance towards others but, paradoxically, it also opened the doors to a particular ignorance towards ourselves.

Contemporary narcissism seems particularly self-destructive. It is not only that the subject is centred in his or her well-being. Paradoxically, despite the flood of information that we have regarding how to create our lives, look after our bodies and so on, individuals often decide to completely ignore this information. A brief remark again from Japan. After Fukushima, about 50% of the people in Tokyo were obsessively checking where their food was coming from, worrying about the danger, investigating how to protect themselves from radiation, but the other 50% behaved as if nothing had happened. Although they had the same information, they bought vegetables that had been grown next to Fukushima and behaved as if there had been no real change in society.

Jacques Lacan suggested that people do not have a passion for knowledge but rather a passion for ignorance. This passion leads us to close our eyes and ignore what we have seen, deciding not to deal with it. It is necessary to distinguish between ignorance and repression. When we experience something truly traumatic, repression usually helps us to establish some distance from what was painful or frightening, at least temporarily, but when it comes to ignorance, we have a denial that some think is traumatic. People behave as if the issue didn't concern them; it's almost as if there were a closure at work, where the subject is not marked by language, by the information around him. The individual can therefore have information of the threat but will work as if nothing has happened.

This kind of ignorance also creates an illusion of powerfulness. The passion for ignorance has now been appearing on a variety of levels in society. In spite of our continuing economic crisis, until very recently most countries have behaved as if it were a bad dream from which we will eventually wake up and then everything will be the same again. With regard to ecological problems, we are behaving as if nothing really should be changed, or as if it were always someone else who had to deal with it instead of us.



Until recently there has also been a lot of ignorance with regard to social inequality in the developed world. The success of the capitalist ideology derives from the fact that it created a fantasy of possibilities, although people actually had fewer and fewer possibilities. Even very poor people, who had fewer and fewer choices, have paradoxically supported the idea of choice.

Louis Althusser declared that ideology functions in such a way that it creates a veil of obviousness. When we perceive something as obvious, we are usually very caught up in ideology. This operation has been incredibly successful in the past few years, since we couldn't even imagine any alternatives to the organisation of society as we know it, and we still don't do so sufficiently. The idea is that what we have, the democratic liberal system of capitalism in the developed world, is here to stay and one cannot even dream about utopias or changes in the future.

How did the passion of ignorance express itself, especially in regard to social inequality? American researchers Dan Arielli and Mike Norton carried out an interesting study at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). In the study people were asked how much money, how many resources they thought that the rich 20% of the population, owned in the United States, and how much they thought would be a fair distribution of wealth. They found a surprising answer. People thought that the richest owned perhaps about 60% of wealth and that it would be fair for them to own no more than 30%. Of course, the reality was that the rich 20% owned 84% of everything. Reporting on this research, *The New York Times* asked other researchers to come up with quick answers to the question of why would there be such discrepancy in perception? And how come that people do not fight inequality, support higher taxing of the rich or support universal healthcare, if they think that inequality should be smaller?

The responses they got ranged from the idea that Americans believed in a lottery mentality, 'Maybe I'll have a chance some day in the future', that they also had the idea that maybe their children would make it, which is why now they don't quite want to raise taxes, thinking 'Maybe my child will become the new Bill Gates, and I don't want him to pay too much taxes'. Another idea is that people have a lot of gadgets, more than their parents, and that this has somehow improved their lives. Another theory was that people felt guilty for having generated a lot of personal debt, and that sort of guilt prevented the fight against inequality. There was also the idea that rather than a desire to have, there was a desire to keep, and last but not least, the idea that we are usually envious of those who are similar to us, our neighbours, and we don't identify so much with that top 1% of the wealthiest individuals.

Another important pacifying element in today's society can be a particular identification with luxury. I think that in the last decades we have witnessed a sort of democratisation of luxury, which has also contributed to a certain pacification of

people. Most of you probably still remember the London riots, at the end of which the British police posted online images of people captured by surveillance cameras. It was as if they wanted to turn everyone into a spy, asking people if they recognised anybody in the images, almost as if a fantasy society of total control had materialised. When I looked at those images, I was surprised to see smiles and enjoyment on the faces of the looters, especially women who were holding lots of shoes. Shoes are obviously objects of enjoyment for us. Men who carried lots of sports goods were smiling too. So, when discussing where happiness lies in today's society, we should not forget the signs of happiness and enjoyment when people are stealing.

When people engage in transgressions, especially group transgressions, anxiety as regards the actual meaning of transgression is appeased. So when people follow in the tracks of others, when people act together, they are often far less anxious about punishment; it's as if the group gave them a special kind of protection.

Of course, this sort of violence looked frightening, horrifying, and posed a lot of questions, but we should not forget that over the past few years we have observed great violence that has been sort of glorified as a part of the functioning of corporations and large financial institutions. The discourse of management has been filled with ideas of ruthlessly destroying competition, killing rivals, seeking profit, and so on. A violent discourse was constantly emerging. Among those who analysed the people running big corporations, some psychiatrists pointed out that they quite often have psychopathic personalities characterised by having no feelings of guilt, being easy with imposing violence and having no empathy with others.

Ironically, the behaviour of the rioters on the streets of London was not so different to that of those running the companies that were looted but, of course, the ones who acted violently on the streets of London were then punished for it.

The London riots, however revealed another similarity between the higher and lower classes, and that is a religious love for luxury. During the riots a casual observer overheard some girls deciding which shop they were going to loot. One girl proposed that they should go to Boots, which is a kind of cheap chain store for cosmetic goods, but then another said, 'Why go to Boots when you can go to The Body Shop?'. But the identification with luxury goods was also behind the riots as a result of the fact that a lot of the shops which were looted had used gangster chic in their advertising campaigns. At that time Levi's was about to release a video in which a man dressed in Levi's jeans is facing a police line, and a message says 'Go Forth'. Of course, they withdrew it immediately.

In the domain of art we have also experienced a turn towards luxury. The increase of sales of very expensive art, the search for exquisite hard-to-get objects explains the way art the market operates. In a recent interview, the director of Christie's

mentioned that the reason they have had such an increase in sales is that now that everything exists in replica form and everything can be found on the Internet in a variety of versions, people want the real thing, the real object. And just a couple of days ago there was a note in the newspaper that Gursky's photograph was sold for four million-odd dollars. Which is the highest price ever paid for a photograph.

What we experience as luxury has changed in recent years. Luxury, however, has always been linked to transgression. Luxury has to be inaccessible, expensive, prohibitive or otherwise hard to get, because we also want other people to want it! In his book on the history of luxury, James Twitchell observed that the first public examples of luxury were church relics. In the Middle Ages, if a church wanted to possess a relic, it had to steal the relic from another church. Subsequent wars were always about stealing luxury from others, particularly art objects. Stealing art objects and even destroying them is, of course, an important thing of today's life too. However, in the last few years we have witnessed a change in the perception of luxury. In the first place, there has been a certain democratisation of luxury. Secondly, the luxury objects we use in our everyday lives don't necessarily have to have a durable quality, because what is most important is the name, the branding. Identification is produced through identification with the brand, so when the upper classes perceive something as a luxury item, it rather quickly happens that the middle classes perceive it, too, and then also the poor. Now practically everybody can obtain a replica of what appears to be a luxury object, just a little piece of something—instead of a Prada dress you can get a tiny Prada key ring, for instance, and you still participate in the idea of luxury.

This proliferation of the identification with luxury leads us to believe that people who don't have the means should exert some sort of self-restraint with regard to it. They should be like the people who go to Apple stores just to play with the computers, to look at them and yet refrain from purchasing them.

In Montenegro they have recently mastered the idea of restraint almost to perfection. As most of you probably know, Montenegro is the country that sold half its assets to the Russians, and the other half to America. Now a lot of rich people are going there and the local young girls have a desire for luxury and for meeting rich men. So, to make sure they have steady relationships with the really rich men who travel there with their yachts, the young girls give each other advice on how to behave, and have come up with a whole new theory: if they meet someone very, very rich, and they spend a night with him, without being exactly prostitution in the morning he might give her some money and tell her to buy herself something nice, to go shopping. What she should do, if she wants to see the guy more than once, is go and buy an expensive watch for him and give it to him as a present. Of course, the guy has many watches, he probably doesn't need another one, but the idea is that she can restrain her passion for buying something for herself and show him at least an illusion of love, to prove that she is interested in him beyond his money.

In regard to the London riots, I thought that it would be interesting if when the disturbance were over, the rioters took all the goodies back to the companies as presents, as proof that they were restraining themselves. Then the companies would probably start filming the goodwill of the people and use the footage in their next advertising campaign.

Let me finish this exposé with the question, 'What kind of changes are produced in identification?' Without trying to come up with big social theories, how we can create a new future? I was wondering what art could do in a tiny little way, how art affects our identifications.

Most of you are familiar with Antony Gormley's project, *Event Horizon*. The interesting thing is that when the project was finished, people became obsessed with the question of what would happen to the figures once the installation was dismantled. They were afraid that the sculptures might be thrown away somewhere, that they might be lost. A number of people on the Internet proposed that they should be placed in a museum where they would be together, and not lonely. They identified with the loneliness of statues in an incredible way!

Austrian artist Peter Arlt also decided some time ago that the statues in South Austria that stand on a bridge, called Nepomuks, are lonely. He decided to bring them together for one day so that they could finally meet and create friendships. After a long-drawn-out procedure with the Austrian agency of cultural inheritance, he succeeded in uniting the statues. One can assume that now that statues have friends, they feel much better knowing that others exist.

After his *Horizon* project, Antony Gormley posed another question. If people identify with statues in such a way, what would happen if artists actually minimized statues? The project he produced last year at Anna Schwarz Gallery in Melbourne, *Memes*, consisted of forty-six tiny little statues, each of which was made from the same number of boxes, but each had a slight change in shape to create a different feeling or emotion. Gormley's idea was that even if statues are minimized, they can create a particular emotion. But he also wondered what kind of anxiety was experienced by someone walking among them and feeling like a sort of godlike creature who could damage them, always observing them from above.

When we minimize things, we quite often we see them differently. Some of you might remember the film *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids*, in which a scientist accidentally shrinks his children. He's trying to create a shrinking machine, and suddenly the experiment goes wrong and his kids start getting smaller and smaller. They end up a quarter of an inch high and their parents no longer see them, in fact they almost eat them for breakfast, with the cereal, then they almost vacuum them. So, the kids barely survive being so minimal, and yet what the minimization produced was

a radical change in the family. The moment of shrinking had a cathartic effect on the strained family relationships, and the misunderstandings between parents and kids were miraculously solved. In the end, of course, the kids return to their normal height and become much better people after the experiment.

Minimization of various kinds often helps us see situations within broader contexts—to really see the forest, and not only the trees. Gormley's *Memes* offer us the possibility to see the world at a distance; in other words, art enables us to create the possibility of seeing things slightly differently. At the recent Carsten Höller show in the New Museum in New York, for example, visitors wear glasses, go through a slide inside the gallery and take pills, all of which affect their perception. We don't know what we'll discover, but the most interesting part is when we put on the glasses that turn reality completely upside down. I tried them myself. At the end of the show, however, I no longer knew what was real and what was fiction, which is why when I left the gallery I got terribly anxious when I saw three men looking at me from an open lorry. I needed a couple of seconds to figure out whether this was reality or another work of art, until I finally realised it was just an advertisement. I took a photo and the driver of the lorry said, 'Oh, this happens to me all the time'.

## **CASE STUDY I - *The Time Capsule***

### **AKRAM ZAATARI**

The Arab Image Foundation has a long history. Some of you know it; some of you are new to it. It all began in 1997. I don't know why I feel that to talk about the foundation today is to somehow wrap up a story. It feels like I'm writing history, all of a sudden. I think it's because me, many of my generation and the Foundation find ourselves today at a crossroads. Not only are we moving from one stage to another, but also the times are changing, the region around us, Lebanon, the Middle East, is changing. The technology of photography is changing as well, and we can't just remain fixed to the same spot with the same ideas, the same perspective of things. Such changes are definitely beginning to be visible in the way we write.

Briefly, it was in the nineties when in 1997 the Foundation was officially registered as a non-profit organisation that had the primary mission of preserving photography. At the time, the Foundation had zero photographs in its collection, so from then on its main purpose was to try and build up a collection.

I've asked for total darkness because photography has a lot to do with darkness. Let's applaud the darkness.

The nineties were special times in Lebanon. The war was presumably brought to an end in 1991. At that time, many of us were in their late twenties and thought it was our golden chance to build a nation based on sound foundations, to set everything up as if for the first time: organisations, research platforms, institutions, etc. We believed we were inventing new social relations. In this context, organisations such as Ashkal Alwan started somewhere in the mid-nineties, and the Ayoul Festival in 1997. In that same year the Arab Image Foundation was created.

A number of new organisations set up platforms for artists, intellectuals and cultural producers to meet, debate and produce work. In this almost utopian bubble, particular to the nineties, the Arab Image Foundation had come up with a 'naïve' mission to preserve photography. I think many naïve ideas end up becoming long-lasting and useful initiatives, but when I reflect on the mission of the Foundation—to preserve photography—I realise the mission had left so many gaps not to say contradictions and many unanswered questions such as how, where, and for what purpose and at which cost. I think an initiative such as the AIF could only have been put into practice by people who were still young (in their twenties) and who were willing and capable of going knocking on doors, looking at family albums and for old men and women who would donate their pictures to a new photographic archive. Implicit in their donation, would be a fear of death and securing a possible future for their photographs. This naïve and passionate mission led the Foundation to start collecting pictures, first from individuals and then from

professional photographers or from those who inherited their collections, with the aim of studying photography produced and diffused in this part of the world.

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As regards my personal interest, I was curious to learn how photography functioned in the private space within families and in the semi-private space that's photographers' studios, how photos came to look as they do, who they are the product of social habits, of people's imaginations as much as photographer's conventions. How they have reached us. In the absence of a national archive and of an archival tradition in Lebanon (in any event, had there been one in pre-war Lebanon, after the war it would have been completely destroyed or looted, in a way or another) we had to reinvent things by collecting all sorts of documents. Over the course of time, we became totally submerged in collecting, which became my personal art practice. This is how my interest in fieldwork developed, although I also came from a documentary filmmaker's background, which dictated some kind of fieldwork already rooted in that tradition. I think both of these interests sort of merged, and within two or three years the Foundation had gathered some twenty thousand images in its archive, composed of a number of smaller collections.

I call the mission naïve because when I speak of preservation today, as opposed to thirteen years ago, I am not only thinking of the preservation of the paper and the emulsion that becomes with it: the support that delivers photographs. I think preservation circles around the world speak of preservation as a scientific endeavour that aims to preserve the object that's the photograph that we love to contemplate. Today, as an artist practitioner, I am aware of other levels of preservation that involve the preservation of the oral history that surrounds certain images: the situations that triggered them, how they came about, the ties that link them to the people who are featured in them, or to the practice of taking pictures, whether in the domestic sphere or in the photographer's studio. So preservation includes also, in my practice, the set of practices that are dictated by the medium and the technology of the time and, and as I realised much later, of the set of pictures that existed in the same album or the same cupboard, the same shelf or the same desk. The numerous relationships that link individual pictures and isolate them from each other could somehow break that contract of preservation as a scientific endeavour. The bonds that exist between pictures are really as important to preserve as much as their emulsion. Over time, I also realised that when I select with my own eyes or someone else's, my own desires or someone else's, some thirty, forty or fifty pictures from a group of five hundred, I am actually creating a set of meanings between pictures that would also need to be preserved by the Foundation.

Only today, fifteen years after the opening of the Arab Image Foundation (when I am also fifteen years older), have all these ideas actually taken shape. Why do we

collect? It's almost a poetic and enigmatic question. Let me show you an excerpt of an interview I held with a photography collector from north Lebanon named Mohsen Yammine.

'I've been collecting photographs since 1979 and I've always asked myself why do I collect?

Maybe this is due to the circumstances around me back then. We lived in a country in which everything was being destroyed and falling apart and photographs presented a totally opposing reality. Everytime a gun pounded a wall of a building or a rock in a mountain, everytime a shell burnt a wheat spike in a plain or a flower in a valley I thought I should collect pictures and through them, reconstruct the past and the present, reconstruct an image of the country before it was defaced by successive wars.

The main stimulant was a collection of photos by Camille el Qareh, which I encountered by pure chance. I visited a studio of an Armenian photographer in Ehden, my town, in 1979 looking to buy photographs of Ehden's summer festival in the sixties. While talking to him I asked him if he had any photos of Ehden before his times. He had started in 1947 taking photographs between Zgharta and Ehden. He said: Come and see, and opened a green curtain behind which were fixed some 40 pictures showing the influential gang leaders of Zgharta. This collection hit me like thunder. I was mesmerized. I asked about the photographer, he answered that he had died few years after I started working which pushed me further to research him'.

So the day he saw those pictures of his village or its people, which he had never imagined before, a new passion was ignited in him. Such a fascinating moment is still inexplicable to me, although occasionally, when I come across things that I feel I absolutely want to possess, either in my work or in my life, I too feel this passion. As I child, since I was ten, I collected stamps, lots of stamps, and sometime in the eighties, in the middle of the war, my parents' house was looted and I lost all those albums full of stamps. I think I had gathered with my brothers approximately three thousand stamps by then. And whenever I see Mohsen speaking, I remember this inexplicable passion to collect stamps, to complete series, to discover new ones, to carefully give them order within an album. When you see something you have never seen before, you go crazy, and you just absolutely to own it. This passion exists in many people who work at institutions withholding collections, especially in those working underground to incorporate these collections into larger ones.

At many points in my life and in the life of Arab Image Foundation we have been asked, 'What are your criteria for collecting?' We have never thought of the Foundation as an institution with an institutionalised way of creating collections, like a bible. In fact, I'm slightly against institutionalising the act of collecting as I find it a very personal and even intimate act. As I don't want to make collecting as a motive for simply storing images, I always aimed to involve artists or scholars in researching and discovering photographs that they think are worth preserving for



posterity. I think this is one of the interesting contradictions in the Foundation, the fact that a picture already exists within a body of work that is adopted by an artist or scholar who is pursuing research out of personal interest. But once it arrives at the Foundation, that body of work is taken apart and the pictures are catalogued or indexed individually and become part of a larger database with a research engine. We had this discussion from the very beginning, since 1998 or 1999.

The question is, do pictures have a double presence at the Foundation? As art works and elements in scholarly fieldwork, on the one hand, and as powerful documents in themselves, on the other, and therefore we make them accessible as individual pictures to other researchers, who may discover in them something that the scholar or artist who originally brought them in did not see.

I think this is always the case, that the pictures in this archive have more than one presence. I sometimes ask myself what would happen if we were to break Hans-Peter Feldmann's work up into individual pictures and catalogue them to make them accessible to another agent. Would that generate new or different meanings? What would it do to an art work? What would it add to our understanding of photography? I still don't know, but the same question applies to Christian Boltanski, for instance, to artists who have created bodies of meaning that only circulated within their work. My experience with the Arab Image Foundation was different, although we were not aware of it in the very first period. Some years the collection received a lot of pictures because its members were more active than in other years, and other years not so many because members did not bring in so many images. I will just give you briefly the highlights of my photographic discoveries while working within AIF.

Van Leo is one of the first discoveries we made. He is an Armenian photographer from Cairo who practiced from 1942 until 2002 in the Cairo. His most important work is a catalogue of approximately four or five hundred self-portraits produced between 1940 and 1946 and meant as samples of work to show to possible clients. In these pictures he himself appeared as a model, disguised in different characters, to prove how versatile was photography and show the importance of elements such as the *mise en scène* and lighting. In 1999 I curated *Les Portraits du Caire: Alban, Armand and Van Leo*, and later a small exhibition entitled *Palestine before '48* that had a very particular focus on family history in Palestine before the creation of the state of Israel, and later the show entitled *The Vehicle: Picturing Moments of Transition in a Modernizing Society*, which considered how means of transport came to penetrate photographs, and included images of people taking pictures while travelling on ships, in planes or by car, riding a camel or just having fun near modern machines intended for transport, but whose presence in images meant belonging to modern times.

In 2001 I made a video called *Her+Him Van Leo*—that's the photographer you see on the far left in the self-portrait, and here in the interview, you see him 1998.

Until the year 2002 I was completely focused on reading photographs thematically, as cultural texts. However, that changed drastically when I began to work with Walid Raad on the exhibition entitled *Mapping Sitting*. We began by examining the body attitudes of sitters facing the camera, basing ourselves on portraiture practices, and realised that what we actually wanted to discuss was less the body postures and more the photographic device, the device of photographic reproduction that produces thousands of portraits and therefore imbues life with new social codes, fashion, and attitudes. As a result, *Mapping Sitting: On Portraiture and Photography* ended up as an exercise on looking and making sense of existing portraiture practices.

More works in the collection. Here is a sample image from *Mapping Sitting* and this is an index book where a photographer named Soussi from Sidon used to keep a record of every portrait that he took, numbering them all to facilitate future reproductions.

Sometime in 2004 I started to work on the first chapter of the Studio Sherezade project. This is when I decided that all I wanted to say about photography and the role it plays in society could actually be taken from one and the same archive, that of Studio Sherezade, that was an archive that I encountered when it was still intact. Hashem al-Madani, the photographer who owns the studio, had accumulated work from 1949 until today all in one place, without losing a single negative. He was still alive and still is, so he could tell me the stories I needed for my preservation project. This made me realise that not only the stories and the links between photographs were worthy of being preserved but, ideally, the life of the photographer should be preserved too. This is where it becomes slightly utopian: if I wanted to preserve the studio I didn't think I could do so without the photographer himself. So the idea of preservation transcends what is possible. For me to continue working on this studio material, Madani has to stay alive, as a source of information, and as the subject of my project.

The project began with studio practices, examining how people used the photographer's studio as a space that was almost a theatre. I did another chapter of the project looking at pictures taken outdoors, studying people's attitudes in the public space, and later a third intervention in the old city (the market) of Sidon, placing pictures in their original locations and donating framed pictures that could be installed inside the same shops where they had been taken fifty years before. The idea was about the 'return' of a picture that was 'taken' fifty years ago. I eventually realised that maybe what interested me most were not the pictures or the studio but all that which surrounded the pictures, all that which could testify to how photography was used and diffused in the twentieth century through simple elements such as the change from 120mm to 35mm, but also the presence of Super 8 cameras and projectors, etc.

This made me think of the analogy between the studio space and an excavation site: that the studio has become an archaeological site the technology of image production and diffusion. And so I began to look at every document in the studio, without limiting myself to images or non-images, highlighting productive links and producing new documents while filming and recording everything in the studio, including interviews with the photographer. The project has consequently become more a living project, more theatrical even: Madani is there, he is growing older; I'm there with him, recording him and at the same time recording the machines in his studio.

You can see him in the upper right. I filmed him using his Super 8 camera as he walked through the city while responding to another video I had made before entitled *Video in Five Movements*. In that super 8 film below, you see that he asked members of his family to film him while walking front of his camera. This is someone who always said to people: 'Stand still, don't move, I want to take a picture of you', and all of a sudden, with a Super 8 camera, he would invent all sorts of simple movements, innocent movements to demonstrate camera's ability to capture movement. Watching this now, I really believe that those rushes bring back some kind of a lost innocence to film.

I think I'll leave it here. Thank you.

## **CASE STUDY II - *Long March - Ho Chi Minh Trail Project (2008– ongoing)***

**LU JIE**

The *Long March Project* began in 2002 as an artistic investigation of the grand narrative and historical consciousness determined in the wake—and the resulting mythologisation—of China’s revolutionary Long March of 1934-1936. In 2002, the first *Long March Project, A Walking Visual Display*, mobilised two hundred and fifty local and international artists, cross-disciplinary scholars and cultural workers to retrace the historical Long March pathway. Along the journey, participants produced over one hundred indoor and outdoor artistic exhibitions, performances, film screenings, folk art surveys and academic conferences. In this project, the historical Long March route not only served as a geographical pathway but also as a metaphorical framework to readdress the revolutionary and Socialist memories that critically affect contemporary society. By cross-examining elements of utopian idealism, mutual imaginations between East and West, localisation and globalisation, nationalism, migration and the ideological and religious processes that constitute the complexity of Chinese modernism today, *A Walking Visual Display* sought to find contemporary meaning in the positive ingredients of idealism, revolutionary thought and traditional culture and apply them to today’s concerns of individual and collective, local and international, theory and practice. The *Long March Project* continued in the following eight years as an ongoing investigation of critical discourse surrounding art and culture, including *X -Blind Spot* (2006-2008) and *800 Meters Under* (2004-2006), both with Yang Shaobin, *Chinatown* (2005, Yokohama, Japan; 2006, San Francisco, USA; 2007, Auckland, New Zealand), *The Great Survey of Yanchuang Papercutting* ( 2004 ) and *Yanchuan Primary School Papercutting Education Project* ( 2009-2010).

I would like to thank CIMAM for inviting me to give a presentation about the *Long March Project* in the context of the theme of this year’s conference, ‘Museum and the City’. Although the *Long March Project* is based in Beijing, it is a nonetheless a global, mobile and evolving initiative. It has a 2500 square metre space, the Long March Space; it is an educational organisation and a publishing house; it commissions artists and has its own residency programme; it even has its own collection, so in fact it is an ongoing, self-sufficient, alternative ‘institution’. In its ten-year history it has served as the place where the most important exhibitions and dialogues concerning contemporary art in China have taken place. It cannot be defined by the logic of the art market, nor can it be comfortably labelled as a non-profit organisation, therefore it is in exactly the right position to raise a variety of questions regarding the production, interpretation and consumption of art today. If the debate on ‘Museum and the City’ is to circumscribe the status of museums now dealing with the aftermath of ‘globalisation’ by way of connecting with local inhabitants, we need to understand that institutions function differently in different cities, in different geographical locations and different time zones. The issues we are all too familiar with, such as discussing cultural strategy or globalisation within the singular or dominant logic of town planning and museum

building in developed regions like Europe and the United States, or the contradictory and opposing positions of art education (elitism) and exhibition (public), are equally problematic in connection with local problems in Beijing such as the lack of modern or contemporary art museums as we know them, or the fact that there are too many museums, that too many museums are being built too soon. In Beijing, the issue doesn't lie in differentiating public resources from the difficult situation of public institutions, or private museums from market logic. What requires immediate recognition is the perspective of history in China and the fact that there are multiple definitions of the idea of contemporary art. Taking this very particular context into consideration, attention needs to be focused on the specific 'time' and 'place' in which contemporary art stands. If the conference is to rethink the role of museums in the present context of the city and society, the idea of engaging with the local community may require more imaginative experimentation and execution. Under this pretext, an institution like a museum will be unable to contain the complex context inherent in society; furthermore, the ideas of city, artist, art work, exhibition and discourse will have to be considered as a whole, instead of establishing separate and fragmented divisions. The *Long March Project* is acutely aware of the unique artistic environment and historical condition of Beijing. Over its ten-year history, Beijing's art scene has witnessed the legalisation of contemporary art within the context of public institutions and museums. During this period, contemporary art was distanced from the local 'legitimate' public arena, marching directly into the global cultural scene, as reflected by its presentation in group exhibitions held at foreign museums, biennials and triennials.

After this period, fuelled by the rise of media and the fashion industry, and the boom in development and the property market, the most unlikely places (namely, the model houses and showrooms of luxury property complex) became showcases for the most progressive contemporary art and culture, nurturing a whole new generation of curators in a way that could have never been achieved in art museums and art centres in China at the time. Today, the power of capital strives to unite curators, media and lifestyles. The marketplace becomes the dominant force, negotiating with the concept of nationalism and the influence of globalisation. In this context, public museums are destined to become the 'spectacle' of the city, both politically and economically. Scarcely different to private museums, they all interpret history based on a common structure that revolves around the formation of a stable sense of value in contemporary art.

Although the *Long March Project* has accomplished many undertakings that may be viewed as the work of a museum, its own logic has pushed it to challenge our understanding of contemporary art and its agency from outside in, and from the bottom up. Today the project focuses specifically on the disguised spaces that reveal the political economics of visual culture. The geographical and historical complexities of the Ho Chi Minh Trail make the route an ideal metaphor for

engaging with and constructing a new interrelational reality between Southeast Asia, China and other communities in the world.

The Ho Chi Minh Trail, though internationally understood as a logistical supply route created during the Second Indochina War, formed a vast network of passageways across China, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. This area was the strategic battleground between the two Communist powers (China and the Soviet Union) and the United States during the Second Indochina War. China's decision to support Southeast Asia during this time was instrumental to Mao Zedong's domestic argument to gather the masses against the imperialist forces encroaching its national borders. The rhizome map created by the Ho Chi Minh Trail serves as a reflection of the interconnected, influential and overlapping histories of the region. Kublai Khan's presence in Vietnam in the thirteenth century, Vietnam's complicated relationship with the People's Republic of Kampuchea in the eighties, and the vassal relationship between the Cham Dynasty of Vietnam and China are but a few historical examples which to this day contribute to significant and prolonged feelings of division between these different countries.

In contemporary times, social conditions encourage us to assume role-play determined by the nature of specific social production models. It is crucial that we re-evaluate and contemplate upon the terms post-war, post-revolution, post-colonial and post-historical that define our cultural realities today. A parallel urgency is evident in the contemporary art world according to which art is continually identified as the materialisation and spectacle of global capitalism and neo-liberalism, instead of what it could be—a materialisation of production of culture and thought, and negotiation between memory and reality. What new artistic modes will follow the recent trends of institutional critique, social engagement and relativism? In which ways can individuals assume their historical consciousness? How can we take the Ho Chi Minh Trail, a layered geographical network with multiple intertwining historical narratives, and examine its disguised spaces of contemporary visual, political and economic complexity? Through thought–discourse–body–action, the *Ho Chi Minh Trail Project* will journey through these hidden spaces and histories, thereby constructing a disguised political space.

The *Ho Chi Minh Trail Project* is not a continuation or an extension of *A Walking Visual Display*. Instead, it is conceived with critical reflection on the failures and successes of our previous endeavours. The *Ho Chi Minh Trail Project* explores the potential common threads and divergent perspectives of lived and felt experience, and it aims to serve as a progressive artistic and discursive platform built on the value of process and exchange, rather than an assumed investment in results and subsequent object-making (though undoubtedly this is an inherent part of the process).

The *Long March Project – Ho Chi Minh Trail Project* is neither an exhibition title, nor a project name nor field research. It is a working site that is constructed from

the following five stages: field research, residency, physical journey, rehearsal-theatre and an on-going database, Knowledge of the Ignorant, which is a collection of research material relevant to the project.

The preparatory field research lasted a year, from 2008 to 2009, when we started the Long March Education programme, a month-long residency that welcomed eleven thinkers from Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi, Phnom Penh, New York, Seoul, Hangzhou and Beijing. This phase of the *Ho Chi Minh Trail Project* was organised in conjunction with Long March Education, an ongoing educational programme focusing on the study of critical relationships between visual art, artistic production and the systems in which this visual practice is historicised and displayed.

The July residency programme operated as a curatorial brainstorming session for the *Ho Chi Minh Trail Project* in which residents closely examined the shared physical and psychological landscape embedded within the Ho Chi Minh Trail route. Throughout July, four thematic topics were introduced as starting points to discuss the ways in which artists transform discursive material into visibility: How are geographies bordered by images and texts that become their own fictions bearing no relation to actual territory?; Political games as psychological strategy; Political propaganda versus capitalist promotion; and Disguised Space: Anti-mapping of the contemporary art landscape. The journey (12 June – 3 July, 2010) is the most important part of the *Ho Chi Minh Trail Project*. The main sites include Ho Chi Minh City, Phnom Penh, Vientiane, Hanoi, Hue and a segment of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. As to participants, a total of twenty-eight travellers, composed of ten writers and thinkers (invited as participating artists), ten artists (invited as participating thinkers), four Long March staff members and four media representatives and volunteers engaged with local marchers along the way. The June programme was a journey made through walking, rehearsing, artistic and textual production, dialogue and recording. Throughout the journey, local and international participants were invited to perform a process of confession and revelation, exploring issues of global and local, empire and the Third World, ideology and politics, art and theory, and other critical questions that concern us today. To achieve this state of existence we decided we would rather admit our position as cultural travellers—we would not pretend a romantic level of interaction and intervention or seek to reach the impossible goal of being on the same page with the locals (any imagined success in this aspect would have been a mirage). What we faced along the journey was something beyond China and Southeast Asia, beyond artistic production and other realms of activity. Every local and international participant was simultaneously a host and a guest, engaging with subjective and local interpretations of geopolitics, historical and war memories and cultural and ethnic conflicts encountered along the way, thereby revealing the absurdity and futility of political correctness. The continuous, intense and physical process of confessing, discussing, walking and recording along the way transformed the act of ‘acting’ into actual ‘action’. Although most of the journey

was undertaken by bus, there was a walking segment through a critical part of the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos.

The *Ho Chi Minh Trail Project* calls for a questioning of the fixed relations of social production as determined by ideas of history, identity, market logic and subconscious effects of a geographically imposed divide. The tangible elements of the project include dialogue, artistic production, physical experience and other forms of feeling to reach a state of *baigan jiaoji*, literally, 'a multitude of feelings'. This process of following intellectual, physical and interactive re-sensitisations is what transforms the aforementioned act of acting into actual action. As a collaborative contemporary arts project in the implementation of physical, discursive and artistic activities between China, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, the geographical and historical complexities of the Ho Chi Minh Trail present the route as an ideal metaphor for engaging with and constructing a new interrelational reality between Southeast Asia, China and other world communities.

I hope my presentation has provided a new perspective on the topic in hand. The history of the *Long March Project* shows that it doesn't intend to provide a solution to our problems, nor is it merely an alternative case study, but rather, taking the ongoing *Ho Chi Minh Trail Project* as an example, it is the presentation of the multiple nature of the problems at hand. I hope that as a case study it provides dialogue and mobility beyond institutions and artists' studios, beyond art works and exhibitions, beyond fixed understandings of community and geography.



## UNDERSTANDING LOCAL CONTEXT I - *The Metelkova Case: From Army Barracks to Museum of Contemporary Art*

BOJANA PIŠKUR

When the Yugoslav People's Army vacated the barracks at Metelkova in 1991, some of the space became available for contemporary art. But the emptied space had lost all of its previous performative functions. Instead it became 'susceptible to being diverted, reappropriated and put to use quite different from its initial one' (Lefebvre), thereby enabling different configurations of forces, performative acts and social relations that called the future museum of contemporary art into being. Zdenka Badovinac has pointed out that it was the war in the former Yugoslavia and in the Balkans that marked the beginning of our contemporaneity. Similarly, it was the former military complex that marked the beginning of Moderna galerija's Museum of Contemporary Art [Figure 1].



Figure 1: Metelkova, ex-army barracks, 1990s

I would argue that what has given this space a specific meaning was neither its architectural frame, that is, its representational and ideological function, nor the notion of space as a 'historical idea'. Instead I would like to call attention to various performative functions; performative acts and repetitions that have defined it and vice versa. In performativity, as it is generally understood, repetitions through time play a vital role and are connected with the concept of identity. When something, a sentence, an utterance, an act, is repeated often enough, it gains power, it constructs an identity. For example, in communist Yugoslavia the slogan 'Protect brotherhood and unity' became a kind of a performative speech act, where, according to Austin, to say something actually means an action has to be performed to realise its effect. The slogan 'Protect brotherhood and unity' designated the official policy of ethnic relations in former Yugoslavia, and the authority behind the particular performative speech act was the Yugoslav People's Army. Whenever the effect, i.e., the unity of the country was put into question, the sanctions that followed demanded an intervention. In the eighties, when the

political situation changed, this normative ideology regained new performative functions and repetitions, which no longer demanded unity but instead, fragmentation of the country leading to a break-up of Yugoslavia.

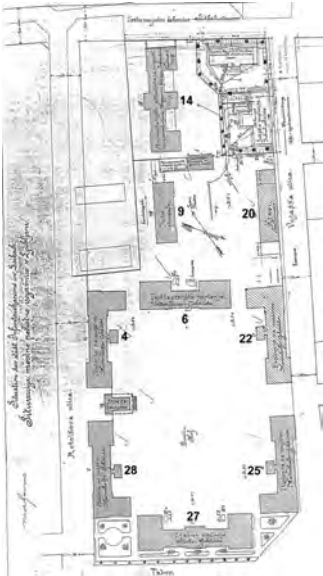
Similarly, the museum's legitimation consists of those discourses that have the capacity to produce what they name. What they name are the works of art. And this is what performativity in the art context means: the way the identity of a work of art is constructed and invested within the art environment. This had been the museum's main objective until the second half of the twentieth century.

Now, when we do not only investigate conflictual acts, events, gestures, forms of behaviour, affects etc., that constitute so-called counter-knowledge within such performative environments but also connect them with the body, with desire, really interesting things emerge. What does this counter-knowledge do? Through it, identities, borders, disciplines, hegemonic narratives and automatic responses are being questioned and deconstructed, subsequently leading to the production of a space that is different. Now, the contradictory new space is being produced out of differences which are found, for instance, in 'lived bodily experiences', 'socio-spatial tactics' and 'rhythmanalysis' and should be considered, as Henri Lefebvre pointed out, with the entire body and with all the senses in order to become aware of the conflicts at work within it, or, more specifically, to become aware of the forces that demand its normalisation, its abstraction. In art, for example, once the particular environment recognises it, the difference between inside and outside cannot disappear again. In the context of the contemporary museum the repetitive acts that grant the art work its identity are inevitably linked to the subversive repetitions that question that very same identity. Subversive repetitions could be seen as analogous to the Deleuzian model of time, where a repetition actually makes itself the form of time. It is this antagonistic relationship between repetitions-as-time and performativity that has legitimised the idea of contemporary art and, later on, that of the contemporary museum over the last fifty years.

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The barracks on Metelkova Street were built between 1883 and 1895 for the Austro-Hungarian army. Michel de Certeau put it very precisely when he said that the tendency of functionalist totalitarianism was to erase everything that compromised the univocity of the system. Following his idea, the relationship between spatial practices and constructed order can be observed more clearly. The same logic could be discerned at the Metelkova complex. The formalised and strict architectural order of the military complex fostered authority, hierarchy, discipline and control [Figure 2]. All of these operations subsequently effected the routinisation of human actions, efficiency, and disciplinary bodily activities; in other words, the construction of a 'docile body'.

The regulated bodily acts and the repressions of desire which prevailed in these military spaces were an inevitable part of the 'performative exercises of power'. In military barracks, any potentially dangerous or disturbing behaviour was sanctioned, life was strictly planned and regulated, and time was dictated and organised in schedules. In other words, 'the space of order was hidden in the order of space' (Lefebvre).



**Figure 2:** Blueprint of the Metelkova street barracks from 1883

When the Yugoslav People's Army moved in after the Second World War, it exercised its power precisely through these same regulated forms of behaviour, instrumental actions and punitive social conventions, outwardly manifested also in embodied performances such as military parades and other highly performative acts and spectacles. In order to impose an authoritarian order, these performative acts had to be repeated in time [Figure 3].

As previously mentioned, performative acts, which are inevitably linked to power, make us re-think the disciplinary boundaries not only of embodied behaviour in culturally restricted, regularised spaces but also of the counter behaviour that occurs in those very same spaces (cf., Diana Taylor).



**Figure 3:** Yugoslav People's Army military parade, 1970s

The first gesture of such rebellion is, as philosopher Mladen Dolar says, an 'epistemological rupture, which establishes authority as an object'. The subversive acts then occur as interruptions disturbing the stability of the system where ideology of those in power is called into question and can therefore no longer be valid as such or taken for granted. Its performative power is lost forever [Figure 4].



**Figure 4:** Tomislav Gotovac, *Zagreb, I love you*, performance, 1981. Photograph: Ivan Posavec

The list of various 'subversions' in the context of the former Yugoslav People's Army and the dominant ideology of that time is too long for the scope of this talk. But there were also cases where artistic subversions which could somehow be considered 'events' disturbed the continuous linear time of the dominant ideology to such a degree as to enable the beginning of something different. Many such works are now part of the Moderna galerija's collections. What makes all of this especially interesting is the antagonism between two environments / two spaces: one that banned subversive (artistic) expressions and persecuted their authors, and another that has recently, or to be more precise, since the beginning of our

contemporaneity, included and conceptualised those expressions within the museum narrative.

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In 1969 Želimir Žilnik filmed *Early Works*, which is set during the time of the student riots of 1968 in the former Yugoslavia and has four young people as the leading characters. They leave home and travel around the country looking for genuinely revolutionary Socialism, with the intention of raising the workers' and peasants' revolutionary consciousness. But theirs is a mission that cannot be realised and the film endeavours to express this state of helplessness on the part of the revolutionaries who are trying to change society. Throughout the film, slogans such as 'Down with the red bourgeoisie!' can be heard, although instead of performative utterances they could be interpreted as a mocking of the system. The film was banned [Figure 5].



Figure 5: Želimir Žilnik, film scene from *Early Works*, 1969

In 1972 Karpo Godina made a short film, which was originally commissioned by the Yugoslav army as a propaganda film. Instead, the picture called *On Love Skills* was pacifistic and took the hippy maxim: 'Make love, not war' as its point of departure. Where the army repressed and encoded differences and desires, this film not only openly showed them but constituted a desire in itself. It was an act of rebellion, a threat to the system, doubting the authoritarian ideology via embodied counter-behaviour, in the sense of Lefebvre who said, 'Any revolutionary project, whether utopian or realistic, must make the reappropriation of the body, in the association with the reappropriation of space, into a non-negotiable part of its agenda'. All copies of the film were destroyed and Godina was forbidden to direct any new film for ten years [Figure 6].



**Figure 6:** Karpo Godina, film scene from *On Love Skills*, 1972

In his 1971 work *Streaking*, Tomislav Gotovac runs down the street in Belgrade naked shouting 'I am innocent!' Gotovac's performances were embodied subversions *par excellence* of the existing socio-political order, where his naked and desiring body was the protagonist of the action. Such expressions were dangerous because they questioned the very system based on control and discipline, destroying the established culture of normality in a society that did not tolerate non-conformity and difference [Figure 7].



**Figure 7:** Tomislav Gotovac, *Streaking*, 1971

In 1987, New Collectivism (or shortened, NK) took part in the visual design competition to commemorate The Day of Youth, May 25, President Tito's birthday, which was one of the major performative acts / spectacles in the former Yugoslavia. NK won the competition and the poster it designed was to be distributed and displayed all over the country. However, a striking similarity to Nazi artist Richard Klein's painting was soon discovered in the design, only the Nazi symbols had been replaced by Yugoslav ones. The events led to the so-called Poster Scandal, embarrassing (as Rastko Močnik wrote), the 'ideology of those in power'. In the proclamation that followed, NK stated that a political poster should have some disturbing appeal to the masses and that its slogan was humanistic

propaganda. Tomaž Mastnak, a political philosopher, pointed out that the key moment of any social or political struggle was the outbreak of the so-called 'strange utterance' leading to a restructuring of ideological speech. This was also the case with the Day of Youth poster [Figure 8].



Figure 8: Newspaper clip from *Politika*, the Day of Youth poster, 1987

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While the military complex in Metelkova corresponds to repressive, dominant space legitimated by repetitive performative acts and 'man's servitude to quantified time', the Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova corresponds to the appropriated, differential space, or, to be more precise, to an ideal/utopian projection of that space, which Foucault would have called *heterotopia*. Why so? Because the fact is that there are various frictions at work: not only antagonism between the forces of domination and differentiation, but also between abstract space and the space of lived experiences, of the *in-time*, which demands of us an answer to the question of how to preserve human temporality and its 'pure historical essence'. When back in the early nineties the Moderna galerija acquired a building at the southern end of Metelkova, a new kind of museum model had been envisioned, a future model which would foster a relationship to those practices from the sixties onwards in which artists would manipulate time in a variety of ways, not only in order to become historians of their own time but to challenge dominant, ideological time. For this to be possible, what was needed was 'not a new chronology but a qualitative alteration of time,<sup>1</sup> with, as Agamben might have said, an authentic history. So it is actually the antagonistic relationship between the 'liberating time' of authentic history and the 'continuous linear time'

<sup>1</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Infancy and History, On the Destruction of Experience*, Verso, London-New York, (first ed. 1978), 2007, p.115

of dominant ideology, or between repetitions-as-time and performativity, that defines our idea of both contemporary art and the contemporary museum [Figure 9].



**Figure 9:** Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova, 2011

Bojana Piskur's text *The Metelkova Case: From Army Barracks to Museum of Contemporary Art* has been edited by Jeff Bickert.



## **UNDERSTANDING LOCAL CONTEXT II - *City as a Museum. The Workers' and Punks' University***

**ASTA VREČKO**

The Workers' and Punks' University (WPU) was founded in Ljubljana in 1998. It is located in the Avtonomni kulturni center Metelkova mesto (AKC Metelkova mesto), the Metelkova district, on the premises of the former Yugoslav army barracks and affiliated with the Peace Institute. In the beginning it was an attempt to break the silence that took over Ljubljana's intellectual life in the nineties after the intellectually intense eighties. When the dreams and desires of the leftist intellectuals of the eighties met in the nineties with the cold reality of nationalism, ethnic chauvinism and capitalism, with their corresponding destructive social and political effects, there was a large withdrawal of intellect from the political field and public space. The remains of the once impressive intellectual movement of the eighties were mostly isolated attempts for preservation of the welfare state and against the ethnic exclusion and liberal and capitalist triumphalism. In these circumstances, WPU tried to counteract the prevalent intellectual trend and establish once again a base for independent and critical thought. Its name was both a reference to the leftist intellectual and cultural movements of the eighties (punks) and a critique of the misery and conformism of left-wing thought in Slovenia in the nineties (workers). At the same time, WPU was formed as an independent intellectual and educational institution, removed from the official university, which by the late nineties (especially in the faculties of humanities and social sciences) had more or less become a carrier of conservative nationalist and technocratic liberal thought, precluding any possibility of genuinely leftist theory, except for certain miserable attempts at impersonating Western cultural studies.

The move from official university to the then (in the times of Soros) budding NGO scene proved to be no less problematic. Actually, at the time, despite its sincere benevolence and dedication to noble causes such as the promotion of human rights and the rule of law, the NGO scene was at the forefront of the transformation of classic humanities' theory into practical, applied, problem-solving and issue-related knowledge. WPU was therefore founded in the least favourable circumstances, caught between the decadence of university life and NGOs that were eager to replace all historical achievements of continental thought with second-hand Anglo-Saxon imports, unreflective legalism and anti-theoretical discourse of discrimination, social exclusion, monitoring, European integration, etc. Still, WPU managed once again to bring explicitly political themes to the centre of public space and discussions, addressing issues such as the revolution, May '68, the New Left and the New Right at a time when political topics, especially those concerning revolutionary and left-wing political legacies, were unwelcome in the political and academic fields.

After a few years, WPU grew and expanded its programme. At first, it consisted of only a few weekly lectures, a number that was progressively extended to approximately 20 lectures each annual course. Reading seminars and film projections were also added, so it currently has 4-5 reading seminars, a film seminar, a lecture course and a spring school held each May. Reading seminars, to date, have focused on Marx, Foucault, Brecht, Freud, Spinoza, Hegel and other classics, as well as different authors on several relevant topics such as bio-politics or Asian modes of production. A theme for a series of lectures on a topic is selected by the board; recent themes have been Love and Politics, Stupidity, On Sin, Post-Fordism, School as Ideological Economy Apparatus, Totalitarianism, Class Struggle after Class Struggle, and this year's topic is Financialisation [Figure 1].<sup>2</sup>



Figure 1: WPU Financialisation poster

Together with reading seminars and lectures, WPU presents a socially conscious, politically engaged and theoretically rigorous alternative to standard university teaching, both in content and in form. Regarding content, WPU tries to focus on reading classics and on selecting literature that is pertinent to relevant and actual social and political events and processes, in counter distinction to repetitive and largely irrelevant corpus of knowledge taught at the university. Regarding form, WPU is egalitarian and inclusive; all events are free of charge, open to everyone regardless of age, social status, financial situation, formal degree of education or any other personal circumstance. Moreover, there are no formal exams and titles and anyone who shows enough interest and skill can attend, teach or organise events.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://dpu.mirovni-institut.si/>

During its existence, it has managed to activate a whole generation of young intellectuals by offering them a space to organise seminars, lectures and discussions outside the stifling, gerontocratic and status-obsessed academic milieu. In the last few years, it also began to expand its scope from the narrow intellectual sphere to workers' circles by collaborating with trade unions and with the Moderna galerija Ljubljana. While the problems with the university and the NGO scene persist and have not been corrected by WPU's activities, it at least offers an alternative form of education and development of critical leftist theory. Now we shall move slightly away from the history of WPU to the topic of this meeting and events in Ljubljana. Urban development over recent decades has faced an array of social forces that have moulded its appearance. Most notably, capital has been the driving force behind the creation of impoverished neighbourhoods, the migration of labour force and gentrification. This culminated in an even larger discrepancy between old city centres and other economically profitable areas (shopping centres, elite apartment districts) and districts that are not so interesting from the market point of view. The former have thrived and enjoyed prosperous development, while the latter have steadily deteriorated. This is the framework defining the urban strategies each city had to consider.

City space as a social and material place is becoming more and more fragmented and segmented, but at the same time it is increasingly connected with the global, albeit it seems that this connection is only established through economy, through capital. Creative industries are being introduced by the government to enable cities to develop their potential and almost as the only solution to connect their inhabitants with culture and art. However, the fact that, like all others, this is merely a political decision is completely overlooked. The idea is not to open public space up to debates and new ideas, but to run it as a capitalist company concerned only with its own income and profits. Regarding Ljubljana, very necessary renovation and conservation works are becoming an excuse for changing the status and understanding of public spaces. Despite having once belonged to their users, the general public and citizens, now such relationships are being redefined in terms of consumerism and entrepreneurship.

The city tells its own (hi)story to a spectator through its image, which is manipulated by every new government and its political agenda, all of which is materialised in architecture, monuments, street names, venues and urban planning. Citizens, however, are guided thorough the city, especially through the old quarter and the new shopping centre districts only as consumers, and therefore individuals are not considered as users of their own public space, streets, pavements, museums, galleries, schools, etc., but as consumers who have to pay for the services they are offered. As a result of the firm and highly successful implementation of capitalism, people have forgotten their right to demand free use of public places that belong to us all. So the task faced by culture, art institutions and individuals to unveil this simple fact and to question and reflect

on the political decisions that are being made is both challenging and responsible. What is most important is that we make sure we ask ourselves at which point does the concern for public good turn into a reduction of public space, and that we do not distance or cut ourselves off from each other, as is currently the case with the AKC Metelkova mesto separated from direct access to the Metelkova museum quarter that is being established only a few metres away.

That is obviously happening in Metelkova, but it had also previously occurred with the Moderna galerija Ljubljana and a project entitled *Museum in the Streets* in 2008 when it lost its exhibition space due to renovation work and yet did not receive any temporary space for its displays from the government. As a result, the citizens of Slovenia lost the possibility to contemplate their own modern art, which is theirs to claim, since the institution is public. But who cares about public art and culture, if they are neither profitable nor directly connected to the market? As Bojana Piškur has stated in the accompanying catalogue of the exhibition: '*Museum in the Streets* questioned public art as an embellishment, as a means of gentrification, as the erasure of differences via commodification, generalization and reproduction of forms of spectacle, as well as the idea that art is produced autonomously and as such has no political relations towards the wider social space where it is located.'<sup>3</sup>

To come to the question raised by Zdenka Badovinac in her letter for this conference: 'What, in fact, is the space of the museum? ... Especially in times of crisis, collaboration between different groups and organizations in a city has often meant the creation of platforms that allow work to take place in relative autonomy, that provide a kind of shield against the undue pressures of politics and capital.'<sup>4</sup> So, how can we change the purpose of space, not only public space, and who can claim the right to this space and its use? We shall now take a quick look at the main event in our city today, which is not the Ljubljana Graphic Biennale, but one that is taking place on the square in front of the stock exchange. The 15 O movement is a part of the global resistance movement that began with the Occupy Wall Street movement [Figure 2].

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<sup>3</sup> Bojana Piškur, The (Im)possibilities of an Art Space Becoming Political, *Museum on the Street* (ed. Tamara Soban), Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana, 23 September – 19 October 2008, p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Zdenka Badovinac, *The Museum and the City*, 2011.

[http://www.cimam.org/arxius/reuniones/archivos/Z.\\_Badovinac,\\_The\\_Museum\\_and\\_the\\_City.pdf](http://www.cimam.org/arxius/reuniones/archivos/Z._Badovinac,_The_Museum_and_the_City.pdf)



Figure 2: Occupation movement, Ljubljana

It is a movement against global capitalism, a global uprising against the capitalist mode of production, that very same system that is experiencing the greatest crisis in its history and has robbed the younger generations of their future, depriving workers of a possibility for a dignified life. The evening after the demonstration was held some of the protesters decided to set up a camp there. Tomorrow they will have been camped for a month and the movement has only grown stronger and stronger.<sup>5</sup> It is called BOJ ZA, or in English STRUGGLE FOR, because the letter R from the sign *borza* (which means stock exchange), fell off and was cleverly replaced by the letter J, so it is now known in public as BOJ ZA or STRUGGLE FOR [Figure 3].



Figure 3: STRUGGLE FOR, Ljubljana

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.15o.si/index.php/sl/>

Perhaps one of the most interesting characteristics of this movement is its 'struggle for' space. It has redefined the square before the stock exchange and given a new meaning to the place, that was already public, but is now also run by citizens. It is our responsibility not to leave it merely as a public sculpture made up of tents but to protect and preserve it as a site for context and thought. It has become a place where the right questions are being raised, and it enjoys great public support. Next week the occupation of the Faculty of Arts is planned by the movement of students and university workers MI SMO UNIVERZA [*We are the University*, Figure 4]<sup>6</sup>, in order to regain public institutions that are no longer run by workers, professors, students, etc., but by bureaucratisation and the dictatorship of capital [Figure 5].



**Figure 4:** Occupation of the Faculty of Arts, Ljubljana

In the forthcoming elections to be held in Slovenia in early December, most parties plan to reduce the number of ministers in order to cut costs. For the most part that means saving in public administration and reducing the number of ministries from fifteen to ten. As you can already guess, for most parties the Ministry of Culture is expendable and its loss would only be considered as collateral damage; the majority propose to merge it with the Ministry of Education.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://mismouniverza.org/>



**Figure 5:** *We are the University*, Faculty of Arts, Ljubljana

What can we do about this situation? How can we change the course of events? How can we bring theory, action, art and institutions together in the city? I have already mentioned BOJ ZA and other occupation movements, but the question is still how the subversive and emancipatory potential of art and therefore of art institutions can also collaborate. The great thing about art is that it is limitless: it can imagine and present the world without class distinctions; it can research new possibilities of alternative thinking on the economy and others seemingly rigid subjects. It has a possibility to go further, to be universal and contemporary; not only to be a response but an idea in itself. It has the ability to open only concrete but also virtual places for discussing and creating platforms for exchanging ideas. The power of art and, of course, art institutions, is to make the invisible visible. Due to its subversive nature, art can bring forgotten and hidden phenomena to the surface, raising public awareness of them.

**UNDERSTANDING LOCAL CONTEXT III - *The Other Museum. P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E.***  
***Museum of Contemporary Art***  
**TADEJ POGAČAR**

**PART I (BUS)**

Dear colleagues and honoured guests,

Welcome aboard. Our goal is the northern margins of Ljubljana, an area called Šentvid. The trip will take about fifteen minutes. Our final destination is the P74 Center and Gallery and the exhibition *The Other Museum*. Visibility is good. Please fasten your seat belts so that your journey will be safe and comfortable.

When I use the name P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E., I am referring to a two-headed dragon: the P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E. Museum of Contemporary Art and the P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E. Institute.

The P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E. Museum was founded in 1993 and is the only museum of its kind in the world. It can be described as a notional parallel art institution, a mobile spiritual entity that creates specific interrelationships among a variety of subjects, societies, institutions, social groups and symbolic networks.

The P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E. Museum of Contemporary Art has no premises or staff of its own. Instead, it adopts territories, chooses different spaces and feeds off the juices of other institutions. It is a 'parallel institution' that serves as a critical model for analysing systems and the institutions within them, and as a framework for introducing alternative forms of communication and establishing new connections. Its operations are not based on the production of objects but on the creation of situations and the cultivation of relationships.

The P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E. Museum's early interventions in other museums raised questions about institutional organisation and knowledge. How are museums organised and how is knowledge produced and structured? How is it possessed, transmitted and used? Another closely related issue was social visibility: we question what we see and what we don't see, what we think of as 'natural' and what we find disturbing. Over the years, the P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E. Museum has evolved its own operational strategy, called 'new parasitism'. This can be described as the subtle deconstruction of the horizons of the everyday and the relentless challenging of social systems that establish the centralising forces, the structures of dominance and power, in everyday life, art and society.

One of the important activities of the P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E. Museum has been the creation of communication networks. In the mid-nineties, this took us out of galleries and museums and into public spaces, into the city and onto the streets. Next came joint projects and collaborations with marginal urban minorities—homeless people in the project *Kings of the Street* (1995), and sex workers in the long-term project *CODE:RED* (1999–2011). In its current projects, the



P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E. Museum explores the everyday reality of contemporary cities, participatory urbanism and the economy of urban minorities, examining these and other issues through the context of dominance and power relations.

Now, let me say a few words about the other institution tied to the P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E. name: the P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E. Institute. The P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E. Institute was founded in 1998 as a non-profit cultural institution. For the past fourteen years, it has promoted a diverse assortment of contemporary art and culture programmes in the areas of production, education and publishing (notably, art theory and artists' books). The institute operates two production and exhibition spaces in Ljubljana: the P74 Center and Gallery in Šentvid and KAPSULA in the centre, which is a bookshop for artists' books and a project space. The Institute's story is all about the self-organisation of artists—artists who create new spaces both for their own ideas and for the ideas of others. The working philosophy of P74 has always been based on the ideas and strategies of adaptability, flexibility, experimentation, the crossing of disciplines and discourses, collaboration, exchange and a critical approach. In our fourteen years of operation, many of the projects in our programmes have focused on the theme of the local: on locality, site-specificity and the micro-local. The P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E. Institute has also introduced new programmes and projects in visual art, experimental music and education. We initiate and support collaborations between artists, artists' groups, independent artists' initiatives, curators and art centres and galleries, both locally and internationally.

For more than a decade, the mission of the P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E. Institute has been centred on participatory projects, collaborative workshops and alternative forms of education, working with youth and underprivileged groups such as the homeless.

One of the P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E. Institute's most recent projects was *The Renaming Machine*. This was a comprehensive curatorial and artistic exploration of the complexities in political and cultural renaming processes. The project examined how these processes and patterns contributed to the construction and destabilisation of national, cultural and personal identities over the past twenty years in the former Yugoslavia and South Eastern Europe. It encompassed a wide range of artistic and cultural phenomena associated with renaming, in order to examine how renaming affects visual culture and transgresses cultural identities in the region.

An important upcoming educational project organised by the Institute is called *Reversed Hierarchy: Audiences in Action*. Here we are working in close collaboration with Suzana Milevska and several international partners. The project was inspired by the fact that today's art audiences are curious, well-educated and informed, and more than ever before, expect, and even demand, the opportunity to participate in different stages and aspects of institutional art programmes. They

are often put off, however, by the emphasis on specialised knowledge, the technical jargon and the fixed agendas of the leading players in the art field (curators, art professionals, artists and policy makers). This project will invite audiences to get to know us more closely and will encourage them to take an active role in creating parts of the programme by discussing topics, concerns, media and art phenomena that from the audience's perspective seem most relevant today.

Now, dear guests, we are approaching the periphery. In addition to viewing the exhibition at P74 Center and Gallery, please don't forget to visit the gallery bookshop and consult our publications, editions and artists' books.

## **PART II (P74 Gallery)**

Welcome to P74,

The exhibition entitled *The Other Museum* brings together works by the most important contemporary artists in the region, made between the sixties and the nineties, which problematise, deconstruct and politicise the status and ideological foundations of the museum and the art system and actively contribute to the creation of alternative models of cultural production and presentation. In this process, it is the artists themselves who establish parallel models and structures of operation, who appear as political figures, and who subordinate cultural production to direct participation, the local community and the public.

The exhibition may be read as a direct introduction to the question: What sort of contemporary art institutions do we need and how should they operate in the period of globalisation?

## **INTRODUCTION**

—Thank you very much. Our initial idea was different because the guided tour of the exhibition starts here. This is the last part of the installation, under the title *The Other Museum*. Another idea is that you shall meet two young intellectual curators who will describe the works and how the show has been set up. They've only been here once before, so I've asked them to follow some instructions but also to invent some stories about how narrations in different museum institutions are constructed. So she's coming in a couple of minutes but I've jumped ahead, because I'm supposed to appear at the very end of this presentation.

You've heard a bit about the story on the buses. It's been fourteen years since we entered this building. As you can see, it's a combination of city and village, as it's definitively on the periphery, a concept that is a very important part of our themes. The people who live here say 'We're going to Ljubljana, we're going to the city'. For the local audience it is very hard, because they are not used to digesting

contemporary art and all that surrounds it. However, there were a couple of artistic projects produced in collaboration with local residents. So, the P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E. Institute and these activities, education programmes and exhibitions focus on the artists.

Artists should be the chief figures, and sometimes we just help them, delivering technical support or giving them space. We also have younger artists, whom we support and even help install their works, etc. So there really are different levels of co-operation.

Just briefly you heard a little bit about our activities, one of the most important of which is publishing. In the last five years we have really become very active in the field of artists' books, visiting artists' book fairs and establishing connections with many international publishers. We also publish theoretical or topic-based books. Some of the books, artists' books and catalogues are over there. You're welcome to look at them or even buy them, no problem!

We are now waiting for the guide, who will lead you through these two spaces, and then we have another guide for the next space and I shall wait for you in the last area. You shall also go through the storage space and the kitchen, which is all part of the story. Thank you very much.

#### **GUIDE: A**

—Hello. I'm giving a tour for those of you who are interested in following me around the exhibition. I would like to welcome you all. If I speak too fast just let me know, it's a habit.

So, welcome to P74.

The exhibition you are looking at is called *The Other Museum* and presents some of the most important contemporary work by artists in the region made from 1960 to the present. These works problematise, deconstruct and politicise the status of the museum and the art system, and make an active contribution to the creation of alternative modes of cultural production and presentation. So this exhibition, as I am sure you have noticed, extends throughout the entire ground floor (we can go through both of the rooms afterwards, and please excuse me if I don't pronounce things very well).

The work right behind us was made in 1976 by an artist called Dalibor Martinis and is called *Art Guard*. It's one of his main performance works in which he critiques the gallery and museum systems. So, dressed in a guard's uniform he interrupts and obstructs the view of the observer by standing behind him. The artist uses elements of irony and humour to question how we place value on art works and blocks the view of the work to encourage a questioning of art.

This is a work by Ilya Kabakov. The text that accompanies it is called 'How to Meet an Angel' and was written in 1997. I shall read it to you.

‘After analyzing many reports we can conclude that meetings with angels happen most often, indeed almost always, at an altitude of between 1200 and 1400 meters above sea level. In other words, in mountainous areas and on mountains with the right altitude meeting an angel or angels also always happens in crisis situations when people have reached a turning point in their lives. People in such state who need an angel’s help must ask for it themselves. In a large unpopulated area outside a city or even better in a remote area we will erect a very high vertical ladder, which will be able to reach a height of 1200 meters. Contemporary materials make it possible to make a sufficiently stable construction with cables extending down every 50 meters, which will allow the ladder to resist strong winds. A person who is determined to climb to the top of the ladder would have been prepared to the fact that it would take several days. When they reach the top, high above the clouds and exposed to winds, they will undoubtedly achieve a moment of crisis, when meeting an angel becomes inevitable.’ That’s kind of cheeky.

Behind me here is a work by artist Goran Trbuljak called *Four Houses from Rok’s Garden and One Near Me*, made between 1976 and 1977. In the late sixties and early seventies this artist carried out a number of street actions in which he looked at the element of coincidence in the production of art. He was interested in the idea that every artist can therefore take a position towards questions of authorship and autonomy. Trbuljak’s early works express certain distrust in art and in art institutions. In many of his works he problematised questions about the art system, the gallery system, the significance of exhibiting and the status of the artist. As you can see, most of these [works] have texts below them, so I’ll read you the translation of one of them.

‘I remember that between the years 1955 and 1964 when we were in primary school we would go with our teachers on a field trip to see a house that has been built by a famous sculptor. At the time I was still unfamiliar with his sculptures in my mind. The house he built represented the only sculpture by this artist. Even later, when I knew more about the sculptural works by the artist, this idea from my early youth, that his house was in fact his only sculpture, seemed exactly right.’

This work by Vlado Martek I like to think is a geo-political collage. In this drawing he underscores the geo-political logic of the contemporary art system. Here the Balkans assume the shape of the United States of America where the main cities are labelled with the names of Croatian artists. The artist creates a parallel between the USA and the Balkans, analysing cultural and political stereotypes associated with the Balkans as a region of conflict characterised by religious and national intolerance, wild and primitive. He then questions whether the tropes and stereotypes that we associate with the United States as a democratic, civilised and multicultural nation are really so closely connected, establishing a kind of parallel discourse to that system of stereotypes.

This work we are looking at by Mladen Stilinović is called *The Museum of Pigs* and was produced in 2009. Belonging to a series called *Insulting Anarchy*, which is both vulgar and funny, it takes on the theme of global consumerism, the political archaeology of recent history and the hierarchical structure of the art system. In *The Museum of Pigs* the artist sets up a parallel between nature and culture. As you can see, it has the appearance of pigsties, and is related to the idea of art fairs.

And behind us here is a work by Dimitrij Bašičević Mangelos, *Deer Hunt*, made in 1962. The artist is a critic, curator and Conceptual artist who was an active member of the Gorgona Group from 1959 to 1966. His early works were first exhibited within a Gorgona retrospective in 1977. A creator of anti-art and anti-poetry, an internal sceptic and critic of the institution of art and art institutions, he's known for the statement, 'Art is when you pass a gallery and don't look inside'.

Right over here there is a bookshop that I would encourage all of you to take a peek at. There are a few more works in the other room here.

This work by Marko Pogačnik, *Synth Gallery* made in 1966, is a reconstruction. He came up with this idea in 1966 as a simple mobile construction designed as an alternative presentation platform for contemporary art. It was intended primarily as a means of democratising artistic life and artistic institutions. This portable and easy-to-use structure was designed for places where people gather in large numbers.

And lastly we have a work from the P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E. Museum of Contemporary Art. These are signs from various previous exhibitions and events related to the P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E. Museum referencing alternative or fictive spaces. Thank you.

#### **GUIDE: B**

—I will just quickly introduce the work that is on display here and in the next room (called *The Olive*), and then you will proceed further on to the third room where another speaker will present that part. I would like to describe the centre piece first, a work by the Croatian artist Lara Badurina entitled *Finished Series* 'manufactured' between 2006 and 2010. I say manufactured since in fact it is a series of originally mass-produced Chinese vases that the artist bought in the market, took home and then destroyed. Afterwards, working like an archaeologist, she pieced them back together again. Of course with processes like these, the finished product is never quite as one would expect and we are left with a series of three art pieces which invite us to rethink the role of mass-produced, craft-produced or artistic objects in a gallery setting. At the same time, since the pieces were originally manufactured in China then imported to Croatia and re-made there, the artist also flirts with the theme of globalisation. We might venture to think that this is her own viewing of the way we perceive and rebuild foreign

cultures for ourselves since we are given scraps of information, glimpses and insights which would then construct our understanding of what another culture amounts to, but this is always somehow incomplete and somewhat artificially composed.

Behind me is a work by Dragoljub Raša Todosijević *Ich heisse Pablo Picasso*, a humorous diptych composed in a sort of post-cubist Picasso-style painting, on the one hand, accompanied by another screen which has printed text, in which the artist whimsically calls himself Pablo Picasso and goes about explaining how he is actually from the Balkans and not the other (the real) Pablo Picasso. The artist calls into question how the Western model of art history is accepted and applied in other societies such as African and Asian cultures, to which it might not be ideally suited, and how those cultures might, in turn, respond to that process by compensating for their apparent lack of big names recognised worldwide as icons of art, classical or contemporary, by inventing their own counterparts and saying 'Well, we have a Picassovich, and he is just as valid and just as recognisable as the other Pablo Picasso might be'.

Here we have a piece that is not perhaps in itself a work of art. It is a promotional work by one of the co-founders of the Slovenian avant-garde group OHO, Marko Pogačnik, produced in the seventies. The piece represents the work process of the OHO collective. It tries to make an abstract frame, an abstract representation of the way the group works and what they do, so you could say that here the artists took it upon themselves to act as critics, turning the tables on the critics and instead of saying 'this was made' saying 'this is how we work and instead of a finished object, that is what we are actually showing'.

And then at the far end of the room is a piece called *Untitled*, produced in 2009 by one of the grand masters of Croatian art, Ivan Kožarić. Mr Kožarić himself is over ninety years old now but still going strong. He was selected for documenta XI in Kassel, for which his entire studio was catalogued, photographed, documented and transported, to be rebuilt and exhibited in the gallery space. His entire studio was set up as a museum piece because the curators recognised his way of working: reworking and recycling his own earlier objects, which for that purpose are permanently displayed in the studio, where he can revisit and rethink them as he works. It's almost a kind of museum in itself set up in the artist's studio. This work is a paper sculpture, a structure which, even though it might look randomly crumpled, was carefully and meticulously folded and shaped into this evocative object that we now see.

As the title of the exhibition is *The Other Museum*, we have opened the next room for you. Being the storage room it is not normally used as an exhibition space as it is closed to the public. It features two works by the same group of artists, called the Group of Six, a post-avant-garde group active in the late seventies in Zagreb, Croatia. Both pieces were conceived at the same time but only one of them is

actually from that period because permission was not given for the other one to be executed at that time.

The first piece, the large projection you see on the screen, called *Exhibition- action* from 1974, is documentary footage of the actions performed in public space in Zagreb. The artists sought to question the role of art in society and in life, and the role played by institutions such as galleries and museums, challenging curators and others by taking work outside, into public space—streets, square, markets, beaches, river fronts—displaying it openly and often going as far as to protest about it by carrying banners around the city and advertising their own endeavours.

The smaller screen that you see on the left shows video images captured from a documentary *Artist in a Cage*, (1976) 1999. This piece was conceived in 1976 but artists weren't able to execute. What they proposed was to have themselves locked into one of the cages of the zoological garden in Zagreb but at the time the zoo didn't play along. In 1999 a documentary was made about their work in the seventies, and that was when they were finally granted permission to carry out the work. Extra footage was shot during the making of the documentary and what we did was take an excerpt from it and present it in a thirty-second loop on display in the next space. So, that is all from me. Enjoy the pieces here and in the room that follows the storage room. Thank you.

#### **GUIDE: C**

—Hello. My name is Tadej Pogačar and I work in this gallery. We shall now move to the rear of the building. In fact, you are the first group who will really explore all these spaces because they have never been opened to the public before. So, you go through the storage area and further, through the kitchen, which was closed for twenty years. We want to show you the whole place, all the hidden areas: the exhibition is here and then continues in this last interior space and then comes an exit that leads to the rear of the building, very close to the front.

In this room we have four works about which I shall just say a couple of words to familiarise you with them. I think that every decent museum needs its own 'Mona Lisa' of sorts, so this is our 'Mona Lisa' here, kept for the show, a work by Vlado Martek. I didn't know this work before. It belongs to the *Čuček Collection* from Ljubljana. Vlado Martek is a well-known Neo-conceptual artist from Zagreb who was also a member of the Group of Six artists; this larger projection shows their exhibition actions on the streets in what would be a sort of 'museum on the street' project. He came to the visual arts through poetry and his media included collage, public actions and visual poetry; he was also one of the pioneers in the field of artists' books in the region. He developed an interest in establishing parallelisms, using well-known philosophical and poetic names as a starting point for parallel works, which he juxtaposed to those by famous thinkers and writers. This is why I think he uses his younger photo from the seventies, in which he really looks more like the Mona Lisa.

Just behind there you have a work by a well-known theoretician from the region of Belgrade, Miško Šuvaković, much more known as a writer, an art historian and a lecturer, although he also worked as an artist in the seventies and early eighties and joined Group 143, a group of late Conceptual artists which was active in Belgrade and interested in a kind of hardcore theoretical conceptualism. I don't think that much of his work has been exhibited yet, but this piece forms a part of his personal archive from 1973 to 1975. At that time he was interested in the idea of personal archive and collected different sorts of envelopes in which he placed nails as well as all kinds of ordinary material that he used for drawing or painting, and even dry grass. He was not interested in a classical way of documenting and preserving material, but more in the process of how certain material can become "artistic". On this plastic bag, for example, he wrote 'Here I can put whatever [I want]', for he was interested in the possibility or non-possibility of creating something which could potentially become a piece of art in the future. In recent years Miško Šuvaković has written numerous books on avant-garde and contemporary art in Serbia, and in the South East Europe.

Now we come to these last two works, which deal with the theme of portable museums or virtual museums. The work *Visit II* was performed in 1993 at the National History Museum by Tadej Pogačar; the same year as the P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E. Museum of Contemporary Art was founded. This early action is part of so called *No Event Actions*, i.e., conceptual actions without an audience, that are not announced to the public. The idea of *Visit II* was to deepen empathy with the museum displays. First one is entitled *Meditating with Mammoth*, second *Feeding a Bear*, and the third, *Sleeping with Deer*. Later that same year we made our first major intervention in the Museum of the Socialist Revolution which was in fact the first large installation that actually reused the material from the set and introduced other narratives, questioning both the function and the ideological foundations of the museum.

Here, on the last wall, we have a video presentation of the Antimuseo (Tomás Ruiz-Rivas and María María Acha) an artistic collective from Madrid. Their idea is to build a portable museum—a museum on wheels—that goes in search of the audience instead of waiting for it to make its way to the museum. This was a project produced in Mexico City for a few months, based on extensive research. For a long time Ruiz-Rivas had been running a non-profit space, El Ojo Atómico. Their idea is to approach local audiences, the city's social minorities and non-represented young artists and give them an opportunity to show their work or to show themselves, basically.

Here is the whole process of construction of this portable device but they also show the whole process of negotiations, discussions, how individuals or groups should be presented. So I think the idea was to provide a space and a voice to



enable certain groups or organisations to be presented in public space. This is an ongoing project, and this is just the part that was done in Mexico City.

The last space I will tell you about when you leave the house. The last video piece is by Dejan Habicht, a photographer and Conceptual artist who focuses in this piece on the topic of art systems. The artist used the popular film by Julian Schnabel about his younger colleague Basquiat. In this short clip, in a loop, Basquiat is asking the other person how he can become a successful artist, what he should do, and then he is told a few basic things: how he has to behave and follow a certain style in order to be recognised as an important artist. So, once again we are dealing with a theme that questions the system, revealing how to enter it, how to behave to be popular. Here the story stops. Thank you so much.

**UNDERSTANDING LOCAL CONTEXT IV - POGON - Zagreb Center for Independent Culture and Youth - Dvorana Jedinstvo**

**EMINA VIŠNIĆ (POGON), ZVONIMIR DOBROVIC (DOMINO), ANA KUTLESA (BLOK), TOMISLAV MEDAK (BADCO) and TOMISLAV POKRAJČIĆ (KONTEJNER)**

**Emina Višnić - POGON**

I've brought two things with me, because we're very much pressed for time. So this is a stopwatch, which I'm going to start now. These are the papers which I'm going to read from, because if I start talking the session will last at least an hour.

I have twelve minutes—I'm lucky. My colleagues here will have only three minutes, but they are the most important element in this centre. This is Tomislav Medak from the Multimedia Institute Zagreb and BADco Zagreb; Zvonimir Dobrović from Domino, known for two festivals, Queer Zagreb and Perforacije (Perforations, in English), then Anna Kutlesa from the organisation BLOK, known mostly for the UrbanFestival; and Tomislav Pokrajčić from the curatorial organisation KONTEJNER | bureau of contemporary art praxis.

Let me start by saying that we call ourselves POGON, and we always use the Croatian term, which in English has two meanings: one is 'drive' and the other is 'production plant'. I hope you shall soon see why we chose this name.

As you know, we have only been established for two and a half years, so we are quite a young institution. By definition, and you will see afterwards why this is important for us, we are a hybrid cultural institution based on a new model of public civil partnership; our founders are Alliance Operation City, which is the alliance and network of local NGOs for culture and youth, and the City of Zagreb, the municipal administration. You can see our motto here. Our main role is not to produce programmes but to support those who do, i.e., the independent culture and youth scene.

Before explaining any further what we do, I need to tell you a couple of things about the context in which we operate. As many of you probably know, so-called transitional societies are not characterised by profound or systematic changes in the cultural infrastructure or the cultural system. Of course, this prevents detrimental processes such as the privatisation and commercialisation of the whole cultural field, but at the same time it also prevents favourable processes such as an adequate recognition of new trends and tendencies, the development of innovative art production and the stability of new organisational forms. As a result it consigns a whole scene of independent culture to the margins of the system. Moreover, cultural policies are more or less implicit and therefore not

easy to monitor. We can, however, easily interpret some policy priorities by analysing the distribution of resources within the cultural field. The vast majority of the infrastructure is in the hands of traditional public institutions. Furthermore, the so-called fixed costs, the salaries and running cost of these institutions, take up between 80% and 90% of the budgets for culture. So, the independent cultural scene was facing a number of challenges: changing the perception of the decision-makers that this is a small, marginal and non-professional scene (and therefore not that important or relevant) was one of the main challenges, and another was to set up policies that would bridge the huge gap between the public and civil sector, enable the development of potentials of independent culture and secure its basic stability, but also contribute to the overall development of the whole cultural field, including the public institutions.

So, the independent scene has developed a few strategies during these years. Creating programme-based corporations and networking and advocacy-oriented collaborative platforms and coalitions, which we call intensive collaborative platforms or tactical networks, at the national and the local level, are fundamental strategies. Our activism is not only directed at cultural issues and needs, but also at broader social and even political matters, through co-operation with other areas of civil society such as the environmental and youth sectors, etc.

I will now give a brief overview of what we call the Zagreb Initiative. It started in 2005 and actually resulted in the creation of POGON in 2009. The first action we can speak of was an advocacy process we could describe as 'by the book', i.e., it followed standard theory. But we shall see how it finished. In 2005, a civil society coalition was set up to start an advocacy campaign. It consisted of two national networks, one for independent culture called Clubture, and the other for youth organisations, the Croatian Youth Network, a local collaborative platform called Zagreb - Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000, and three independent cultural clubs, Attack, MaMa and Mochvara, which is next door to us. During this campaign, the art world articulated and publicly discussed the structural problems of the independent cultural and youth sectors that required decision-making policies with a variety of stakeholders—political parties, the public administration, experts and other actors in civil society.

This resulted in a declaration that was signed by all the future decision-makers. One of the most important measures was setting aside two or three abandoned industrial sites for public use as a multi-locational and multifunctional centre for independent culture and youth. Parallel to public discussions and media activities, we began Operacija:Grad (Operation:City), a sort of festival that each year would focus on specific issues relevant to the urban development of the contemporary city. Through various formats and art forms, it occupied different locations and, among other things, it promoted the idea of POGON.

What were the results? Well, the cultural scene was recognised and supported by a great number of citizens, by experts and by the media, but not by the decision-makers. After the initial promises made by the mayor and city officials in 2005, that followed the declaration they had signed, the co-operation and implementation were obstructed. Apparently, to prove competences and knowledge wasn't enough; to show great art wasn't enough; to present our ideas supported by good rational arguments wasn't enough. We needed to take a step further, move into the serious political arena and become a real threat. We needed to play a more important role, one that was reasonable but also strong and persistent.

In 2006 we organised a number of public actions against the municipal government designing giant hoardings or the Youth Salon. The hoardings directly promoted the mayor (you can see him across there), who persistently ignored the needs of the youth and cultural scenes. We then began to promote a wider initiative against the destruction of public space, which we shall mention shortly.

The other example was also produced in this very same place, in 2007: the Temporary Illegal Centre for Independent Culture and Youth. The site was illegally occupied for an indefinite period of time, until it eventually became a part of the centre, as you can see now, although not before we had been evicted! During this long four-year period, our relations with the local administration went from reserved co-operation at first, to ignorance and marginalisation and then to direct attacks, budget cuts, media fights and the shutting down of the Culture Club Mochvara next door to us.

Despite all that we didn't give up, but continued protesting and negotiating. During this period, the same coalition initiated another campaign, which developed into a broad citizen initiative that dealt with town planning and the management of public resources, called Pravo na Grad or Right to the City. This initiative, together with the environmental organisation Green Action and a huge number of anonymous citizens, is involved in the wider struggle, including many protest actions concerning particular sites in the city, Cvijetni Square and Varsavska Street, which I'm sure you shall visit during your stay.

A range of different activities was undertaken by numerous cultural, environmental and youth activists. One was collecting signatures in a petition against the construction of a shopping centre in Cvijetni Square and the destruction of public space in the city in general. These pictures we are seeing were of the first large-scale protest that brought together several thousands of citizens bearing the sign 'Give Up'.

Perhaps accidentally, perhaps not, after a series of such actions the city of Zagreb finally understood and acknowledged what we had been criticising for years, and before the last general elections held in 2009 the city finally agreed to the creation of our centre. POGON was therefore founded in 2009 as a hybrid institution based

on a new model of public-civil partnership, as mentioned, between the city of Zagreb and the coalition of culture and youth NGOs. We set up the Operation:City alliance, then called Alliance for the Centre of Independent Culture and Youth.

The role of the City of Zagreb is to provide public resources and secure the proper functioning of these resources. The role of the Alliance is to provide the programmes and ensure civil participation and decision-making. In structural terms, POGON is jointly managed by its co-founders and its director, and users are included in its decision-making processes through the Programme Council. This structure ensures that the overall functioning of the centre can be jointly controlled by the two co-founders, the City and the Alliance, while the control over programming is in the hands of those who implement programmes in the POGON venues.

POGON provides free-of-charge venues for independent organisations and artists working in the different fields of contemporary art and culture, as well as for organisations working in the area of youth activities. At the moment we are running two sites: those in green. Two other locations, those in red, have been promised but the City has not yet fulfilled its promises although we are still expecting them to do so. POGON Mislavova is located in the city centre. It's a space of one hundred and twenty square metres that houses a conference room for workshops, lectures, presentations, meetings, etc., free of charge, as well as temporary office space for associations and our office. This place here, POGON Jedinstvo, is a former industrial plant. It has two spaces, this one measuring four hundred and fifty square metres and a smaller one measuring eighty square metres. It hosts various events, visual, performing arts, music, etc. Its resources are quite limited and it is poorly equipped, although this is not visible right now, but nevertheless, we do celebrate many many events here.

To conclude, before giving the word to my colleagues, [I would say that] POGON, as you can see, is definitely not an independent institution, but it *is* the institution of the independents. It is designed to support the independent culture and youth scene, it is co-managed by the independent sector and it is the direct result of the initiative taken by the independents. Our operation is not defined in terms of aesthetic criteria, strong programmatic or curatorial concepts, but rather by the realm of cultural and youth policies. As such, it is one of the instruments that bridge the gap between traditional public sector and the independent scene. Thank you. Now I would like to ask my colleague Zvonimir Dobrović to present their activities here.

### **Zvonimir Dobrovic – Domino**

Thank you, Emina. Welcome. It really is a pleasure to talk to you. Let's see what we can do in three minutes.

I run two festivals in Zagreb, in Croatia: one is Queer Zagreb and the other is Perforacije [Perforations Festival], which is the one I'm going to talk about. What is behind this festival is actually the idea that we would like to support and produce work by artists who work outside of cultural institutions. As Emina said, there is this kind of division between institutions and everything else in the Croatian cultural scene, so we kind of recognise the artists who work outside of these institutions as those who are often very progressive and yet lack support. So, in a sense, the festival is a platform for them, and also for those artists who sort of bridge the gap between the two worlds.

As a festival, we also focus on our context, which means not only Croatian artists but artists from the Balkan region as a whole, because the system we all work in is in fact the same, even though we are now different countries. The idea behind this is also that we would like to provide more visibility and more strength to those artists, not only within the local context but also in the wider international landscape. We try to do this through the organisation of this festival, which is pretty big in our terms as it makes over twenty-five productions a year, in most of which we play a part either as producers or co-producers.

We also organise the festival in three Croatian cities, Rijeka, Zagreb and Dubrovnik. It's a consecutive programme, so it's different in each city. Next year we are adding Pula to the list of venues. I think it will stop there, so it will take place in four cities.

I would like to mention one of the events that has become the highlight of the festival, the Night of Performances, at which visual artists are invited to create site-specific works, live performances around a certain theme or idea. This is something that we are even exporting: so it will take place in Belgrade in two weeks time, as well as in Ljubljana and in Skopje.

We also organised two festivals outside of Croatia, that focused on local and regional artists: one was held in New York earlier this year, and the other will be held next year in Brest (France) during the months of February and March.

Similarly, we try to support these artists by linking them to wider international contexts and by inviting international artists to work with them—to work with the artists here. In one of this year's productions, for example, Brazilian choreographers worked with local dancers, and next year we shall be working with artists from Japan and Korea.

In order to grant artists this visibility we also form a part of an informal network that produces the *Balkan Can Contemporary* or *BCC* magazine, published in English, which comes out four times a year and gives an idea of what is happening in the region. You can take some copies if you like. Thank you.

## Ana Kutleša – BLOK

Welcome from me too. The Blok organisation is dedicated to contemporary art practices and contemporary art theory. In the presentation I will focus mainly our activity in the field of art in public space and our perception of the public sphere in general.

As Emina has briefly mentioned, there is a strong activist scene in Zagreb connected with the Right to the City movement. We consider these issues very important, particularly in our context, which could be described as a society in transition into which a new set of values that affect public space are being introduced, issues we approach from the realm of art. We work with various formats: publications, lectures, exhibitions, the production of works by new artists and interdisciplinary projects. Our most ambitious project is the UrbanFestival, a festival of art in public space that has been held since 2001. In 2009 we organised a festival on the banks of the River Sava that dealt with this very specific area of Zagreb. As it had a general thematic focus on borders and was in fact called (*In*) *Place of Border*, it was logical for us to use this space as the festival headquarters, although the various projects were staged at different venues on the two banks.

This is how we used the space of the hall, which is on the first floor. It's a smaller hall than this one, and we used it as a physical base for a project called *Sava for Everybody!*, which we produced together with the architectural organisation Analog. It consisted of an open archive, which dealt with the history of the River Sava, and with its potential and possible future. It presented several projects carried out by architects and town planners, but it also showed these old photos and combined the urban history and the personal, intimate history of everyday life on the river. People could visit the place and intervene in the archives by copying or adding information. In parallel, we also organised discussions and meetings, as you can see here, and strove to draw different groups that had interests in this area, including representatives of local government, sports organisations, etc. The idea of the project was to investigate the possibilities of a bottom-up approach to town planning.

The next project which I would like to mention, by Bosnian artist Lala Rascic, was co-produced by us in 2010. Under the title *The Dammed Dam*, it dealt with specific economical and social situations in ex-Yugoslavian countries through the metaphors of the river and natural disaster. It involved research shown in the final phase of her ongoing project, and we used the same room to present it. So, once again, it was a sort of archive, and this image shows how we used this hall to present her video installation, the sound pieces that she produced and also her drawings. Thank you.

## Tomislav Medak – BADco

—Hello. I'm Tom from BADco. We are an independent experimental theatre collective. We create a movement-based theatre and our projects are research-driven. Unlike the previous presenters who work as programmers and curators, we as an artist group use this space not only for presentation, but also for production.

I should perhaps begin by clarifying what independent means. In essence, being independent means that we are a non-institutional actor, that unlike public institutions we were not founded by a public authority. We have neither sufficient nor stable financial support, nor access to the cultural infrastructure that theatre houses have. Working outside institutions, during the eleven years of our existence we've always struggled to find the right place to produce and present our work, coping with the extremely limited financial and infrastructural means available to independent actors in the cultural policy framework that exists here.

But before I say more about our co-operation with POGON, I should say that throughout the most of this eleven-year period, as a result of exceptional circumstances, we were given access to a small rehearsal space in a community cultural centre in Zagreb—not this one, but one on the outskirts of the city. Community cultural centres deserve here a historic remark that sheds light on the current moment of cultural infrastructure for independents. During the previous Socialist period we had community cultural centres across city neighbourhoods and across the country in smaller towns. As a result of the introduction of nationalist politics in 1990, however, the whole cultural system was reduced to large institutions such as museums and theatre houses that acted as pillars reinforcing the national identity and nationalist politics. The plethora of cultural institutions that existed before 1990 was eradicated, with the cultural centres such as the one where we used to develop our work being driven to impoverishment, marginalisation or extinction.

So, exceptionally we did have access to a rehearsal space—inadequate, but still a rehearsal space. However, we've never had a space in which to present our work, and only on rare opportunities are we able to organise co-productions with local theatre houses. (This is fairly understandable, as they have no incentive to work with us or present our projects because we do not employ their actors.)

Therefore, we are seldom able to perform in Zagreb. As an internationally active performing group we are present on a worldwide scale and perform much more abroad than in Zagreb.

However, POGON has enabled us to perform more regularly because it is available to independents and provides the necessary facilities for our particular research, experimental set-ups and *mises en scène*. Last spring, for instance, we filmed a part of one of our projects here that was shown in the framework of the Croatian



representation at this year's Venice Biennale. You'll find some of our printed material here, and you can look up our website for more information. Thank you.

### **Tomislav Pokrajcic – KONTEJNER**

Hello. I come from KONTEJNER | bureau of contemporary art praxis, an organisation based in Zagreb and dedicated to art in conjunction with scientific research, technological development and extreme Body Art practices, including topics related to biotechnology, cybernetics and artistic and scientific interaction.

In general terms, KONTEJNER organises three main large projects: the Touch Me Festival, Extravagant Bodies and Device\_art. They are triennial events, so each one is held every three years and there is also a trans-disciplinary section of events that always consists of international exhibitions, symposiums and round-table discussions, accompanied by a bilingual publication and complemented by film programmes, performance cycles and/or public interventions.

Recent editions of all three festivals were co-produced in partnership with the POGON centre and were presented here at POGON Jedinstvo. Our last programme held here early in July was the Touch Me Festival 2011, subtitled *Energy Ab/Use*. The festival dealt with the problems of energy production, distribution and consumption from ecological, ethical, esthetical, political and philosophical points of view.

Another project organised this year was the Creative Arts and Music Project, CAMP, a workshop-type festival for visual music produced in collaboration with POGON and CAMP e.V. Kirchentellinsfurt. The previous year, the Extravagant Bodies Festival, subtitled *Extravagant Minds*, was organised here. This event focused on the problems inherent to people with mental disabilities. We had two editions of that festival, both of which were based on breaking new ground, dismantling social taboos and questioning the concepts of normality when it comes to the human body and the human mind.

2009 was the year of Device\_art, which was subtitled *Nintendo versus Končar & Gorenje*. The idea behind this festival was to create a coalition between Japanese artistic practices and domestic art based on techno-scientific procedures but also on playful and inventive approaches.

For Kontejner, this space at POGON Jedinstvo is, above all, a space that offers incredible creative freedom when it comes to planning the concept of an event. This means that it contains significant possibilities for a complete transformation of space. The space also offers us the possibility of conceptual freedom, which has a bearing on the configuration of the programme of the event, which can be as diverse and bold as we like.

However, we're not only talking about spatial resources. What is perhaps more important is that POGON provides a stable platform, infrastructure and human resources that are crucial to us, and to many other organisations, in order to produce independent cultural activities. As a result, much needed collaborative work is stimulated, especially the exchange of ideas and experience between organisations.

These are the main reasons why KONTEJNER will continue in close partnership with POGON, in order to keep contributing to the extremely positive and encouraging atmosphere created by this kind of institutional contact.

**UNDERSTANDING LOCAL CONTEXT V - *What, How and for Whom of WHW***  
**IVET ĆURLIN, ANA DEVIĆ, NATAŠA ILIĆ and SABINA SABOLOVIĆ**

Good evening, we welcome you to the Zagreb Youth Theatre, located at Teslina 7 Street, the same address where the Gallery Nova is situated.

Since the gallery has a space of about one hundred square metres, we are accommodating you at the neighbouring institution, the Zagreb Youth Theatre. During the Socialist period, both the Gallery Nova and the Zagreb Youth Theatre belonged to the same institution, the Center for Cultural Activity of the Socialist Youth of the City of Zagreb, established at this location in the eighties along with Radio 101 and Youth Television. During that decade it became a very important centre for so-called alternative culture. A private jazz club was also located in the same building, while the courtyard and neighbouring institutions hosted concerts, exhibitions and theatre performances. For a few years in the late eighties this courtyard was an important hangout and cluster for youth culture ... Today, when the idea of a cultural youth centre has disintegrated in the post-transitional landscape dominated by commercialism and the crumbling of the social infrastructure, what we see outside are symptomatic kitschy cafés. The theatre and the gallery are the only institutions left, standing not only as remnants of the past but also as active cultural institutions. Of course, each of them transformed and reprogrammed in its own way, under specific economic and organisational circumstances.

This evening we shall make a brief presentation of the Gallery Nova, and by outlining several lines of the gallery's programme and our work methodologies, we will also briefly touch upon certain critical dynamics of the local art scene in Zagreb.

The Gallery Nova is a city-owned, non-profit gallery founded by the artists Ljerka Šibenik and Mladen Galić in 1975, the programme of which we have been directing since 2003. During the seventies it set up an innovative exhibition programme, showing a number of avant-garde modernist artists who began to work in the fifties, such as Aleksandar Srnec or Exat 51, the first retrospective exhibition of which was held in 1979. Equally important is the fact that in the seventies the Gallery Nova supported the emerging art scene by showing works by artists such as Goran Trbuljak, Braco Dimitrijević and the Group of Six Artists, and staging Mladen Stilinović's first solo exhibition.

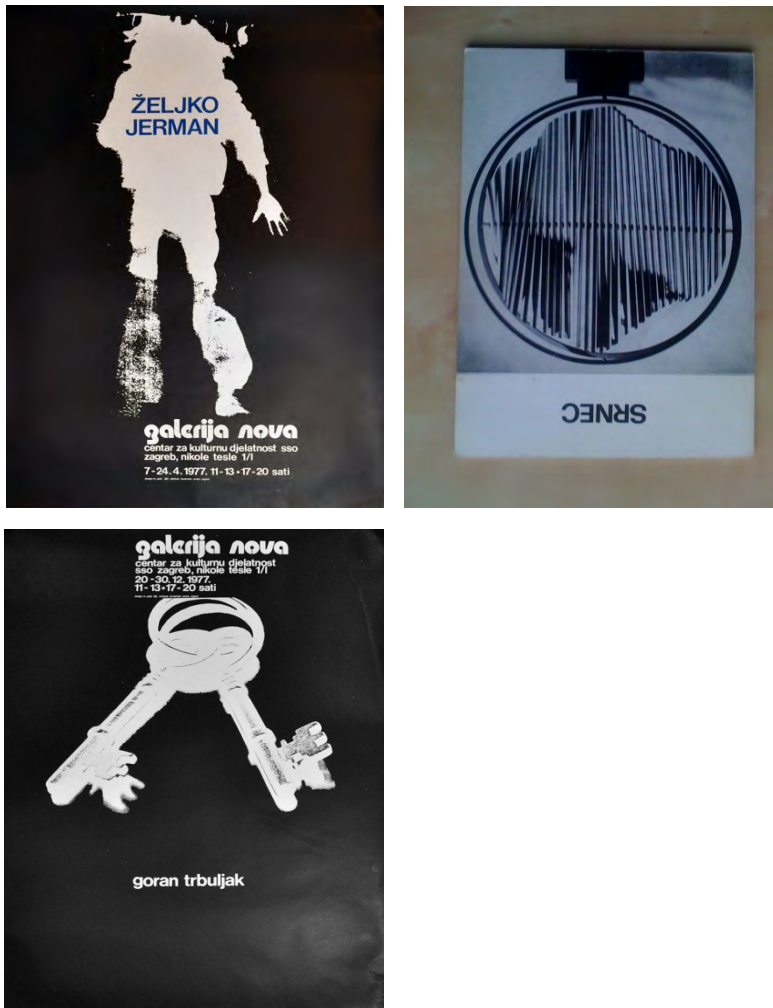


Figure 1: Materials from the Gallery Nova archive

Here we would like to add an important note: we have decided to show a number of pictures of the exhibitions held in the gallery and are aware that we will probably not do justice to the artists presented in those exhibitions. We apologise for this, but our intention is to highlight some of the structural lines of our programme rather than to focus on any particular exhibition or work, so please excuse the fact that we shall run through the images and use them as 'illustrations'.

Now back to the Gallery.

In 2003, when we started to direct Nova's programme, we had already been working as a collective for four years. Our first exhibition, entitled *What, How and for Whom*, held in Zagreb in 2000 and dedicated to the 152nd anniversary of the 'Communist Manifesto', inaugurated many of our curatorial methods. It focused on the complex relations between art and economy, and placed special emphasis on problematic attitudes regarding the legacy of the Socialist decades and the current economic transition in our local context. Many of the methods developed during the preparation of this exhibition were incorporated into the programming of the Gallery Nova. These included a collective way of working, forming

partnerships with cultural workers from different fields, reopening and questioning topics suppressed within public discourse and establishing transgenerational and international links.

We developed our approach to the gallery's programming in relation to the specific needs of the local art scene and the political context, which have changed over the years. In the nineties, when national identity was almost the exclusive interest of official culture and cultural policies, we were rather isolated, a situation that would produce long-term consequences. Then, gradually, the number of independent cultural initiatives that critically intervened in a cultural field began to grow, accompanied by gradual changes in legislature and the financial support of unofficial culture (important although still insufficient). Over the past few years, the funding and the internationalisation of the gallery have increased as Croatian negotiations with the European Union progressed. In fact, European funds for culture became available in 2007.

So, our programme has reflected these cultural and political changes, without losing sight of its key principle: to respond to the specific needs of the local art scene and to fill in the gaps ignored by the dominant cultural production.

The basic structure of the programme is very straightforward and consists of a series of solo and group exhibitions, as well as a number of discursive programmes including lectures, seminars and public discussions. As such, it hasn't changed since 2003, from which time on we have organised around one hundred and fifty lectures in the gallery. What has changed over the course of time is the gallery's thematic focus, in accordance with present circumstances.

In the very beginning, emphasis was placed on the production and contextualisation of the youngest generation of artists, as exemplified by the series of solo exhibitions entitled *Start Solo*. An open call for emerging artists working with minimal or no gallery support was made, as the aim of the series was to provide these young artists with the means for carrying out new productions.

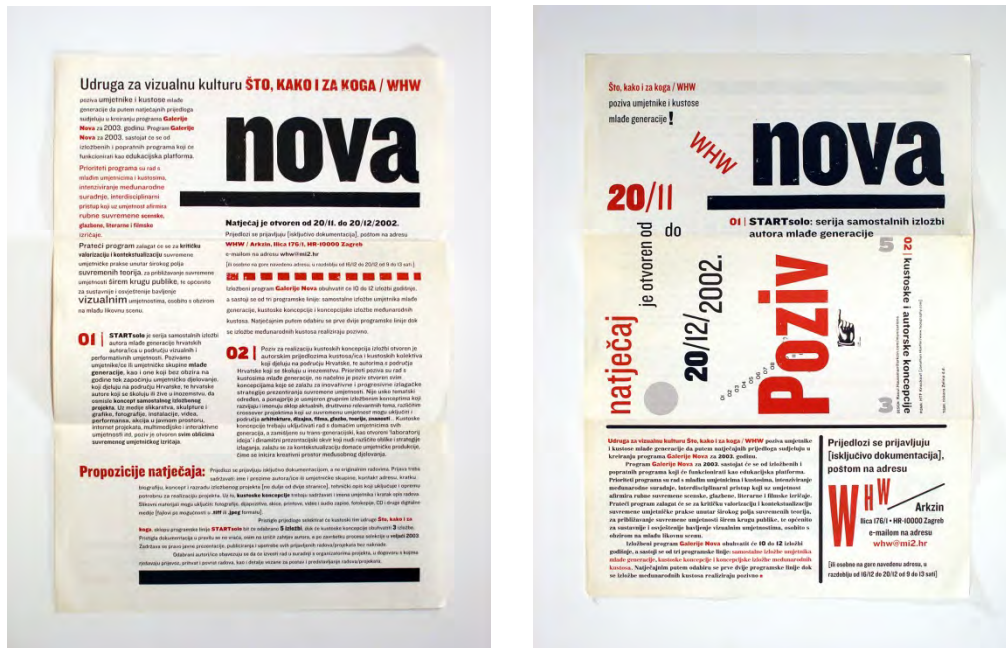


Figure 2: Open Call, Gallery Nova

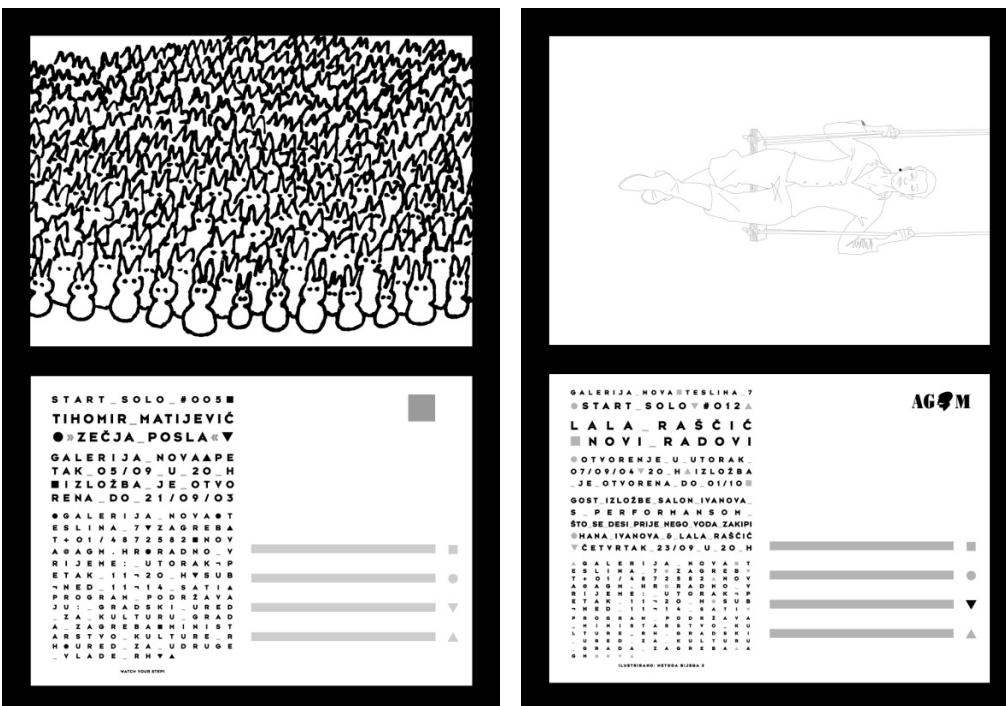


Figure 3: Invitation cards from Start Solo exhibitions. Design: Dejan Kršić

Parallel to *Start Solo*, we organised a series of individual exhibitions for established artists of the younger and middle generation, who worked on a local scale without sufficient institutional support, most of whom exhibited abroad. It is important to note that this problem was particularly acute during the construction of the present Museum of Contemporary Art, when the museum was practically closed.

Some of the exhibitions among those organised:

*These Days*, 2006 (David Maljković). The first extended presentation of the series of works that revisited our modernist past, thus confronting current historical revisionism.



**Figure 4:** David Maljković's solo exhibition, *These Days*, 2006

*A Place under the Sun*, 2006 (Andreja Kulunčić). The first retrospective of her works in Croatia, reflecting upon insufficient institutional support for contemporary art in the local context.



**Figure 5:** Andreja Kulunčić's solo exhibition, *A Place under the Sun*, 2006

Another area explored was the work of artists whose careers began in the seventies, such as Mladen Stilinović, Sanja Iveković and Goran Trbuljak, with whom we have collaborated continuously on a number of our projects, both in Zagreb and abroad, and who remain a constant source of inspiration. This programmatic line is followed to this day.

The following exhibitions were among those organised:

*Inventory*, 2003. Group show by Sanja Iveković, Željko Jerman, Vlado Martek, Mladen Stilinović and Goran Trbuljak, who displayed their works in the windows of the gallery during the summer break, when the gallery was closed.

*WUFF-WUFF*, 2006. Solo exhibition by Mladen Stilinović dedicated to the role of art in society, the relationship between engaged and autonomous art, genocide, cynicism, transitional economy and indifference.



Figure 6: Mladen Stilinović's solo show, *Wuff-Wuff*, 2006

Attempts to establish a national culture often tended to overlook crucial links between cultural scenes of the ex-Yugoslavian cities Ljubljana, Belgrade and



Sarajevo, as a result of which our programme consciously recontextualises local avant-garde and neo-avant-garde practices in connection with a broader international outlook we shall briefly talk about later.

All the exhibitions mentioned question the relationship between artists and cultural institutions, a theme that is also present in the Gallery Nova's historical programme. The *Gallery Nova* newspaper appears on a regular basis, stimulated by the driving force of the newspapers published by the Gallery of Student Center in the late sixties and early seventies, at the time of the centre's most prolific activities under the curatorship of Želimir Koščević. We could speak of a kind of cultural continuity in which the activities of the earlier generations have been intensified through various self-organised, 'micro-institutional' artistic and curatorial experiments.

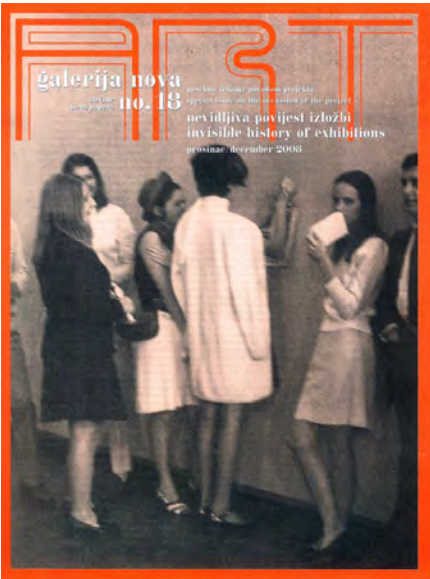
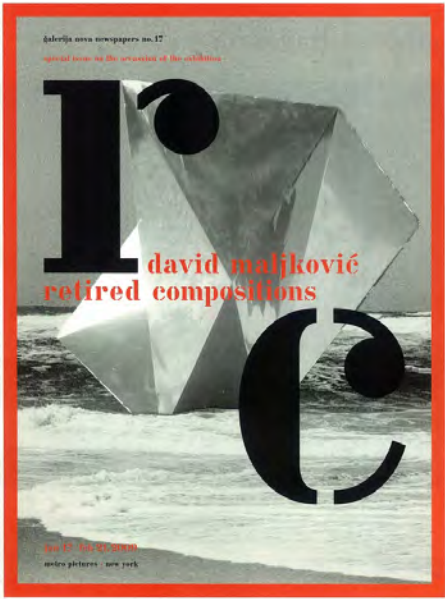
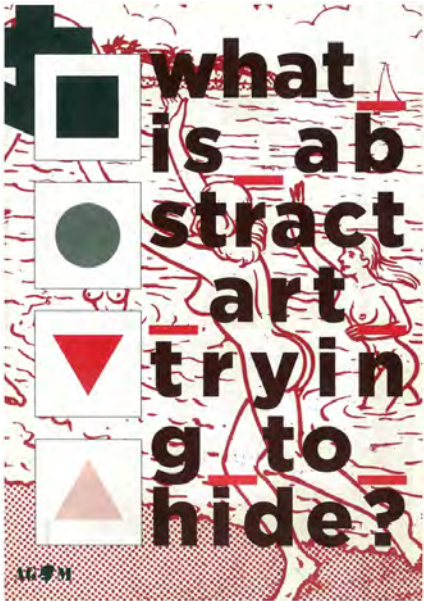




Figure 7: covers of *Gallery Nova* newspapers. Design: Dejan Kršić

Apart from the solo exhibitions, we also organised a number of group shows with figures from the local art scene. One of the most important of these exhibitions was *On Unknown Works*, 2006, curated by Branka Stipančić, which displayed works by artists from the seventies who were considered canonical, most of whom stemming out of so called New Art. The artistic practice of the seventies produced by the post-1968 generation of artists who first introduced post-object, conceptual art in Socialist Yugoslavia, sought alternative ways of producing and presenting art, redefining its status and forms of mediation and posing radical questions about the autonomy and role of artistic institutions. The show presented hitherto unknown (i.e., never displayed) works by Sanja Iveković, Mladen Stiliović, Goran Trbuljak, Vlado Martek and Tomislav Gotovac, among others. In 2007 Branka Stipančić was also guest curator of the one-man show *The Time of Gorgona and Post-Gorgona* by Josip Vaništa. In 2005 Tomislav Gotovac presented *Birthday Performance* in the Gallery.

*Contemporary American Art*, 2007, was a show organised by the Museum of American Art-Belgrade (MoAA), an educational institution in progress devoted to collecting, preserving and exhibiting the memory of exhibitions of modern American art presented in ex-Yugoslavia in the fifties and sixties.







Figure 8: MoAA, *Contemporary American Art*, 2007

*Vojin Bakić*, 2007, was a solo exhibition of works by the sculptor who died in 1992. A pioneer of abstract sculpture in Yugoslavia after the country's break with Stalin in 1948, Bakić is considered a genuine modernist who fought for freedom of expression, but also an artist in the service of official ideology as he built many abstract monuments commemorating the people's liberation anti-fascist struggle, some of which were destroyed in the nineties in the heat of nationalist fervour. Our show, which presented works from the Bakić family archive that were completely neglected at the time, was a modest intervention in the controversy over Bakić's legacy and the understanding of Socialist modernism in general.





**Figure 9:** Vojin Bakić's solo exhibition, 2007

Since 2007 the interest in this movement has re-awoken, as proved by the fact that a critical exhibition on the subject will open at the Museum of Contemporary Art at the beginning of December, an important project we are eagerly awaiting.

The constant interest in establishing meaningful links between generations of artists which we have shown since the beginning of our task was especially important in the nineties, when official culture was very much obsessed with national identity and in many ways our history was approached as if it had begun in 1990 with Croatian independence. Furthermore, insufficient institutional infrastructure contributed to the fact that neither documentation nor new interpretations of the seventies were really available: the collection of the

Museum of Contemporary Art was not open to the public until the museum inaugurated its new building. During the last decade this archive has gradually grown, and now the museum is of course trying to fulfil this role. In terms of our programme, one of the last exhibitions we produced along these lines is *Iveković/Maljčković/Picelj*, 2010.



**Figure 10\_1:** *Iveković/Maljčković/Picelj*, 2010 (Ivan Picelj). Photograph: Ivan Kuharić



**Figure 10\_2:** *Iveković/Maljčković/Picelj*, 2010 (Sanja Iveković, David Maljčković). Photograph: Ivan Kuharić



Another programmatic line running since 2003 involves a series of more or less thematic group exhibitions that explored a number of socially sensitive topics. These included *Repetition: Pride and Prejudice, Normalization, Side-effects*, and *I Need a Radical Change* curated by WHW, alongside shows such as *Dataaesthetics* by guest curator Stephen Wright and *Mobile Archive* curated by Galit Eilat. *Side-effects*, of 2003, displayed works by Kristijan Kožul, Vlatka Horvat, Bulent Sangar, Aydan Murtezaoglu, Felix Gmelin, Serkan Ozkaya and Sharon Hayes, among others, whereas *I Need a Radical Change*, also of 2003, showed works by Kosovo artists Erzen Shokolli, Albert Heta, Alban Hajdinaj, Driton Hajredini, Petrit Hilaj, Memet Erdener/extrastuggle, Sener Ozmen+Ahmet Ogut and Erkan Ozgen.

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22/04-10/05/2004 | Gallery Nova

**nuspojave / side-effects**

EGOBOO.bits | Felix GMELIN | Igor GRUBIĆ  
 | Vlatka HRVAT | Kristijan KOŽUL | Andreja KULUNČIĆ | Davor MIHALIĆ | Aydan MURTEZAAGLU | Serkan OZKAYA | Ivan PETROVIĆ | Kirsten PIEROTH | Bulent SANGAR | Marko TADIĆ | VERSION

...it shouldn't surprise us much that at the very moment when everybody is trying to capture that elusive narrative that supposedly could define the fall of Communism and subsequent transitional turbulences (After the Wall, Aspects/Positions, The Other Europe), a small Zagreb based art-collective is doing just the opposite: it is following the least-likely path to its roots: what, how and for whom? Now, again, when everybody is echoing the question How to avoid the New Balkanizations of Balkans (In Search of Balkania, Blood and Money, In the Gorges of the Balkans) WHW is refusing to mistake culture for politics and to loose itself in the ideological void. Not abstraction of Balkans but concretization of World Politics, not Balkans as a World-problem but Side Effects of Global Capitalism! By refusing to abstract on the troubles of the supposedly efficient liberal, laissez faire, market oriented world devoided of politics, Exhibition *Side-Effects / ...* talks about Balkans just as much as it really participates in, or is a symptom of global processes. In other words, it pulls the very field of transition out from its forced Euro-European or Balkan framework, and addresses it as a major global question"

an excerpt from a text by **Jelena VEŠIĆ** & **Svebor MIĐIĆ**

**Serkan OZKAYA**

**EGOBOO.bits** **Felix GMELIN** **Igor GRUBIĆ** **Vlatka HRVAT**

**Kristijan KOŽUL** **Andreja KULUNČIĆ** **Davor MIHALIĆ** **Aydan MURTEZAAGLU**

**Ivan PETROVIĆ** **Kirsten PIEROTH** **Bulent SANGAR** **Marko TADIĆ**

curatorial team: **Što, kako i za koga/What, How and for Whom**, Zagreb; *Nuspojave/Side-effects* taken place in the context of *In the Cities of Balkans*, the 2nd part of the *Balkans trilogy*, a project initiated by *Kunststiftung des Bundes*, Kassel. Project supported by *Kunststiftung des Bundes*

During January/February 2004 the first version of this exhibition was presented at the Salon of the Museum of Contemporary Art-Belgrade at the annual exhibition of the Centre for Contemporary Arts-Belgrade

**VERSION**





Figure 11: *Side-effects*, 2003

The 2005 show *Repetition, Pride and Prejudice* displayed the works of Sharon Hayes, Pierre Huyghe, Sanja Iveković, Aydan Murtezaoglu, Anri Sala and Andreas Siekmann, while the 2006 exhibition *Normalization*, a series of events questioning the post-war perspective of the processes of normalisation, gathered works by Phil Collins, Dan Perjovschi, Johanna Billing, Gruppo parole e immagini / Luca Frei, Jasmila Žbanić, Goran Dević and David Maljković.



Figure 12\_1: *Normalization*, 2006



Figure 12\_2: *Normalization* (David Maljković), 2006



Figure 12\_3: *Normalization* (David Maljković), 2006



**Figure 12\_4:** *Normalization* (Platforma 9,81), 2006

In terms of international group exhibitions, the gallery's programme also continuously reflects WHW's long-term projects worldwide and opens its research processes to local audiences. In 2005, for instance, we curated *Collective Creativity* for the Kunsthalle Fridericianum in Kassel, an exhibition produced as a consequence of our long-term programme entitled *Collective Action* begun in 2003 which, through several series of events, explored the problematics and specificities of art groups and collectives.

More recently, during 2009 and 2010 we organised series of lectures and shows devoted to the research process involved in the preparation of the 11th Istanbul Biennial we curated in 2009, in direct dialogue with the main topics of the Biennial, its protagonists and a geographical focus on the Middle East, Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The exhibitions included *For Example*, showing works by Ben Cain, Inci Furni, Tina Gverović, Sanja Iveković, Ruti Sela & Maayan Amir and Canan Senol; *If You Don't know What the South is, It's Simply Because You Are From the North*, a display of works by Jesse Jones, Vlatka Horvat and Runo Lagomarsino; *Wouldn't Be Easier for the Government To Dismiss the People and Elect Another*, which presented works by Société Réaliste, Tamás St. Auby and Artur Zmijewski; and shows with artists Mounira Al-Solh, Darinka Pop Mitić, Jumana Emil Abboud, Ioana Nemes and Jinoos Taghizadeh.



**Figure 13\_1:** *For Example*, 2009 (Ben Cain). Photograph: Ivan Kuharić



**Figure 13\_2:** *For Example*, 2009 (Inci Furni). Photograph: Ivan Kuharić



**Figure 13\_3:** *For Example*, 2009 (Sanja Iveković). Photograph: Ivan Kuharić



**Figure 14:** *Wouldn't Be Easier for the Government To Dismiss the People and Elect Another*, 2009. Photograph: Ivan Kuharić



**Figure 14\_1:** *Wouldn't Be Easier for the Government To Dismiss the People and Elect Another*, 2009 (Société Réaliste). Photograph: Ivan Kuharić



**Figure 14\_2:** *Wouldn't Be Easier for the Government To Dismiss the People and Elect Another*, 2009 (Tamás St. Auby). Photograph: Ivan Kuharić



**Figure 14\_3:** *Wouldn't Be Easier for the Government To Dismiss the People and Elect Another*, 2009 (Tamás St. Auby). Photograph: Ivan Kuharić

The latest example of our research in progress is the current exhibition at the gallery entitled *Second World*, part of a project that WHW curated for the Streicher Herbst festival in Graz this year. It explores the notion of the Second World from the perspective of the critical 'cognitive estrangement', which is compatible with the way in which Darko Suvin, one of the leading science fiction theoreticians, talks about the methods of radical estrangement in his field of study. This engaged view aims to enable us to perceive neo-colonial and hegemonic givens of the neo-liberal world, its repressive social constructions and the deregulation of the conditions of production and class division from a new perspective. Focusing on more than just the fictional, *Second World* attempts to rethink the reality of the present through a distancing effect, encompassing history and memory, geographical definitions, representation and public space. The art works by Tom Nicholson, Isa Rosengerger, Mona Marzouk and Maha Maamoun explore the possibilities of 'artistic de-colonising' strategies that reinterpret co-relations of exploitation, power, profit and history.

Our work belongs to broader scene of self-run, independent organisations, which, through a number of networked cultural activities, have been formulating active opposition to institutional cultural production based on the logic of national identity since the beginning of the twenty-first century. In this sense, the gallery has continuously offered its space to the part of the local independent scene that functions without a permanent exhibiting or programming space such as the Queer Festival, the Anarchist Book Fair, Right to the City, etc.

More importantly, the Gallery serves as the location for a number of self-organised collaborative platforms on a local scale, and more broadly in the former Yugoslavia



and in Eastern Europe. One of the most important of local initiatives was Zagreb Culture Kapital of Europe 3000/CK3000. Set up in 2003, it brought together a number of local independent cultural organisations (CDU, Multimedia Institute mi2, Platforma 9,81, What, How & for Whom/WHW, BLOK, Community Art School, Shadow Casters and Kontejner) to develop a host of collaborative practices, covering a range of disciplines from architecture and theatre to new media and visual arts. It questioned the dominant regimes of representational culture and initiated cultural policy discussions directed towards reforming the institutional framework for independent culture. Gallery Nova hosted a number of project related to these collaborative projects.

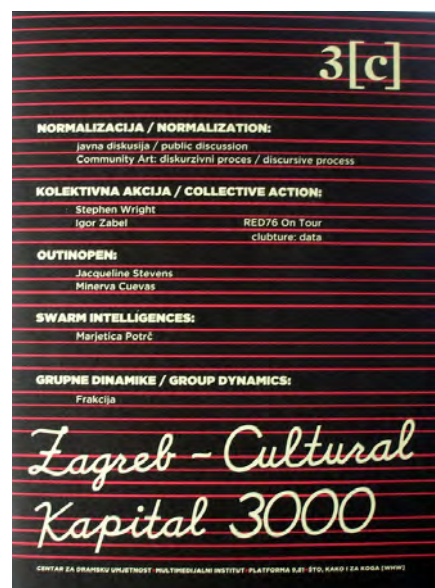
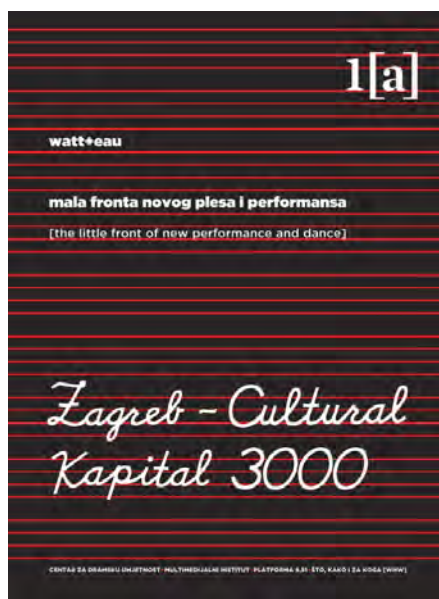


Figure 15: Printed material of the Zagreb Culture Kapital of Europe 3000 project. Design: Dejan Kršić

Between 2006 and 2010, along with three independent cultural organisations from ex-Yugoslavian countries (Prelom Kolektiv, Belgrade; kuda.org, Novi Sad; and pro.ba/SCCA-Sarajevo Center for Contemporary Art, Sarajevo), WHW took part in the multidisciplinary research project entitled *Political Practices of (Post-) Yugoslav Art*, that explored the historical, socio-political and economic conditions of intellectual and cultural production in the post-Socialist space of the former Yugoslavia. The final stage of the project took the form of an exhibition and a publication curated by Jelena Vesić of Prelom collective, entitled *Political Practices of (Post-) Yugoslav Art: RETROSPECTIVE 01* and held in the 25 May Museum in Belgrade in November 2009.

Among the shows produced by the Gallery during this period was *TV Gallery* in 2008. In the seventies, curator and art historian Dunja Blažević ran a gallery at the Student's Cultural Center in Belgrade which became a space open to artistic experiments. In 1981 she was appointed editor of a contemporary art television show entitled *TV Gallery*, which was broadcast on the Yugoslavian television network from 1984 to 1991 and stands as a unique and unsurpassed example of art's involvement with a public television channel. In Novi Sad, kuda.org organised the exhibition *Continuous Art Class*, which researched and presented neo-avant-garde from this Serbian city.

*Exhibition of Women and Men*, 2008, re-created the show of the same title held in the influential Gallery of Student Center in Zagreb in 1969. Under the directorship of curator Želimir Koščević (1966-1980), the Student Center Gallery systematically promoted conceptualism and the dematerialisation of art, and initiated institutional critique.

*The Case of SKC in the 1970s*, curated by the Prelom Kolektiv in Belgrade, displayed research materials including documents, images, texts, films, testimonies and researchers' notes.

These projects intended to reveal important traits of a general constellation of the art and politics in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.



**Figure 16\_1:** *The Case of Student's Cultural Center*, curated by Prelom Kolektiv. Photograph: Vladimir Jerić



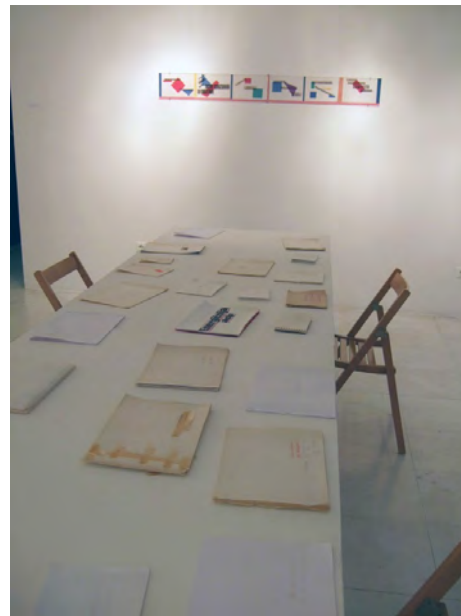
**Figure 16\_2:** *The Case of Student's Cultural Center*, curated by Prelom Kolektiv. Photograph: Vladimir Jerić



**Figure 16\_3:** *The Case of Student's Cultural Center*, curated by Prelom Kolektiv. Photograph: Vladimir Jerić

In 2008 WHW initiated a programme entitled *Art Always Has Its Consequences*, co-organised with tranzit.hu in Budapest, the Museum Sztuki in Lodz and kuda.org in Novi Sad. Focusing on four areas of study: the history of exhibitions, artists' writings, archival practices and conceptual design and typography, the project reopened the issues of modernist legacies and histories in Central and Eastern Europe.

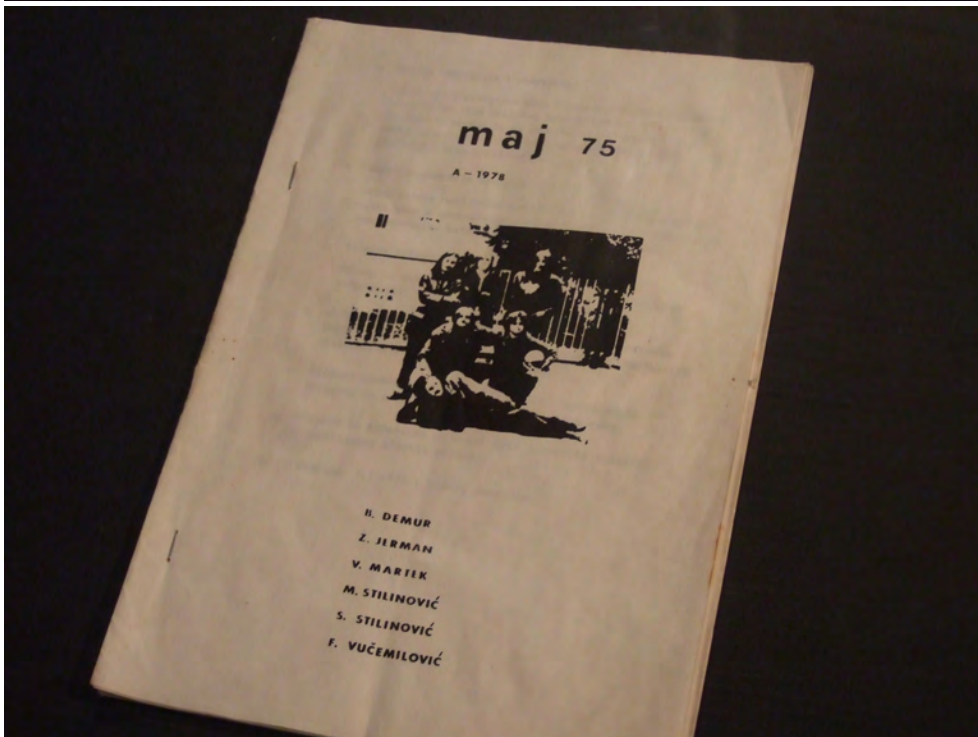
The show of Mladen Stilinović's artists' books *I Wanna Go Home, 1972-2006 (Invisible History of Exhibitions, 1st round)* presented books that he had been making since the seventies and had never shown in Zagreb before in such a comprehensive form. This exhibition was previously held at Platform in Istanbul, and in Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, and we translated and published the catalogue in Croatian. The series comprised a number of handmade books, open editions that focused, for the main part, on the relations between work, poverty, laziness, power, cynicism and pain.



**Figure 17:** Mladen Stikinović's artists' books *I Wanna Go Home*, 1972-2006 (*Invisible History of Exhibitions*, 1st round), 2010. Photograph: Ivan Kuharić

*Invisible History of Exhibitions*, 2nd round, comprised three projects in many ways paradigmatic for conceptual practices in Eastern Europe. *IDEA ART*, begun in 1970 by Jerzy Ludwiński in Wrocław, Poland, was 'presented' on the loose pages of the exhibition catalogue, thereby eliminating the exhibition space entirely; *Imagination/Idea*, begun in 1971 by László Beke in Budapest, asked participants to submit material that could be placed in a standard document folder and consequently exists as a collection of index cards; and the *Maj 75* magazine, begun

by the Group of Six Authors in Zagreb between 1975 and 1981. These projects, which are among the most radical examples of collaborative platforms that included huge numbers of participants, were held outside of institutional frameworks and triggered the innovative and autonomous production and circulation of art works.

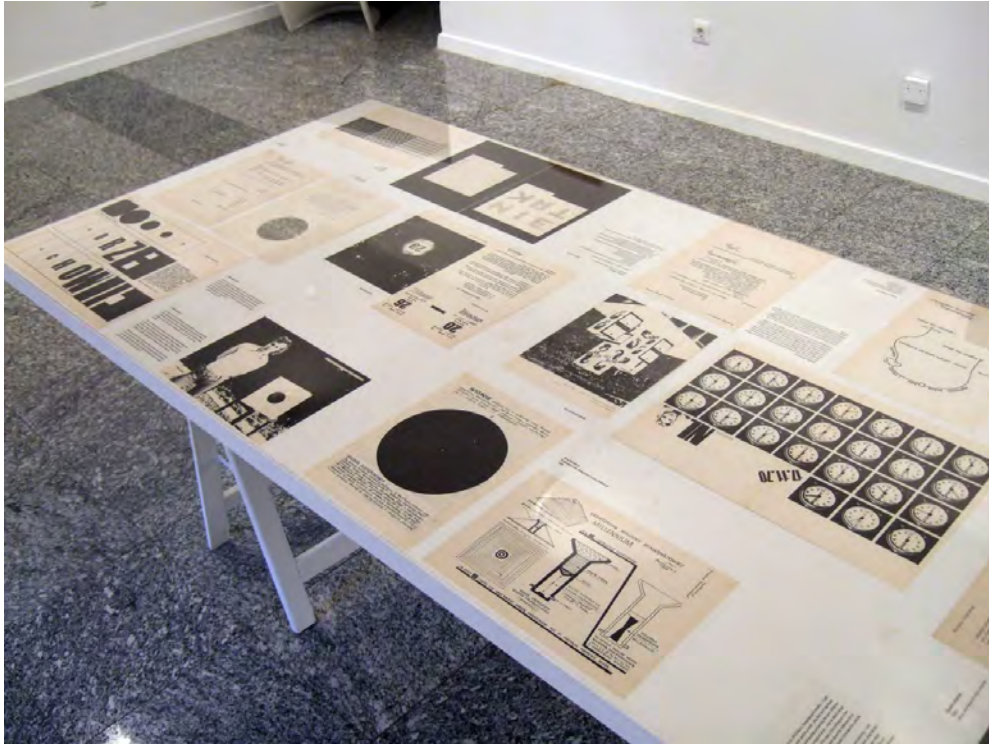




**Figure 18\_1-2-3:** *Invisible History of Exhibitions, 2nd round (Maj 75)*. Photograph: Ivan Kuharić



**Figure 18\_4:** *Invisible History of Exhibitions, 2nd round (Imagination/Idea)*. Photograph: Ivan Kuharić



**Figure 18\_5:** *Invisible History of Exhibitions, 2nd round (IDEA ART)*. Photograph: Ivan Kuharić

WHW is currently participating in the long-term collaboration project *Sweet 60s*, initiated by tranzit (Vienna). The project investigates the revolutionary period of the sixties and seventies and its subsequent effects on contemporary socio-political and cultural situations with a focus on 'post-ideological societies' (in the post-Soviet, post-Socialist era, in Eastern European, the Middle East, Central Asia and North Africa).

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For us, to run a gallery programme means to preserve a public space in society that can become a basis for new articulations of social formation, outside of the absolute dominance of private property and representational logic. Our activities are not merely aimed at filling in the gaps of the system, although very often, like many other self-organised collectives over the past decade, we have done the job largely neglected by local institutions.

Nowadays, when the polarisation between the institutional and the independent, self-organised local scene is not as clear-cut as it was ten years ago, organisations like ours face increasing precariousness. Since the beginning of the so-called financial crisis, in the last two years, the economic support offered our programmes by the City Office for Culture and the Ministry of Culture (which had never been sufficient) was cut by 40%, and yet the process of self-institutionalisation and the need to reflect critically upon our involvement and influence in the process of changing the local art field have grown. As many other actors on the local independent scene, WHW is an institution and functions as one,



which broadly speaking means that we perform as an institution, we act like one and are perceived like one (especially from abroad) yet without any of the benefits of institutional work, i.e., without stable support, with funding geared exclusively to temporary programmes, thereby preventing any sustained research and long-term planning.

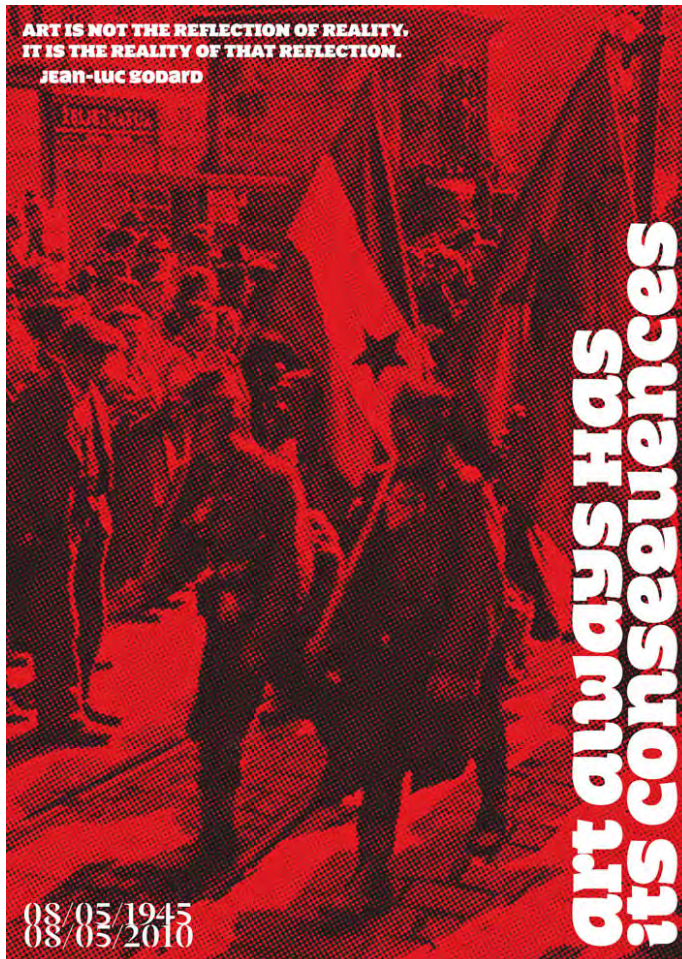


Figure 19: *Art Always Has Its Consequences*, exhibition poster. Design: Dejan Kršić

However, we don't want to complain or end on a pessimistic note. Today the museum is open (which is probably the biggest change undergone in our field over the last decades), and the general sense of urgency that had been governing our work since we started up the collective in 1999—when the right-wing crusade against the so-called cultural hegemony of the left and a nationalistic understanding of culture were clearly the 'enemy' against which we had aligned forces with different partners—disappeared in the years of normalisation that followed the progress of Croatia's negotiations with the European Union. (Croatia is set to join the Union in 2013, which, in the light of its present situation seems like the distant future, but that is another matter).

To end on an optimistic note, therefore, we could quote a joke from the beginning of Terry Gilliam's 1985 film *Brazil*, a dystopian science-fiction black comedy which depicts a future society more or less organised around terrorism, or more

precisely, against terrorism. In many of its details the film is surprisingly precise in depicting things that really would happen twenty-odd years later ... In a television interview, the Minister of Finance was asked to explain how terrorists could be active for thirteen years, to which he replies, 'Beginners' luck'. Perhaps we can take this as a parallel to Gallery Nova, which is functioning almost against itself, not by inertia and not of course as a terrorist organisation, but certainly against rather unfavourable material conditions, against the importance of representative culture that still lies at the centre of cultural policy. Now that the flexibility and inclusiveness of the foundation sector prevail as the material basis for contemporary art production, critical discourse is embraced by its rhetoric. In the new post-Fordist regime, cognitive criteria such as participation, knowledge sharing, networking, managing and cooperation, which were intended to realise human potential and abolish the formal division of labour, have actually turned into exploitative moments of production.

We believe that we find ourselves presently at a strategic impasse that is not passivity, but that involves sustaining openness to test modalities of art production and critical thinking within and at the edges of the existing systems, and sustaining it over a long period of time. In one of his recent texts on the political options we have in order to face up to the so-called current crisis, Franco Berardi Bifo calls for 'a cultural revolution based on the force of exhaustion, of facing the inevitable with grace, discovering the sensuous slowness'. Perhaps this is what we are trying to work for.

## **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

**Snježana Pintarić, Director Muzej suvremene umjetnosti MSU Zagreb**

—My name is Snjezana Pintaric and I would like to welcome you in the name of the Contemporary Art Museum in Zagreb. First of all I thank Dalibor Martinis for this wonderful performance.

I would like to say a few words about our institution. You have had about one hour to see our permanent collection. The museum was set up in 1954 as a Contemporary Art Gallery for the city of Zagreb with the aim of collecting and promoting contemporary art practices.

So we immediately began to collect works from the fifties by eminent artists of the decade who were breaking with Social Realism. This marked the beginning of abstract art, new designs and new approaches to architecture and individual arts in the fifties.

In the sixties we started to branch out and focus on international activity, the new tendencies and the numerous very well known artists who came to Zagreb and who are also represented in our permanent collection.

In the seventies our museum was one of the first in Croatia—which was then still in Yugoslavia—to start to collect film, video and Conceptual art. To date we have collected some 12,000 art pieces produced in different media that represent the development of contemporary art, both in Croatia and internationally.

Approximately fifty per cent of the works in our collection are by Croatian artists and fifty per cent by international artists, but this group includes artists from former Yugoslavian countries such as Slovenia, Serbia and Bosnia.

During this entire period the museum was located in a very small space in the upper town, just across the palace where we were yesterday evening. The museum directors and curators had begun to search for a new home for the museum back in the sixties. After three decades, in 1996, a decision was made that the museum should be erected on this very spot in New Zagreb and in 1999 there was a national architectural competition to design the building, which finally opened two years ago.

We possess the largest contemporary art collection in Croatia but there are also other museums in Rijeka, Split and Ossik that collect contemporary art. Our institution has been very important for the development of contemporary art, as I think is plain to see in our permanent collection, with some of whose artists you are already familiar—one of them is our colleague, curator Tihomir Milovac, and Nada Beroš, who is with us today.

Over the year we organise five large contemporary exhibitions. At the moment there's a retrospective of works by Ivan Ladislav Galeta. I recommend those of you who haven't yet seen it to do so, because Galeta is also with us today and he will gladly guide you through the exhibition.

We also organise various performances, including dance performances, theatre and film projections here in this space and we collaborate with numerous institutions, artists and even non-governmental groups in Zagreb. This film about our activities that you may see as I speak was made in 2010. That was our first year in this new building and we were all very happy and enthusiastic. Working day and night, we managed to organise about three hundred and seventy events that year, more than the actual number of days in the year. The following year we would not be so active, but still.

When we moved to the new building, the new location, we suffered a lot of criticism because we were coming to this part of town, which was known as the dormitory of the city of Zagreb. Many people felt that it was not a good decision, so we were a little afraid, I must say, about how the public would accept the new building, our permanent collection and our exhibition programme, because it was the first time in history that we had a permanent exhibition of contemporary art here.

Maybe the public is still getting used to it, but they are coming, people are showing interest and we are doing quite well. So far, we've had more than 300,000 visitors, which I think is quite good for a contemporary art museum.

As a city-funded institution, we get eighty per cent of our funding from the city of Zagreb, only three or four per cent from the Ministry of Culture and our income ranges between fifteen and twenty per cent, so it is very important for us that we have an audience, that we have many visitors coming in and I hope they continue to do so in such numbers in the future.

I'm really glad—and I'm speaking in the name of my colleagues and curators at the Museum of Contemporary Art—that you have come here to Zagreb, where we can show you what we are doing. We also have a department of restoration and documentation, and an audiovisual studio where artists can produce video walls for our Western façade. This is our fourth or fifth exhibition space here in this building, which favours our communication with the public and with these people who pass by every day.

So, I wish you a good stay and I wish you a good working session today. Thank you again for coming to Zagreb.

### **KEYNOTE III – *Notes on Forensic Architecture***

**EYAL WEIZMAN**

The pyramids of Gaza, so a forensic architect once told me, proliferate throughout the Strip, but are most commonly seen in the camps and neighbourhoods that ring Gaza City and along the short border to Egypt. They are the result, he said, of an encounter between two familiar elements in the area—a three-storey residential building, of the kind that provides home for refugees, and an armoured Caterpillar D9 bulldozer. While the bulldozer circles the building its short shovel can reach and topple only the peripheral columns. The internal columns are left intact, forming the peak of the pyramid. The floor slabs break at the approximate centre, around the crest and then fall down and outward to form the faces of the structure. The geometry of the pyramids of Gaza is not as ideal as that of the pyramids of Giza. Their irregularities register differences in the process of construction—the uneven spread of concrete, for example—or in the process of destruction—the inability (or reluctance) of the bulldozer operator to go completely around the building. Sometimes, the irregularity is registering other details in the particular form of that destruction. For years I dealt with architecture not as a projective design practice but as a diagnostic technique, the diagnostic of war crimes and human rights violations. I would like to show you some of these [pictures] although, however important, we have not gathered here for this purpose.

Reading architecture, I've realised, is more complicated than I originally thought. It requires not only architectural language but its very infrastructure; and for the reading to have political effects and affects, new forms have to be constructed, which we could call resonating chambers 'forums'. This is the art of forensics, the ancient art of the forum. Forensics of course comes from the Latin word *forum* and is the way in which things—in my case, architecture—come to speak within it. Forensics is a part of rhetoric, and rhetoric is about speech but it's not only about the speech of humans, the speech of people, but the strange and obscure speech of things, how things speak. This is the technology of forensics.

Forensics needs three things: an object that comes to speak to the forum, the forum itself, and its interpreter—the person who speaks the language of the object and the language of the forum and mediates between one and the other. In fact, in order to refute a forensic statement we need to dismantle that entangled form of enunciation; we need to say that the object is inauthentic, the translator is biased or lying or he/she doesn't speak the same language as the thing. In Roman times, interpreters were rhetoricians and in today's courts they are scientists as expert witnesses, but as I will show (and I hope you will agree) the domain, the chief domain of that interpretation could be understood as the field of aesthetics, the field through which the thing speaks.

Aesthetics, as everybody in this room must know, is a complex field of appearances and interpretations, the partition of the sensible as the philosopher stated. I think we can in fact say that museums are forums where things are

making their appearances and you, ladies and gentlemen, are the interpreters, so please don't find it a cheeky provocation if I say that you are forensic specialists. Good. You know about such things much better than I do.

I am, as I said, interested in architecture and its readings, which require the construction of forums. In fact, in order for the reading or interpretation of architecture to take place, I cannot simply remain within the field of interpretation, but need to take part in the actual gathering of forums, the construction of forums in which those things will resonate. So in fact I am going to speak to you today about buildings, or rather ruins. Before that, however, I need to take a detour (rather a long detour) and go through bones.



**Figure 1:** Clyde Snow presents evidence gathered by the Argentinean Forensic Anthropology Team (here, a slide of the skull of Liliانا Pereyra) during the trial of members of the Argentine junta, Buenos Aires, 24 April, 1985. Photograph: Daniel Muzio/AFP Getty Images.

So, let us start with bones. Within the field of war-crime investigation, a methodological shift has recently led to a certain blurring. The primacy accorded to witnesses and to the subjective and linguistic dimension of testimony, trauma and memory—a primacy that has had such an enormous cultural, aesthetic and political influence that it has redefined the end of the twentieth century as ‘the era of the witness’—is gradually being supplemented (let's not say bypassed) by an emergent forensic aesthetics, an object-oriented juridical culture immersed in matter and materialities, in code and form, and the interpretation of scientific investigation by experts.

This image here [Figure 1] is taken from the trial in the mid-eighties of the Argentinean Junta, and the exhumation and identification of those who disappeared in this context. Most historians of the juridical process describe this case as the emergence of forensic practices, or forensic anthropology, within war crime investigation, a field that had previously been almost exclusively entrusted to witnesses' declarations, at least since the Eichmann trial in the sixties. The man who trained the group of forensic anthropologists in Argentina is Clyde Snow;

there he is here, presenting the skull to be viewed. In fact, what is unique and inspiring about Snow, one of the great gravediggers of the twentieth century, is that he never considered his skulls as evidence but as witnesses.

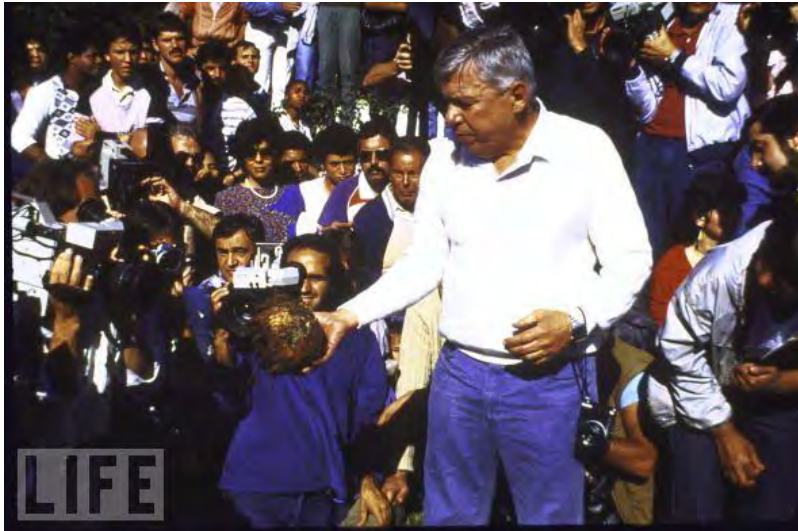
We know that the difference between a piece of evidence and a witness is that a piece of evidence is presented and a witness is interrogated, but something in the practice of forensic anthropology would begin to blur these distinctions. An object such as a skull wasn't one from which the subject could be easily cleansed or removed, and in fact with those skulls a certain blurring began to be produced between human beings and things, between life and death, between a testimony and a piece of evidence. Snow refers to his methodology in speaking to skulls as osteobiography the biography of the bone, the biography of the object as the biography of the bone. In fact, as the word biography indicates, the term embraces more than a moment of death. What is in discussion here is not a terminal moment where objects change state, but a long process of life, a sequence of illnesses, incidents, accidents, migration and labour relations that have literally fossilised into the morphology and texture of the bones, of the skull, which speak for its morphology and texture—for the way the untrained eye we could be tuned into these minute details in the object itself.

Bones, and definitely skulls, look all alike. Skulls are devoid of expression and of the gesture of the human face, but the bones of the skeleton are exposed to human life in a similar way that a photographic film is exposed to light. A life understood as an extended set of exposures to a myriad of forces—as I said, labour, location, nutrition, violence, and so on—is projected on a mutating, growing and contracted negative which is the body in life. Like a palimpsest, or a photograph with multiple exposures, bones can be quite complicated to interpret, but development in the analysis and method of the scientific technique allowed what is inscribed in them to gradually come into focus. We can now read very complex lives in the morphology of the bone: we can read where people had been, how they moved, what they ate, what work they did, etc.

Snow refers to his witnesses—his witnesses are the bones—as witnesses that never forget and never lie. Just by taking them, something strange occurs, right? By transforming them from an object into something like a subject, from dead to quasi-alive, he makes them more than a subject, he makes them super-subjects; people, of course, forget and lie constantly, so why don't bones forget and lie? I think in this kind of article I should almost try to show the opposite, i.e., how through the dense field of interpretation, gesture, drama, theatricality and aesthetics of presentations in the forum, bones actually begin to tell multiple stories.

Indeed, I mentioned earlier that most accounts of forensic moments start with the Argentinean Junta trial in the mid-eighties, but there is one incident that is less known, and I believe that through the work of other authors and the research that I have undertaken with Thomas Keenan, I could historically identify the actual

moment forensic aesthetics emerged with the appearance of a particular skull in the summer of 1985 in a small suburb of São Paulo called Embu das Artes. The investigation wanted to lead to an international trial (like that of Eichmann in Jerusalem) of a war criminal called Josef Mengele and yet ended up in a gravesite in Brazil. To the great disappointment of those investigators who wanted to stage a trial, all they ended up with was with a body. At a press conference held after the body had been dug up, the head of the Brazilian police showed the skull to the cameras, and in a highly theatrical manner, said, 'The hunt has ended: here is the skull of Josef Mengele'.



**Figure 2:** Assistant coroner José Antonio de Mello displays bones to press photographers at the exhumation site in the Nossa Senhora do Rosario Cemetery, Embu das Artes, Brazil, 6 June, 1985. Photograph: Robert Nickelsberg/Time Life Pictures and Getty Images.

But of course this scenario immediately began to be contested by a huge number of people from all over the world with their own stakes. In fact, what happened in the next few weeks was a sort of trial of the bones, a strange forum where the best pathologists from all over the world assembled in a little morgue at the forensic institute of São Paulo to look at these bones as no bones had been looked at ever before. Every bone was measured and X-rayed, every detail of the bone was read against a certain timeline, against a certain osteobiography that compiled the information they could obtain of Mengele's life. A certain methodological shift started occurring around the problem that emerged at that forum, at that trial of the bones that took place in Brazil at the time. Every moment in the history of life is looking for its parallel within the bones. After about three weeks of investigation, the scientists claimed that it was between probable and highly probable that the skull they were examining was actually that of Josef Mengele. And yet, they didn't convince the forums of international opinion—the survivors and other people who so desired to have a living person for the witnesses to emerge. In fact, forensics here is not about the science itself and inasmuch as every empirical science is a matter of probability, such a basis wasn't enough to convince the forum.

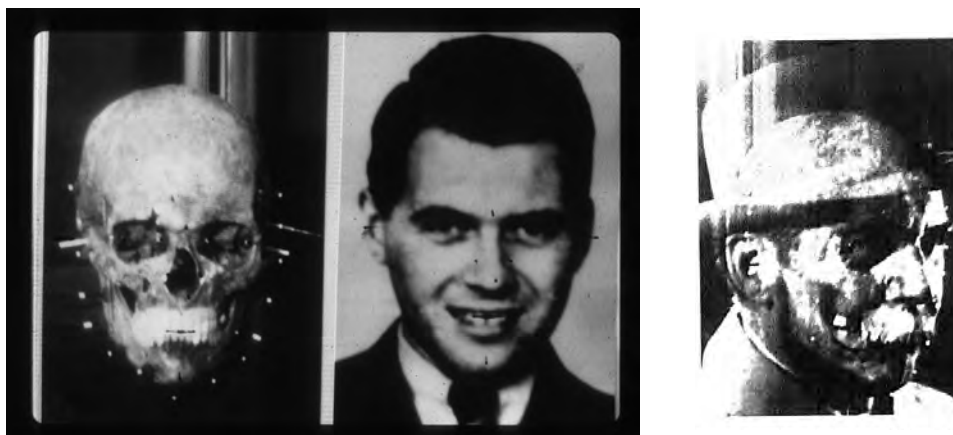


We know for a fact that science, every science, ends with a note on the margin of error, which is a margin of probability that its findings are correct. No scientist would ever say they were 100% sure, and in law as in politics, decisions have to cut through a fuzzy forensics of probability. We can convict, we can send somebody to the gallows on a margin of probability called ‘beyond reasonable doubt’. At some point a decision has to cut through that fuzzy forensics of probability, and what I think exists in excess of the probability is a kind of aesthetic rupture, an aesthetic moment that rearranges the way we see things and make decisions.



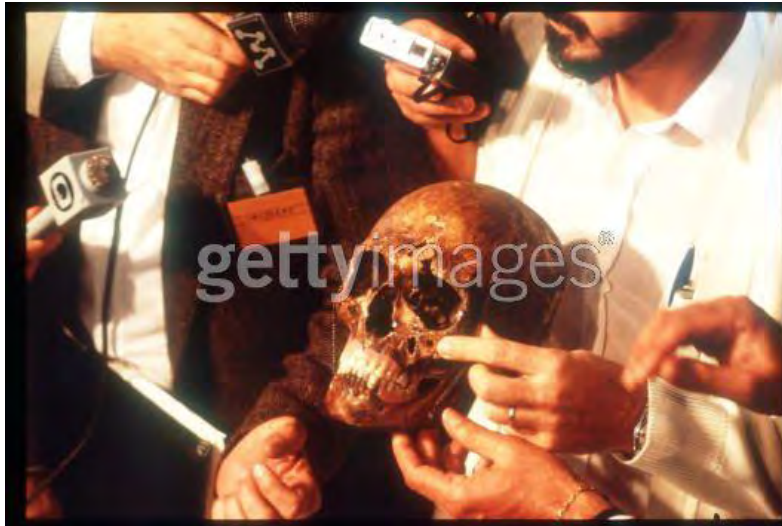
**Figure 3:** German forensic scientist Richard Helmer prepares the skull found at Embu des Arte, Medico-Legal Institute labs, São Paulo, Brazil, June 1985. Photograph: Eric Stover

An image had to emerge in Brazil, but before it could, the skull had to be repaired by Professor Richard Helmer, who very patiently reconstructed the skull of Mengele. Helmer, a member of the West-German forensic team and an amateur photographer, experimented with a new methodology we could call a videography of photography, that favoured the emergence of a new type of image. In order to create that form of identification, on the skull he stuck about thirty pins to measure the distance between the skin and the bone, so the skull itself became something like a pincushion. Helmer then erected a sort of photographic studio, in which the skull was filmed by a video camera while documentary photographs from Mengele’s life—from his childhood, from Auschwitz and photographs as a fugitive—were placed on another stand. The skull had to turn to match the kind of position from which the camera was shooting in order to create these images, and so life and death appeared simultaneously, almost overlapping in fact.



**Figures 4-5:** Images produced using photographs of Mengele and images of his skull in Richard Helmer’s face-skull superimposition demonstration, Medico-Legal Institute labs, São Paulo, Brazil, June 1985. Courtesy of Maja Helmer.

Some of them are incredibly comical and the photographer took one or two attempts to match them. In this one here [Figure 5], which I think is the most hilarious of them all, Mengele's skull is wearing a hat, and so an image of life is wrapped over that object and we have life and death, subject and object, that sort of produces the transition and blurring I was speaking about earlier. In fact the appearance of that image is what created the conviction, and I think even the word 'conviction' betrays the connection between a kind of aesthetic sense of constructed belief and the verdict of 'guilty'.



**Figure 6:** Brazilian forensic expert Daniel Romero Muñoz displays the reconstructed skull of Josef Mengele at a press conference, São Paulo, Brazil, 21 June, 1985. Photograph: Robert Nickelsberg/Liaison.

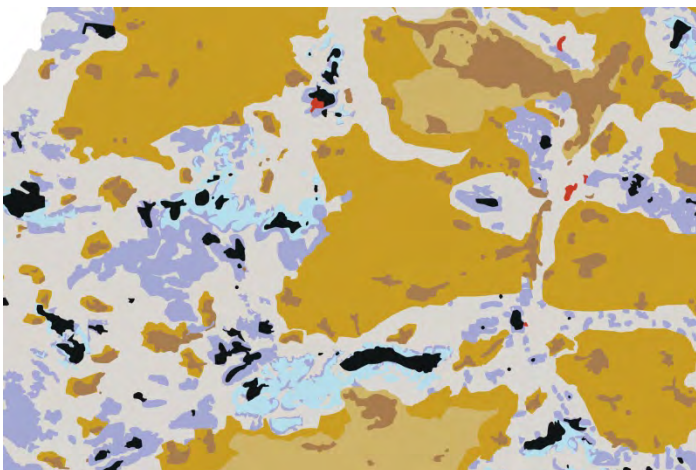
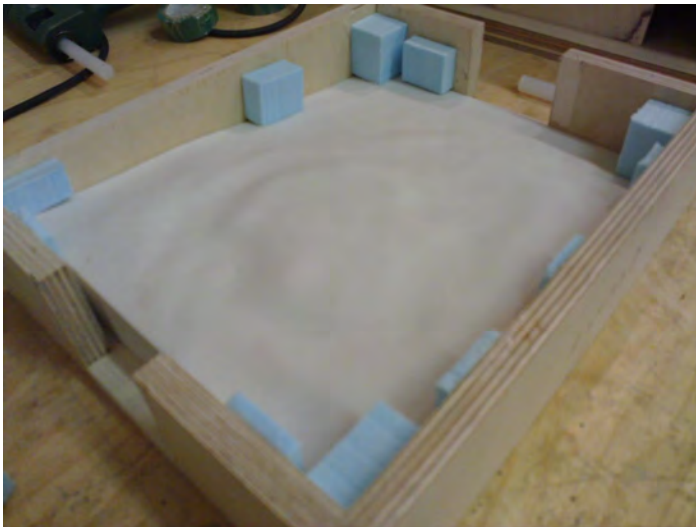
Of course, the trial of the bones wasn't in any way related to what Mengele had done, but was simply designed to render a verdict of whether the skull belonged or not to Mengele. Although to speak about the trial of things seems a metaphor, it wasn't very far off from establishing historical practices. In actual fact, trials of inanimate objects had existed at least as long as the law had, and Miguel Tamen recounts a hilarious example of a statue in ancient Greece that fell on someone who had been tried and convicted of murder, thrown into the sea only to be later extracted from it when the appeal was passed.

So at the press conference, that image is what led to the conviction, not the balance of probability within it. I love that image. The skull was kind of interviewed; it was asked and it spoke. Forensics was experiencing a moment of popularity in 1985. *The New York Times* covered this investigation every day for the almost three weeks of its duration. The scientists whom I have interviewed, as I try to reconstruct that investigation in a part of an exhibition that I'm now co-curating with Thomas Keenan, describe cameramen actually trying to film the morgue through the window! So, forensic scientists then became the sort of popular icon they are today, as illustrated in detective stories, films and television series.

Furthermore, a certain methodological move had also been undertaken. Paradoxically, it is thanks to the skull of Mengele that all other skulls came into vision; the science that developed around the skeleton has now permitted the identification of countless missing people throughout South America. Mengele was just one of many disappeared people in South America at the time of the transition between dictatorship and democracy, when trials, truth commissions and human rights commissions emerged and the remains of people began to be identified, until DNA changed the whole picture in the early nineties.

Some influence of the methodology employed in the Mengele investigation in Argentina was felt here in Ethiopia and in Guatemala, where we see the construction of form around the quasi-scientific results of the process, a sort of blend of religion and science, that tells us that forensics is more than just a science of identification: it is a means of presentation, an aesthetics of presentation.

But I'm also interested in the bones after they have been identified and given a name. Once we know who they are, they are returned to the earth and the bones disintegrate, transforming into the calcium and minerals that flow through the soil until they actually become a part of landscape. This image is in fact a product of a forensic investigation of the type that had aeroplanes flying over areas suspected



to be sites of atrocities, creating three-dimensional digital maps and looking for points of irregularity in the landscape that reveal a sort of interference.

That is a mass grave, and in the minute details of that topography we can see the interference in the ground, the edges collapsing inwards, the centre sort of swelling. In this sense, the forensic examination of bones becomes a means of interpreting landscapes in larger territories. So forensics, as I've said, is the archaeology of the very recent past, but it is also a projective practice engaged with inventing and constructing new forums; things cannot speak and cannot be understood without the construction of such forums. But how do we start to construct them and how we understand these relations? This is what lies at the centre of what I call the forensic aesthetic.

With the urbanisation of conflict, architecture has become the pathology of this era. Geospatial data, maps and models of cities and territories, the 'enhanced vision' of remote sensing, 3-D scans, air and ground sampling and high-resolution satellite imagery redraw the surface of the Earth in variable resolutions from the bottom of the seabed to the remnants of bombed-out buildings.

The surface of the Earth—now increasingly called upon to perform as evidence/witness in political negotiations, at international tribunals and fact-finding missions—has a certain thickness, but it could not be considered a volume. It is not an isolated, distinct, stand-alone object, nor did it ever 'replace' the subject; rather, it is a thick fabric of complex relations, associations and chains of actions between people, environments and artifices. It inevitably overflows any map that tries to frame it, because there are always more connections to be made.

In this context, architecture is both *sensor* and *agent*. Sensor, in what way? We think of architecture as a static thing, but physical structures and built environments are elastic and responsive. Architecture, I once proposed, is the 'political plastic'—social forces *slowing* into form. Joseph Beuys called sculpture the social plastic. I think that by extending architecture into the political plastic we can see the relation between the contours and details of form regardless of what that form actually is.

This is a detail of a map I've drawn of the colonisation of the West Bank.

Here we see a certain relation between forces and form. Each one of these very complex contours owes its shape to the complexity of the force field that has configured it, and only if we know how to read these forces will be able to read it as a diagram of political forces. In fact, in order to understand them perfectly, we would need to press 'Play' on the map and discover how the constant changes of the political force field are translated into morphological transformation. So of course, I'm interested in politics but I'm also a formalist, although I do not accept the full translation, the full transparency of politics in matter.



This is a crack that was produced by Doris Salcedo at the Tate Modern, as you all know. It takes years for trapped air bubbles to make their way between paint layers and structure; the path and rate of their crawl depending on larger environmental conditions and their constant fluctuations; walls gradually bend and ceilings sag. Deterioration and erosion continue the builders' processes of form-making. Cracks make their way from geological formations across city surfaces to buildings and architectural details. Moving within and across inert matter and built structures, they connect mineral formations and artificial constructions.

There is no point in distinguishing between architecture and the landscape on which it sits. The two together form a complex and entangled environment. Just as we blurred the distinction between subject and object, life and death when analysing the minerals of the bones, we need to do the same for architecture, dissolve it into the landscape from which it emerges.

The structural pathology of a building is a diagram that records the influence of an entangled and potentially infinite political/natural environment, registering year-on-year temperature changes, almost imperceptible fluctuations in humidity and pollution, which are themselves indications of political transformations, patterns and tendencies.

Environmental laws change the air. The quality of the air in cities is registered in micro-dimensions—the air bubbles on the façades of buildings, or their first millimetres—which contain a blueprint of the city's politics.



**Figure 7:** Computer simulation of a blast sequence. Image courtesy of Hinman Consulting Engineers, 2005

A blast, however, marks a limit to the responsive elasticity of built structures. An explosion causes a rapid release of energy in the form of sound, heat and shock waves. The shock wave travels across the structure, increasing pressure on the walls and floor slabs. External walls bend inward, reaching their point of no return, and snap, initiating a progressive collapse. Floors pancake onto one another. Air is sucked in to fill the vacuum, carrying flying glass, steel and stone. In today's wars, people die when bits of their homes come flying at them at high speed. Later, when these fragments settle across larger areas, the way in which they do so might be interpreted as evidence.



**Figure 8:** Richard Goldstone's press conference in Gaza, 2009. Photograph AP.

This image is perhaps one of the best demonstrations of the contemporary principle of forensics. Goldstone stands in front of a destroyed multi-storied building. Around him are members of the government in Gaza; before him is a bouquet of microphones belonging to international news networks. Since the ruined building can not speak for itself, Goldstone seems to have taken on the task of speaking on its behalf, interpreting the story of the building to an international forum.

This is Richard Goldstone in his press conference in Gaza [Figure 8]. The Israeli attacks on Gaza in 2008 and 2009 damaged or destroyed 20% of the buildings in the Gaza Strip. Most of the people who died, died in their own homes and architecture actually became the most important piece of evidence, the most important witness to the conflict. So we are facing an absolutely perfect demonstration of a forensic moment, because buildings cannot speak by themselves even if microphones are placed in front of them. Goldstone, therefore, is the translator or interpreter between the language of the object, the building and that of the international forum that was summoned to render a legal opinion on Israel's war.

However, a strange story occurred the very day on which the Goldstone report was published, 15 September 2009. On that day, Marc Galasco, who carried out the forensic analysis of most of the buildings in the Strip, who read every ruin and was the first to tell me about the pyramids of Gaza, was fired by the organisation that had hired him because they discovered, or some pro-Israeli bloggers

discovered, that he was a very prominent collector of Nazi era memorabilia. They accused him of fetishism. At that point I decided to enter into the discussion in his defence. According to my understanding of forensic scientists as people who speak to things and ask things to speak back to them, what could we expect forensic specialists to be if not fetishistic? In actual fact it is not in spite of his collection but rather because of it that we need to accept his forensic propositions as highly probable.



**Figures 9-10:** Marc Garlasco speaking at Bard College's Human Rights Project (HRP) about violations of the laws of war in the Gaza offensive of 2008-2009. Photograph courtesy of HRP, 2010

This is a moment from a lecture at Bard College when he describes to my friend Tom Keenan how he's been sieving through the debris and rubble [Figures 9-10]. But this sequence of images that I can run back and forth several times also reveals the transformation suffered by the subject and the object in war crime investigation that I initially mentioned. Marc Galasco is obviously a human-rights person. Human-rights people go to places and take pictures of people, usually of women and children, of victims, as they sympathise with them. Describing that crime he has no interest at all in the lady. He completely masks her; I don't want you to concentrate on the arm gesture that he is making but on the fact that he hides her and starts reading things in the background. The background thereby



becomes the foreground as this kind of forensics replaces testimony as a methodology of discussion.

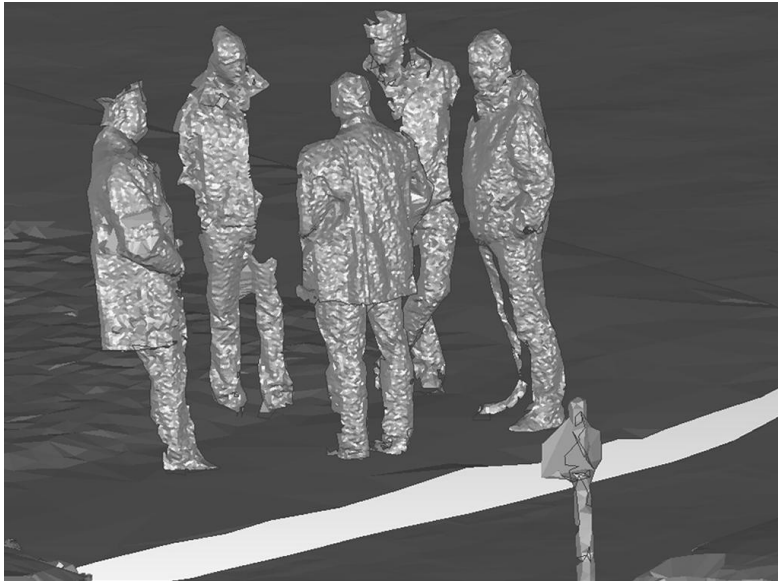
If fetishism is the attribution of an inherent power and a certain agency to inanimate objects, then what do we expect those experts who speak to buildings and cities (and expect them to speak back) to be?

Beyond its manifestation in commodity or sexual form, it is in forensics that the fetish is most commonly manifested today. Here, the fetish is not the mystifying and obfuscating veil that masks the true way in which objects are made in the world—a feature of capitalism that Marx identified in commodity fetishism—or the part that stands for the lack of the whole. On the contrary: under the micro-physical lens of methodological fetishism, it is in the part that we can find folded into the fabric of complex social relations, imprinted political forces, inscribed events; conjunctions of actors and logics of practice are not crushed on the object but rather traverse it, sometimes held together by it.

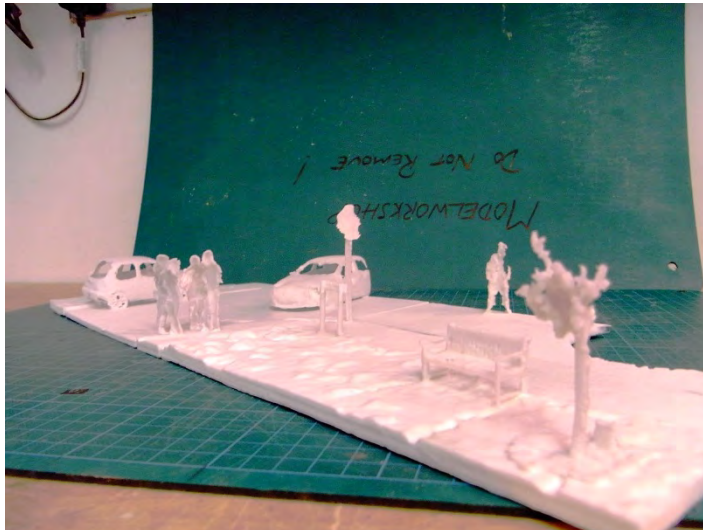
Look at the care, the touch, the intimacy that are set up with these things. This conjunction of forensics and fetish is a rather comical reference to what—in a polemic against iconoclastic critique—Bruno Latour called the ‘factish’, a term that merges the objectivity of facts with the mysterious attraction and autonomous power of fetishes.

I would like to show you a series of new types of objects that began to emerge as photography was supplemented by scanners in the forensic context. In fact, forensic photography—or forensics and photography—have always been intimately connected in the history of crime, or crime scene interpretation, a connection that has now been replaced by digital scanners that provide 3-D scan to a third of a millimetre perhaps of the object in a crime scene.

This forms a part of an archive of forensic scans that I’ve obtained recently, of which I shall show you just one scene [Figures 11-13]. You’ll notice, of course, that the person who is dead—the dead body—is missing from the image. When that image left the police archives and entered mine, one thing had to change. The body had to be deleted by just a click. Here the body is in front of the car and here it is missing. In that image they’ve forgotten to remove it, but we can see the missing body here. This has its own characteristics, and I think the materialisation of that scan (I have in fact printed the scene in 3-D) comes nothing short of documentary sculpture. That object is a different kind of object: it is perhaps to sculpture what photography was to painting, a way in which we can produce documentary objects.



Figures 11-13



I have five minutes left, so I would like to end where I began, with what we call forensics. I have discussed the forensics of destruction. But what about the forensics of the destruction of destruction? I was once granted access to an enormous archive produced in a different context to the international law context. Following an Israeli attack, the government of Hamas in Gaza assembled an enormous book called the *Book of Destruction*, in which every building that was destroyed was photographed was assigned a serial number, either etched on the rubble itself or on a note held in front of the camera. Every building, whether still standing or destroyed, received a name consisting of a mathematical code, and the reason and the state of its destruction on the day of the attack were interpreted by Hamas through each name.



**Figure 14:** A building destroyed by D9 Armoured Buldozer, Northern Gaza Strip, 2009. Photograph: Kai Wiedenhoefer, 2009



And yet I noticed something strange in that archive because these are refugee homes, and such homes are never simply homes—they are in themselves destruction. The homes of these refugees mark the destruction of Palestine in 1948. The destruction of a refugee camp is more than just destruction, it is the destruction of destruction; so we could ask, what is the destruction of destruction and what is the forensics of the destruction of destruction? In Hamas, of course, and in Palestinian political theology, that negation of negation—a quasi-Hegelian negation of negation—is the negation of the negation of domesticity. Is it a romantic moment of destruction that could lead to a grand political transformation? Or is it simply a call to destroy that pyramid? In my opinion, it is to destroy the fetish of the pyramid, to rebuild or upgrade the camp, to destroy the destruction. I also think that at this moment forensics shifts backwards and forwards, delving into the past, into the sequence of Palestinian history as a sequence of destructions that end up with the destruction of the camp as the last iteration in the ongoing history of destruction and a pragmatic call for reconstruction. Forensics is not an international law, we are in the realm of politics itself, in which I think the contradiction between upgrading and returning should not be accepted at all. A lot of Palestinian organisations would say: if you upgrade the camp, if you rebuild the camp, you negate the right of return. However, in my opinion, it is precisely by reinforcing the camp, [by its] rebuilding, [by] destroying its destruction that its creation as a political platform would be supported and reinforced.

Thank you very much for listening.

### **CASE STUDY III - *The Third Hand, Bandjoun Station, Cameroon***

#### **BARTHÉLÉMY TOGUO**

As this project is very political and with my broken English you wouldn't understand a thing, I would like to invite my friend Enrico [Lunghi] to translate my words into English.

I am an artist; I am not a curator or a museum director. One day I thought that Africa had lost its classical art. Today the works by African artists are bought by Western museums—they are not stolen, they are bought with the consent of Africans, who get a lot of money for them.

After ten years of study I have some experience, and I feel that the time has come for me to do something for Africa, because I believe that Africa has to be constructed by its diaspora. Europeans already have enough problems with Greece, Spain and Italy, and all Africans of the diaspora, in the cultural, economic, medical and educational sectors have to send their knowledge back to Africa.

Being competent in the domain of art, one day upon waking up in Paris I said to myself 'Get up and go to work for Africa'. So I came and began this project in no man's land. Bandjoun Station was not a train stop—everything has been constructed expressly, from the basement to the roof. Forty people have been working on this project, all of whom have been pleased to give their energy to this project. And they are very happy today to have constructed such a place in Cameroon.

In Bandjoun Station we have a basement in which to project films and videos, a ground floor to house the bookshop, a first and second floor to welcome the temporary exhibitions and a last floor in which to present the permanent collection.

This collection is born out of my exchanges with African artist friends and the international artists I meet at the Biennale. A small part of the collection I have purchased myself—these are the works by the artists whom I cannot get in touch with personally and so and I bought their works through my gallery.

We have two buildings, one larger than the other. The smaller one is for artists' residencies. We also have twelve studios where artists can live, like Villa Medici. This is not a ghetto for African artists, but is open to artists from all over the world, who come to work with the local community.

The last floor contains a large studio in which to work. At present I am completing the statues for the foundation. First I had to make the place exist physically. As I am neither a director nor a curator, I will leave the direction of the centre to specialists. The need I felt to carry out such a project was also due to the fact that

there was no such structure in Africa. Such work is not a political priority, but I have always thought that education and art should be priorities, for they arouse consciousness in young people, opening their minds and therefore allowing people of all ages to discover a sort of therapy through art.

I have never come into contact with the state, the government or any other form of political power. I came to my city (which is three hundred kilometres from the capital Yaoundé) alone, and carried out my project without informing anybody. It is conceived first and foremost for Africans. They have to come back to Africa and help develop the continent.

I would like to show you some pictures of the construction and of the Bandjoun area. It is a region that has preserved its traditional culture. The idea of situating Bandjoun Station there is precisely to favour a symbiosis between traditional culture and contemporary culture. The architecture of our project respects local tradition. The images that you will see show that the houses in the surrounding area have these high pointed roofs. I was inspired by Gaudí—not by his graphic work but by his way of protecting walls against water. It is my graphic universe which is on the walls, and as it rains a lot in the region, this helps to protect the interior from infiltrations. The problem I will face in Bandjoun Station is the protection of the art works, which is when I shall need you to help with the conservation. We have some very beautiful pieces.

Bandjoun Station is not a copy of a European contemporary art centre that has been exported to Africa. It is also a place for living. After two years of work it is now almost finished. At first, the local population was scared by the beauty of the construction. So I organised an open doors day for people to visit the interior. I had to rethink the function of an art centre or a museum for this specific Bandjoun centre. So I invited people to hold funerals, weddings and anniversaries at the centre, to make it their own. This house is their house, and that's the reason why we didn't have an official opening. Soon, the whole region should begin to develop in different areas, as occurred in Bilbao following the construction of the Guggenheim. Since the museum was established in the city, the whole region has developed and grown in different aspects. Art allows for this kind of development.

Continuing with the images, I forgot to say that before you make art you have to eat. In Africa we have to be realistic—we have to combine this cultural project with an agricultural project. I have never seen a cultural project in Berlin or New York associated with an agricultural project. And so we come to the subject of this conference, the museum in the city—in our case associated with plantations of bananas and manioc.

That is all. Now you can visit us. Thank you.

## CASE STUDY IV – *Venezuelan Museum*

GABRIELA RANGEL

I would like to thank CIMAM, Zdenka Badovinac, Pilar Cortada, Ivo Mesquita and Natalia Majluf for inviting me to think about a subject that deals with my own personal and professional history. Having lived out of the country for over twelve years, I would also like to thank my colleagues in Venezuela for providing information about a topic that has been internationally ignored and neglected.<sup>7</sup>

To begin this case study on Venezuelan museums, I would like to quote social anthropologist Paula Vásquez Lezama, ‘Venezuela is a politically fragmented country. Within this context, any attempt to practice research under such a tense present runs the risk of being influenced by the weight of those conditions. Conclusions are constantly interpreted by people in terms of their political agendas ... Discussion is limited to—as well as nurtured by—the political inclination of its discussants’.<sup>8</sup>



**Figure 1:** Collection display at the Galería de Arte Nacional, Caracas, 2011.  
Photograph: Gabriela Rangel

The situation described by Vásquez Lezama is what Karl Marx identified as the sphere of ideology, which is the revealing force of the truth as truth of the untruth; the truth presented as evidence of the untruth. After Michel Foucault, Jacques Rancière recalled that ideology ‘is the name of the distance between words and things’.<sup>9</sup> I may argue that Venezuelan museums, widely recognised twelve years

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<sup>7</sup> I would like to acknowledge Beverly Adams and Angelina Jaffe for their editorial recommendations, and Roldán Esteva Grillet, Carmen Hernández and Katherine Chacón for their insightful testimonies on the current situation of national museums in Venezuela.

<sup>8</sup> See Paula Vásquez Lezama, *Poder y Catástrofe. Venezuela bajo la tragedia de 1999*, Taurus Pensamiento, Caracas, 2009, pp. 24-25. My translations.

<sup>9</sup> Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, University of Minnesota Press, Minnesota, 2004. This translation from the Spanish version, *El desacuerdo entre política e ideología*, Ediciones Nueva Visión, Buenos Aires, 1996, pp. 11-112.



ago for their professional competence, remarkable infrastructure and valuable collections, are about to die under the malaise of ideology. But perhaps ideology here unfolds a cosmogony and a concomitant mythology that represent the political effects of Venezuela's single source of wealth: oil. I will begin by listing some useful dates and facts in order to provide a succinct context for describing some of the symptoms that are leading Venezuelan national museums to a long-lasting stay in the emergency room.

In 1998 Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías was democratically elected President of Venezuela, supported by a coalition of centre-left wing parties.



Figure 2: Newspaper kiosk in Caracas, anonymous

In 1999 the constitution was amended to reflect the ideological shift undertaken by the new political administration. For instance, the new constitution established that the president can be perpetually re-elected, and the presidential term extended from five to six years. In 2002 a series of massive street demonstrations caused a period of socio-political unrest that led to a failed coup d'état against Chávez's administration initiated by civil groups and supported by a nucleus of the armed forces. This was a reaction against the president's escalating concentration of power. After two days of uncertainties, the president returned to power supported by a military clique. Between 2002 and 2003 a general strike was organised by the employees of the state-run oil corporation *Petróleos de Venezuela* in agreement with different factions of the opposition. In 2004 a nationwide referendum was held in order to revoke the president's mandate. However, the population approved his mandate and therefore his authority. Since then, more political changes have arisen, all of them as a result of the erosion of

civil liberties and the internationalisation of the Bolivarian Revolution as a regional project supported by the Venezuelan oil industry.

A year after the referendum, ten national museums located chiefly in Caracas were forced to surrender their autonomy and the specificity of their missions to the newly created Fundación Museos Nacionales (National Museums Foundation, FMN.) The latter was conceived as a supra-entity created to generate the programmatic content for national museums, reporting directly to the newly instituted Ministry of Popular Power for Culture. It is no accident that the drastic change of direction for the national museums coincided with the process of radicalisation of the so-called Bolivarian Revolution. Precisely in 2005 Francisco Sesto declared, 'Now culture has been absorbed by a group of people as something essential for the revolutionary transformation. And its manifestations have a presence. Such is the main achievement, needless to say. Culture is being felt. I am truly glad for the institutional changes developing very fast, the creation of platforms to guarantee that the state accomplishes its mission ... the work with the communities, the policies of social and territorial inclusion that have reached general attention'.<sup>10</sup>

As a close collaborator of President Chávez and former Minister of Popular Power for Culture who orchestrated the reforms of the museum system, Sesto also implemented strategic changes that raised significant issues about the integrity and the future of Venezuelan museums' patrimonial assets. It is important to highlight that since the seventies Venezuelan museums have been widely recognised in the Western hemisphere for their professional standards, infrastructure and collections, that included European avant-garde masters and archaeological artefacts as well as North and Latin American modernist and contemporary art. One notable and extremely frightening example of the current situation is that since 2005 the collections of the Galería de Arte Nacional, Museo de Bellas Artes, Museo Alejandro Otero, Museo de Ciencias Naturales, Museo Jacobo Borges, Museo Arturo Michelena, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Museo de la Estampa y el Diseño Carlos Cruz Diez, Museo de la Ciudad de Calabozo and Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Coro have been merged and stored in a single facility that is not accessible to researchers.

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<sup>10</sup> In Francisco Sesto, <http://buenosdiasamerica.blogia.com/2005/090802-entrevista-con-farruco-sesto.php> ['Ahora la cultura ha sido asumida por el conjunto del pueblo como algo esencial en la transformación revolucionaria. Y sus manifestaciones tienen presencia. Ese es el logro principal. Es indudable. La cultura se está sintiendo. Me complacen también los cambios institucionales que avanzan muy deprisa, la creación de las plataformas para garantizar que el estado pueda cumplir con sus funciones, el aumento en la producción audiovisual y editorial, el trabajo con las comunidades, las políticas de inclusión social y territorial que se han generalizado ...']



**Figure 3-3A:** Galería de Arte Nacional moves to a new building / Carlos Cruz Diez's *Muro de inducción cromática* is destroyed. Image courtesy of Daniela Lovera and Juan Nascimento

Carmen Hernández, curator and museum director engaged with the Bolivarian revolutionary process, avowed that museum collections are, in fact, in good condition and stored in a single facility. In the last decade Hernández has served as director of the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo and the Museo de Bellas Artes. More recently, she was director of the Sala Rómulo Gallegos, dedicated to promote the culture of Latin America. In contrast, Sagrario Berti, art historian, curator and conservator of photography who served as Chief Conservator at the Galería de Arte Nacional, insisted on the importance of keeping the museum's archives and records together, or at least to maintain the information about the pieces in the same facility in which they are stored. During a round table among

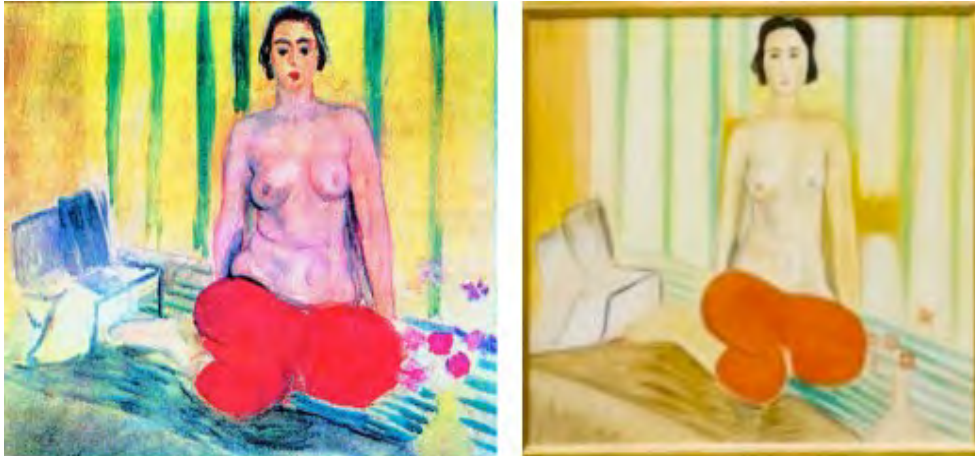
local museum specialists held at the former Ateneo de Caracas, Berti pointed out a series of crucial matters to be presented to the Minister of Popular Power for Culture related to the decision of dismembering and moving museum collections: 'The museum archive contains instructions required to install the pieces through graphic and photographic documentation, specific indications for the installation, and even suggestions on the preservation of the piece according to its medium or support. In short, the museum archive shelters the biographical information about each art work, its memory and its trajectory'.<sup>11</sup>

Beyond technical considerations, the decision to unify the museum collections is even more controversial given the long-unsolved theft of Henri Matisse's *Odalisque in Red Trousers* (1925.) In 2002 Rita Salvestrini, at the time director of the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Caracas (MACC), disclosed to the public that the Matisse painting stored in the museum's facility was a fake copy of the original.<sup>12</sup> Funnily enough, Matisse's piece was not only a part of the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Caracas' patrimonial assets but rather an emblematic piece. Moreover, Matisse's *Odalisque* was singled out among other important works by European avant-garde masters comprised in the collection such as Pablo Picasso or Fernand Léger for branding the internationalism of MACC through a number of marketing goods such as bags, T-shirts, notebooks and foulards on sale at the museum shop. Sofía Imber, director of MACC for seventeen years, purchased the piece with its original frame in 1981 at Marlborough Gallery in New York for \$ 480,000. When the theft was reported to the international police corps the market price for the painting was appraised at \$ 3.3 million. The case remains pervasively unsolved, obscured, and both official authorities and the democratic opposition have made problematic assumptions about criminal responsibilities that involve high-level authorities of the revolutionary government as well as past administrators of the MACC.

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<sup>11</sup> Sagrario Berti, <http://sosomeosve.blogspot.com/2011/01/ponencia-archivos-por-sagrario-berti.html> [También el archivo de un museo atesora las indicaciones necesarias para la instalación de las piezas, conformadas por información gráfica y fotográfica, sugerencias de montaje y hasta recomendaciones para su preservación, según el medio o soporte. Un archivo de museo, en suma, es el custodio de la biografía de cada pieza, de su memoria y trayectoria.]

<sup>12</sup> The Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Caracas (MACC) was subsequently renamed Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Caracas Sofía Imber (MACCSI).



**Figure 4-4A:** Images 4 and 4A, Original and fake copy of the *Odalisque in Red Trousers* by Henri Matisse

Pierre Bourdieu's *habitus* is a notion that could be useful to examine the institutional struggles and forces that led to the collapse and resulting disintegration of national museums in Venezuela. *Habitus* is a system of dispositions that is inscribed in the body of social agents through their past experiences. For Bourdieu, 'The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to obtain them.'<sup>13</sup> In spite of structural changes, Venezuelan museums have kept a part of their professional staff and their *habitus*. Graciela Pantin was the second on command during the administration of former Minister for Culture, Maestro, and founder of the Sistema de Orquestas Juveniles, José Antonio Abreu. Later on, Pantin worked as director for Culture and Education at Fundación Polar, a private foundation dedicated to promote the arts, science and education. In Pantin's view, the salaries and economic packages at Venezuelan museums have been frozen to the extent that many trained professionals have left the field or the country. It is no accident that a number of Venezuelan curators currently work abroad at institutions such as Americas Society, LACMA, MoLAA, MoMA, Museo de Puerto Rico and the Tate. Notably, job promotions are not allowed in Venezuelan museums, and a number of positions have been eliminated, including the curatorial departments banned by the revolutionary authorities, and before and after them by a number of people including curators from the previous regime or the so-called Fourth Republic (Cuarta República). The new approach is to hire free contractors for different tasks, outsourcing rather than forming and developing new professional cadres with specialised skills for museum management. Pantin also pointed out that 'government officials have constantly claimed that the budget for manpower and human resources in all cultural

<sup>13</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practices*, Polity Press, Cambridge, chapter 3, 'Structures, *Habitus*, Practices', p. 53.

institutions has increased about five times since their takeover. This is not the case. ... Some professionals in search of more stimulating challenges apply for a transfer between institutions hoping for a promotion, but it almost always ends in a heavier burden and more responsibilities for basically the same pay ... Those committed to the cultural cause can barely achieve anything, always forced to work under pressure given the urgency of the situation'.<sup>14</sup> Lately, museum employees, especially at a technical level, have formed unions with tight connections to grass-root community groups in order to keep their positions.



**Figure 5:** Museo de Arte Colonial, Caracas, 2011. Image Courtesy of Daniela Lovera and Juan Nascimento

It is worth mentioning that all national museums have ceased to produce catalogues and publications. This textual vacuity applies also to wall texts, missing in all museum exhibitions with the sole exception of the Galería de Arte Nacional, which uses ideological definitions to present its collection, such as 'Art of the Invaders', describing the colonial period that corresponded to paintings and sculptures made during the Capitanía General de Venezuela. Earlier in June 2011, when I visited the Museo de Bellas Artes and the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo in Caracas, I discovered that museum shops only offered crafts and folk art. Art books have disappeared from the shelves as relics of the past. Historian Roldán Esteva Grillet observed that new magazines such as *Roca de crear* and *A plena voz*, massively produced by the Ministry of Popular Power for Culture, had taken over the function and mission of art publications. Carmen Hernández has also expressed her critical concerns about the de-professionalisation of museums, the absence of conservation standards and the obsolescence of their institutional practices, 'Museum directors today lack of both managerial and curatorial

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<sup>14</sup> Graciela Pantin. <http://sosmuseosve.blogspot.com/2011/02/museums-today-aperture-or-crisis-by.html>

experience, and that is the reason for not being able to undertake an appropriate path in tune with more contemporary museum practices. Museums are in reality transformed into somber and sad mausoleums. There are just a few curated exhibitions. The promotional view predominates, but, of course, research does not exist'.<sup>15</sup> Katherine Chacón, a museum expert who has been professionally involved with the Bolivarian revolution and until last year was Director of the Museo de la Estampa y el Diseño Carlos Cruz Diez, has also expressed her frustrations about the matter. For Chacón, the Bolivarian revolution cares little about museums and culture at large.



**Figure 6:** Façade of the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Caracas, 2011. Photograph: Gabriela Rangel

Symptomatically, President Chávez began his tenure in office by firing museum directors during a live television broadcast, mimicking the language and tone of a baseball game commentator. Afterwards, old and new comers have been appointed, recycled, and as Hernández and Chacón admitted, today they are non-professional individuals with the sole exception of the director of the Galería de Arte Nacional, artist-critic Juan Calzadilla. The Consejo Nacional de la Cultura (CONAC) an umbrella institution ascribed to the Secretary of State that has coordinated the museum system since 1974 was absorbed by the Ministry of Education in 1999 and later on dismantled. More recently, the Ministry of Popular Power for Culture has set up three new museums (science and technology, architecture and popular art), but none of them have yet either a clear operational structure or their own facilities. Nevertheless, these invisible and portable institutions have replaced the competence and programmatic functions of the extinct curatorial departments of former museums, organising unprofessional exhibitions. This ideological 'Occupy the Museums' operation has been developing

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<sup>15</sup> Carmen Hernández in private correspondence by e-mail with the author, 9 November 2011. [Los actuales directores de museos no tienen experiencia museológica ni curatorial y eso impide que los museos puedan orientarse hacia una labor pertinente de acuerdo a la museología más contemporánea. Realmente se han convertido en mausoleos oscuros y tristes. Son pocas las exposiciones realizadas por curaduría. Predomina la mirada difusionista y por supuesto, la investigación es inexistente.]

in the very same galleries that achieved their professional competence and international prestige by means of a set of rules and practices that evolved through specialised curatorial and educational training. The last chapter of this chaotic situation for the Venezuelan national museums occurred when museum facilities were converted into provisional shelters for the victims of a flood in 2010. How can Venezuela's national museum system, often compared to that of Mexico in terms of its autonomy, professional standards, dispositions and curatorial achievements, be so susceptible and feeble when faced with such ideological changes?

As Susan Buck-Morss has suggested, I propose a construction of history that looks backwards rather than forwards. It is not fortuitous that new museums in Venezuela were created and gained international prestige between the late sixties and early seventies. Before that time the Museo de Bellas Artes and the Museum of Natural History, both in Caracas, were the only institutions modestly functioning. However, since 1974 a strong impulse in the public sector has led to the creation of new museums under the supervision of CONAC. More museums were created years later to fulfil different missions, and even to meet the needs of underserved urban communities. Established in 1974-1975, the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Caracas and the Galería de Arte Nacional represent the spirit of a period defined by historians as the 'Greatest Venezuela'. In 1976, when the oil industry was nationalised and both the state wealth and national income increased exponentially, huge investments in infrastructure and higher education were produced, providing generous grants to study abroad. At that time, Jesús Rafael Soto, Alejandro Otero, Gertrude Goldschmidt (Gego) Carlos Cruz Díez and Marisol, among other artists, carried out numerous public and private art commissions, which have today been vandalised and some of which even have to be protected with electric wire. In general, public art is no longer recognised as shared patrimony.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> In 2006 and after the death of Jesús Rafael Soto, Petróleos de Venezuela repaired the vandalised sculpture *Esfera de Caracas*. Today, Soto's public work is fenced with electric chicken wire to ensure its integrity is preserved.





**Figure 7:** *Esfera de Caracas*, a public sculpture by Jesús Rafael Soto is vandalised. Image courtesy of Daniela Lovera and Juan Nascimento

Significantly, author José Ignacio Cabrujas wrote about this golden age of wealth, 'With the development of the oil industry a cosmogony was created in Venezuela. The State acquired a providential hue. From a slow evolution, as slow as is everything related to agriculture, the state underwent a "miraculous" and spectacular development ... Oil is fantastic and induces fantasies. The announcement that Venezuela was an oil country created the illusion of a miracle, it created in practice a culture of miracles. Oil wealth has the power of a myth'.<sup>17</sup> Struggles between social agents proved helpful to grasp the cosmogony of oil and its myth of progress represented in the development of a monumental yet feeble museum system. They also paved the way for the construction of a populist-nationalist foundation for museums as well as an oil cosmogony of progress and modernisation.

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<sup>17</sup> I owe this allegoric device to Fernando Coronil's *The Magical State, Nature, Money and Modernity in Venezuela*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1997.



**Figure 8:** Luis Molina Pantin, *Apocalyptic Postcards*, 1996. Courtesy Luis Molina Pantin

Such an ideological template could be summarised in two different principles established in 1974: 1. Venezuelan art should remain singular and therefore should be confined to its own field as an oppositional force to external influences. 2. As Venezuela is a political ally to the United States for the democratic dialogue in the Western hemisphere, its artistic production should be eventually be included in the grand narratives of art history when it is synchronised with the metropolitan canon. These principles inform museum practices and the institutions that frame them.

I would like to conclude this report with a bittersweet story attributed to artist Robert Rauschenberg, who travelled and spent some time in Venezuela between 1984 and 1985 thanks to an exchange programme in the framework of the cultural measures developed by the U. S. Department of State. Rauschenberg was commissioned to produce works for the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Caracas as the hosting institution, which subsequently acquired a part of the series. When the artist presented his paintings made *in situ* at the exhibition staged by the museum, in which he conveyed an acrimonious critique to the social conditions he had met with, director Sofía Imber complained about the lack of optimism of the work. Rauschenberg replied, 'It's not me, it's the combination of oil and shanties.'

## **CASE STUDY V - *The Capitalist Truth of the Communist Past: A Short***

### ***Reminder***

#### **BORIS BUDEN**

Thank you for the invitation. I know you all are curators but today a contemporary curator is also seen as a sort of author. This shift was produced in the seventies. At stake is the emergence of a new kind of curatorial work in which authorship has become the most important feature. Curators have begun to be exhibition authors. Thinking about what sort of case study I should present to you, I decided to follow the pattern of how curators create an exhibition. As is well known, an exhibition today consists of three major elements: first the general idea, the problem, that has to be articulated; secondly, the visual aspect, i.e., the display itself; and thirdly, a conference or a symposium on the topic of the exhibition. I will also bring you all three elements. So, first I'll focus on articulating the problem. Secondly, I will present the visual material which brings the argumentation of my point and thirdly, instead of an international conference, I shall rather quote from the meetings of the Central Committee of the former Yugoslav Communist Party—quotations from its most prominent members. This, as I am suggesting, could be an interesting topic for a large international conference.

Let me start with the articulation of the problem. You are in Sarajevo because it is believed that there is something unique about this place, this location, in cultural and historical terms. What exactly does the uniqueness of this place consist in? Well, for a start let me suggest something you would never expect to be said in a post-Communist, democratic society. The unique historical experience of this particular place, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and even perhaps the former Yugoslavia as a whole, can be summed up in a very simple statement: Communism was better than democracy. But what do we mean by saying that Communism was better than democracy?

First, let me briefly sketch out what democracy means today in Sarajevo, in Bosnia and Herzegovina: a massive loss of various important rights, for instance, social rights, property rights, so-called mobility rights, i.e., freedom of movement; deterioration of all sorts of security, especially social security; destruction of indigenous traditions, before so-called inter-cultural tolerance; an overall institutional and socio-economic decay. Democracy here is the name for mismanagement, total corruption, including massive moral corruption on all levels of social life, cultural regression, parochialism, even barbarism; finally, it was democracy that brought the war to Bosnia, war crimes and atrocities, ethnical cleansing, etc., and moreover, it has shown here its Fascist underbelly. The arrival of democracy to Bosnia and the former Yugoslavia was accompanied by a revival of Fascism.

In comparison to the condition of actual democracy it is not difficult for Yugoslav Communism to be ranked better. It simply implies features that are diametrically

opposed to those mentioned: social security, economic prosperity, moral stability, a number of today denied rights, but also, cultural prosperity including a powerful cultural industry and, above all, peace, tolerance, international recognition, global political subjectivity, etc.

However, all these features can be relativised if, as usual, we introduce the signifier of totalitarianism. Not only does it make the Communist past look worse than it actually was, but it automatically absolves the post-totalitarian condition of all its shortcomings, so it looks better than it actually is. Unfortunately, however, it is unable to absolve the people supposed to be happily enjoying life after totalitarianism of all their actual debts.

At the beginning of his memoirs, *The World of Yesterday*, Stefan Zweig nostalgically recalls the Europe of the golden age of security, a time when people knew how much they possessed, or how much would they earn, what was allowed and what was forbidden, a time when everything had its norm, its measure, its weight. Those who were in possession of assets could know precisely how much interest they would generate in the years to come. It was a time when people used to put money in the cradles of their newborns, a humble contribution, a small donation—a reserve for the future. What those happily liberated from Communist totalitarianism put in the cradles of their newborn children today, however, are the debts which they will have to repay for the rest of their life.

I can already hear objections. First, this is pure nostalgia. Second, one cannot simply define the meaning of words like Communism or democracy by arbitrarily choosing this or that set of descriptive features. Let me answer the second reproach first. Yes indeed, you are quite right. However, it is not only the old-fashioned descriptivist approach that is wrong here. The real trouble with the juxtaposition of Communism and democracy lies in the former's binary structure, that clearly evokes the logic of power representations and political subjectifications based on contradictions and antagonisms, a logic that is no longer supposed to function in our Post-Modern, post-colonial, post-Communist age. Still, I am at least responsible for this binary approach, which is how Communism and democracy are presented and dealt with today, especially in connection with history and historical experience in the hegemonic discourse of liberal democracy, namely, as a completely non-dialectical binary form of mutually exclusive opposites. So it is this hegemonic discourse that expects our historical experience today to confirm and constantly rearticulate a clear-cut difference between both, at best in a mutually exclusive way: either Communism or democracy.

Moreover, our historical experience is supposed to present both in another binary and exclusive relationship—the one between the new and the old. Communism is supposed to be old, whereas democracy is believed to be new, in terms of their presence but even more so in terms of their absence. Firstly, it is clear that there is no Communism, for Communism belongs to the past, although this doesn't imply

the presence of democracy. Democracy is also absent from post-Communism, but in a diametrically different way—it is always a democracy to come, always a ‘democracy in the making’.

This is why all the negative features of Communism appear today as timeless and spaceless, that is to say, forever fixed and universally valid: totalitarianism, terror, violation of human rights, etc.

On the other hand, all the negative features of democracy I have mentioned before are time-specific and space-specific, that is, they are culturally specific. Democracy is absent, but it is absent only in Bosnia and Herzegovina because Bosnia and Herzegovina is a cultural time-space in which democracy has not yet arrived due to the cultural belatedness of this society, to the belated Modernism of the whole former Yugoslavia, a time-space that still awaits its cultural renewal, the implementation (from abroad, of course) of a proper democratic culture that will facilitate the final arrival of democracy.

In short, even if we believe we have advanced well into the Post-Modern age, we shall still be haunted by the binary ghost of the difference between old and new. But what do the old and the new actually look like here?

Let me show you a picture, the photograph taken by artist Marko Krojač in Serbia, that forms a part of his work *Heritage of the Yugoslav Revolution: Artefacts between Memory and Neglect*, presented a few weeks ago at the Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst (NGBK) as a part of the exhibition entitled *Spaceship Yugoslavia: The Suspension of Time*.



**Figure 1:** Marko Krojač, *Ostra*

The work deals with the present condition or the remains of what were called the *Monuments of Revolution*. In 1945, twenty thousand monuments, busts, commemorative plaques, etc., began to be installed throughout the country to commemorate the war of liberation and the Socialist Revolution. Many of them reveal Yugoslavian Modernist aesthetics. However, a large number of these

monuments were destroyed or otherwise disappeared with the arrival of democracy (in Croatia alone more than three thousand disappeared).

My question is: What is new and what is old in this picture? The answer seems to be more difficult than we expected. Thus, there is a certain ambiguity that is intrinsic to the difference between old and new, the ambiguity that goes beyond the difference between Communism and democracy.

Let's take as an example one of the negative features of democracy that I haven't yet mentioned and that is especially acute here in Bosnia: massive unemployment. It is believed that the Communist command economy was free of this typically capitalistic problem. As a result we are supposed to think of unemployment as something new, a disease that has arrived with democracy; a disease for which this democracy, or better, democratic capitalism, also offers a proper cure. It doesn't treat unemployment as a systemic but rather as a personal, individual problem. So if we are able to cope with this problem in a proper way, if we are able to change ourselves, we will eventually find a job.

Let me now show you an iconic picture that shows the end of the industrial modern age through one of its most important symptoms: the expansion of capitalism into the realm of culture. This iconic picture presents democracy's promises of a better future, suggesting that each of us should play our part in the game with the new opportunities brought about by capitalism's colonisation of culture. I'm sure you're familiar with this, from YouTube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RxPZh4AnWyk>

[Dialogue between Susan Boyle and Simon Cowell and Piers Morgan, judges of *Britain's Got Talent*]

SC: 'Hi, what's your name, darling?'

SB: 'My name is Susan Boyle.'

SC: 'OK, ah, Susan, where are you from?'

SB: 'I'm from Blackburn, near Bathgate, West Lothian.'

SC: 'That's a big town?'

SB: 'It's a, sort of, collection of ... It's a collection of, ah ... villages. I had to think there.'

SC: 'And how old are you Susan?'

SB: 'I am 47. And that's just one side of me.'

SC: 'OK. What's the dream?'

SB: 'I ... I'm trying to be a professional singer.'

SC: 'And why hasn't it worked out so far, Susan?'

SB: 'Well, I've never been given the chance before. But here's hoping it'll change.'

SC: 'OK, and who would you like to be as successful as?'

SB: 'Elaine Page, someone like that?'

SC: 'Elaine Page.'

PM: 'What are you going to sing tonight?'

SB: 'I'm going to sing 'I Dreamed a Dream' from *Les Miserables*.'

PM: 'Good. Big song.'

[Singing] I dreamed a dream in time gone by / When hope was high / And life worth living / I dreamed that love would never die / I dreamed that God would be forgiving / Then I was young and unafraid ...

Boris Buden: I knew you'd like to watch the clip because it's a beautiful picture of success. Someone who is supposed to be a total loser, forty-seven, unemployed, finally proves able to achieve a huge success. As I already mentioned, this has something to do with the collapse of industrial modernism when culture becomes the space of capitalist expansion and new opportunities. The message is clear: What has been lost in the classical capitalist industry can be compensated by the cultural industry.

Another example is a beautiful British film made by Mark Herman in 1997, entitled *Brassed Off*. It sums up the whole story of the neo-liberal turn in Great Britain under Margaret Thatcher's rule, specifically, the story of a group of British miners who, after having lost their jobs, form a brass band. At the end of the film they win the National Brass Band Contest held in London's Royal Albert Hall:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gz\\_9FrhCBnI&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gz_9FrhCBnI&feature=related)

[Music: 'William Tell Overture,' instrumental introduction to the opera *William Tell* by Gioachino Rossini]

Boris Buden: These are simple workers, subalterns, to employ the classical category used in cultural studies from Gramsci to Stewart Hall. Yes, they are losers as classical industrial workers, but in the end they win the contest, so again we have a success story. They obtain recognition as cultural producers. Still, in the film culture is not simply presented as a space for compensation for what has been lost in industrial Modernism. It's more than that. It offers an opportunity for the articulation of political protest, of resistance to the neo-liberal dismantling of society.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lKx3MUqzCcQ>

[Danny's speech]

'This band behind me will tell you that that trophy means more to me than no one else in the whole world. But they'd be wrong! Truth is, I thought it mattered. I thought that music mattered. But does it bollocks? Not compared to how people matter. Us, winning this trophy won't mean bugger-all to most people. But us, refusing it—like what we're going to do now—well, then it becomes news, doesn't it? You see what I mean. That way, I'll not just be talking to myself, will I? Because over the last ten years, this bloody government has systematically destroyed an

entire industry, our industry, and not just our industry—our communities, our homes, our lives. All in the name of “progress.” And for a few lousy bob.’

Boris Buden: So as you see, thanks to becoming cultural producers they are able to articulate their protest against neo-liberal capitalism. Now, what has all this in common with Yugoslav Communism? Let’s go back to the year 1967. This is a clip from one of the best films of the so-called Black Wave of Yugoslav cinema, *When I Am Dead and Gone* by Živojin Pavlović, an excellent representative of what we can call Yugoslavian, Communist, Titoist Modernism, which today even former dissidents call the Periclean age of all the national cultures in former Yugoslavia, that has left an incomparable legacy in the realms of architecture, film, literature, contemporary art, etc.

What I’m going to show you now is another contest, this time from Yugoslavia’s Communist past at 01:00:00:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2JdJbNT7AY>

‘Sada vam predstavljamo mladog hipika iz Kruševca, Jovanović Predraga Peđu.’  
[Now we introduce you to a young hippy from Kruševac, Jovanović Predrag, called Pedja.]

[Singing]

I thought love was / Only true in fairy-tales / Meant for someone else / But not for me / Love was out to get me / That’s the way it seemed / Disappointment haunted all my dreams / And then I saw her face / Now I’m a believer / Not a trace of doubt in my mind / I’m in love, I’m a believer / I couldn’t leave her if I tried

Boris Buden: I will show you the beginning of the film. It doesn’t have subtitles, but I’ll tell you what it’s about in English. It’s a sort of road movie. The guy, as you’ll see in the beginning, is unemployed and during the whole film he is searching for a job. Of course, he cannot find a job in the industry, so he becomes a singer, or better, a cultural worker. This is the opening situation in the film at 00:00:25:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2JdJbNT7AY>

[Dialogue]

‘Kuda si kreno bre?’

‘Zar ne vidiš da se nisu svi popeli?’

‘Ja sam ih čekao, oni neće.’

‘Šta, opet ista pesma?’

‘Kuda ćemo Milutine, i sam znaš.’

‘Posao je završen, dobili ste pare.’

[Where do you think you’re going?’

‘Don’t you see everyone is up there?’

‘I waited for them, but they wouldn’t do it.’



'You know for yourself, Milutin, where we're going.'  
'The work is done, you got the money.']

The scene at 00:00:39:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2JdJbNT7AY>

'Nema tu ali.'

'Idi u fabriku. U varoš. Pa nisam ja ovde ničija zadružna baba.'

[But ...

No 'buts.'

Go to the factory. To the town. I am no one's kolkhoz grandma here.]

Boris Buden: If this had been the Socialism that really existed, the state would have taken care of him, but, as we have heard, there are no longer any kolkhoz grandmas to look after people.

The scene at 00:00:49:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2JdJbNT7AY>

'Bubreg!'

'Jebo ti Bubreg mater.'

'Ma odi ovamo.'

'Šta je?'

'Šta da radim?'

'Beži, budalo, bilo kuda, inače si nadrljao.'

[Bubreg!

Fuck you!

Just come here.

What?]

The scene at 00:01:00:

'Gde ću bre, Bubreg? Na drvo, pa da cvrkućem?'

'Ma samo što dalje odavde. Pogledaj mene. Školovali me za ekonomu, a sad, šta radim? Polivam upravniku da se umiva.'

[But Bubreg, where am I supposed to go? On a tree, to sing there?

Wherever, just as far from here as possible. Look at me. I was educated to be an economist, and now, what am I doing? I am helping the chief to wash his face.]

At 00:01:12:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2JdJbNT7AY>

'Kidam, burazeru, prvom prilikom kidam.'

[I am gone, my brother, the first chance and I am gone.]

Boris Buden: And so on ... What is the situation here? Well, the workers get paid for their jobs on a daily basis. This means that they're not employed but are casual migrant workers. You have probably heard about Yugoslavian *gastarbeiters* in the sixties, seventies and eighties in Western Europe, and you have probably heard about the freedom of movement in the former Yugoslavia and its open borders. At that time we had passports that were more useful than any other Western passport. We could go everywhere with those passports, without visas. Why? Was this, as is usually believed, Titoist Socialism with a human face? No, the reason was of a more practical nature: the introduction of the market economy in the fifties that brought about massive unemployment. This is why Yugoslavian borders were open, because otherwise there would have been a social explosion. So, those unemployed in a Yugoslavian Socialist market were allowed to leave in order to seek employment in Western Europe. This explains the freedom of movement.

At the end of the film the guy becomes a folk singer and returns to Belgrade, where he meets Bubreg, who appeared in the beginning of the film and who was unemployed, despite having a degree in Economics.

The scene at 0:53:37:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2JdJbNT7AY>

'O ... Džimi burazeru! Otkud ti?'

'Eto tražim neku šljaku. Upoznajte se.'

'Bojana.'

'Milo mi je. V. Slišković.'

'Je li, pa šta radiš burazeru? A?'

'Pevam.'

[Oh, Jimmy, my brother! What are you doing here?

Well, looking for some work. Here, let me introduce ...

Bojana.

Nice to meet you. V. Slišković.

So, what do you do, brother?

I sing.]

The scene at 0:53:53:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2JdJbNT7AY>

'O, ho? A repertoar?'

'Maramica svilenica, tuljaga i tako to.'

[Oh, really? And the repertory?

Well, mostly folk songs.]

The scene at 0:53:57:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2JdJbNT7AY>

'Oooo, znači, narodnjaci.'

'Nego pročit'o sam onaj oglas u novinama, pa ako bi ti mogao da mi ...'

'Da, da burazeru, samo jes' da sam ja najbolji menadžer na Balkanu, ali sada prolaze treskavci. Šta da radim sa tobom?'

[Oh, so you do folk music.

Well, I read an add in the paper and I was thinking if you could ...

Yes, brother, I am the best manager in the Balkans, but the 'bangers' are in now.

What am I to do with you?]

Boris Buden: The guy who is now a singer has heard about the contest in Belgrade and wants to attend. And the other guy, the economist who was unemployed at the beginning of the film has now become a manager, has made a career in show business as a music promoter considering himself the best in the Balkans. Folk music is out, rock 'n' roll is in, but this is 1967—there is already a possibility to expand into the cultural industry. So, the unemployed becomes a cultural manager and a promoter of rock music.

The scene at 0:54:11:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2JdJbNT7AY>

'Ma ne, kapiram ja i to. Sve znam.'

'Kpiras, kpiras, ali znas kakva je konkurencija?'

[Oh now, I get it, I know.

You get it all right, but do you know what the competition is like?]

Boris Buden: This competitive situation resembles that of Susan Boyle, and implies the very essence of capitalism and especially of neo-liberal capitalism.

The scene at 0:54:15:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2JdJbNT7AY>

'Slušaj Bubri, ako mi sada pomogneš, sve će biti u redu.'

'OK, OK, OK, al' pazi, ali ako propadneš, onda si truba.'

[Listen, Bubreg, if you help me now everything will be all right.

Okay, okay, okay, but watch out, if you fail then you suck!]

Boris Buden: So, he's saying he'll give him a chance, but if he fails, it's all over for him, it's the end. There is, therefore, a chance in culture, the last chance. I repeat: this is Socialist Yugoslavia in 1967.

The scene at 0:54:22:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2JdJbNT7AY>

'Važi.'

[All right.]

Boris Buden: He agrees to do it. Documentary footage of a real 'Yugoslav idol' from Belgrade in 1967.

The scene at 01:00:44:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2JdJbNT7AY>

[Singing]

Love was out to get me / That's the way it seems / Disappointment haunted / All my dreams / And then I saw her face)

Boris Buden: And, now it's his turn.

The scene at 01:01:46:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2JdJbNT7AY>

'Sada slušate novog pevača. Janko Bugarski iz Svilajnica. Janko Bugarski, zvani Džimi Barka.'

[Singing]

Pred svaki izlazak u grad / ja se pitam / da li cu naci u tom gradu / devojku plavu, devojku mladu / koja bi mogla mene da voli / devojka ta / i da nju, samo nju / volim ja / Da li cu naci u tom gradu / devojku plavu, devojku mladu / koja bi mogla mene da voli / da me voli / devojka ta / i da nju ...

[Now listen to the new singer. Janko Bugarski from Svilajnice. Janko Bugarski, called Jimmy Ark.]

[Singing]

Every time before I go out to town / I wonder / if in this town I will find / a blond girl, a young girl / that could love me / that girl / and that I could / love her, only her / If in this town I will find / a blond girl, a young girl / that could love me / that girl / and that I could / love her, only her]

[Voices from the audience]

'Dosta te ...'

'Skloni se kretenu!'

[Stop it ... go away you idiot]

Boris Buden: This is the end. As you see, culture is not only a space of opportunity where you can compensate what you have lost in the modern industrial age; it is also the space of possible failure. And this is what we should bear in mind.

So, this film belongs to the so-called Black Wave of Yugoslav cinema, which is why it is often said that it disclosed the dark side of Socialist reality. However, was it truly a Socialist reality that we saw in the film? I suggest a different interpretation. The film was rather a cultural and artistic response to the introduction of the market economy, to the liberation of the labour force from state control, to the first symptoms of the collapse of industrial Modernism, of post-industrial modes of

production, in short, an early cultural announcement of the forthcoming neo-liberal turn. Please don't forget: this film was made thirty years before Marc Herman's *Brassed Off*.

I would like to make another very materialistic remark concerning how this and other films were made in Yugoslavia in the sixties. They were made by the powerful film industry operating in a sort of market economy that had developed during the fifties. The backbone of this industry was a number of relatively independent companies that were owners of the final product, i.e., the films. They provided the technology, the studios, the film-processing laboratories, professional support, etc. The authors organised themselves in a free association of film workers that comprised the artistic creators of the films, the scriptwriters, directors, composers, cameramen, set designers, etc., who were awarded the status of freelance professionals. In other words, they were not directly employed by the technical and production firms but were granted the right to negotiate contractual arrangements with the film studios for producing scenarios and film projects, which doesn't sound like a typically Socialist form of filmmaking, does it?

Let me at this place provide, as promised, a few quotes from the most prominent members of the Central Committee of the Yugoslav Communist Party. As you know, in 1948 Yugoslavia split with Stalin and began to seek its future independently. In 1950 Boris Kidrič, who designed the introduction to the market economy and the new self-management programme, declared: 'Soviet Socialism is a state monopoly capitalism that is worse than the Western capitalist system. The Soviet monopoly capitalism was brought to perfection by Soviet bureaucratic centralism.'

From the Yugoslav position, Soviet Communism was in fact a state monopoly capitalism.

Kidrič again: 'The economic and social role of the Soviet bureaucratic caste is completely similar to the role of the capitalist class, if not worse.' Thus, for Yugoslavia, Soviet Communism appears even worse than capitalism.

Kidrič: 'Stalinism is the most perfidious counter-revolution in history. Our central question—and this is the central question of Yugoslavian Communism—is who controls, or better who appropriates, the surplus value.' So, as early as 1950 this was the major concern of Yugoslavian Communism.

Kidrič: 'Our historical position can be defined as the one between the restoration of capitalism, on the one hand, and the bureaucratic tendency based on the statist form of social property, the so-called command economy, on the other.' In between the two is a third, Yugoslavian way.

Kidrič: 'Every Communist party that is identified with the state and the police apparatus will be distorted.' The date is 1950.

In the early sixties, Edvard Kardelj, one of the authors of the Yugoslavian self-management concept, stated, 'We are against state paternalism, a good government that takes care of the good, but stupid people. Our role is to establish the material conditions and democratic forms in which working people can take care of themselves, without the state.' Now this liberal leitmotif came from different historical sources, like anarchism and anti-statist Communism.

In the sixties, after the great economic reform and the general liberalisation, financial capital gained momentum and the Communist Party became aware of the problem at the Party Congress of 1971, 'The surplus value taken from the state was not given back to production, that is, to the organisations of workers, to self-management, but flowed over to banks, insurance companies and large trade companies, especially those in the export branch.' Thus, the major social conflict was now officially defined as an economic and political conflict between the centres of financial and economic power that exerted monopoly control, i.e., autonomous institutions on the one hand, and self-managed labour on the other.

A new subject of power had emerged in society, defined as a 'techno-management monopoly' and as a class. However, the members of the Central Committee warned of the major danger of the 'return to primitive Socialist accumulation, that is, to the state appropriation of surplus value.' In the early seventies they still had a problem with financial capital, autonomous financial power, and continued to believe that the major danger was the Soviet model of command economy and state property. As Bakarić, major ideologue of the Communist Party in Croatia, declared, 'The domination of the financial capital concentrated in the banks and to a lesser extent the domination of foreign trade and domestic trade capital in general, when compared with the economy at large, have not been touched at all.' This quote describes directly what is happening today. 'The main enemy is now the techno-managers' political groupings, mostly in the banks and other loan and credit institutions that use or misuse the state in order to push forward the privatisation of social income.' For Bakarić it was clearly a class conflict, and he warns that this new subject of power, the so-called techno-managers, were well connected with the state power and with the positions of power within the actual Communist Party. They also began to have connections with the nationalist political opposition trying to seize power, i.e., to take over the state.

The most powerful political agency in former Yugoslav society in the seventies was the capital concentrated in the financial institutions that strove to provide an overall privatisation, and which in the concrete political struggle aligned itself with a right-wing (in this particular case, nationalist) ideology and a conservative political movement. This is how the forces that in the nineties would bring the Yugoslav state to collapse were forged.

To conclude, I would like to remind you that what you've heard about Milošević being a Communist apparatchik is not true—he was actually a bank director who also worked as such in New York. Thank you.

## **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

**Enver Hadžiomerspahić, General Director Ars Aevi Sarajevo**

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the Ars Aevi Collection Depot. The Ars Aevi Collection is a unique ethical expression of international collective will. It was founded by artists from all over the world and from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Curators and organisers of the founding exhibitions for the Ars Aevi Collection were the artistic directors of the most important contemporary art museums in the region of Southern Europe. The architectural plans for the Ars Aevi Museum are the work of Renzo Piano. The Ars Aevi Project is developing under the high patronage of UNESCO. The Ars Aevi Foundation was established by the City of Sarajevo and the Sarajevo Canton.

The Ars Aevi Project was founded two decades ago, in 1992, the first year of the siege of Sarajevo. Sarajevo intellectuals, founders of the Ars Aevi Project, greet you from the heavenly realm, and here with us today are Ilija Šimić, President of the Foundation, Anur Hadžiomerspahić, Art Director and artist Edin Numankadić.

After two decades of working together, the founders of the Ars Aevi Project entrusted Amila Ramović, the Executive Director of Ars Aevi, with taking the Ars Aevi project into the future, continuing to work with our and your support and co-operation, and with a team of young experts and associates. Today, Amila Ramović will present the development strategies and implemented values of Ars Aevi.

In our local environment, both ordinary citizens and respected intellectuals have come to understand and accept the values upheld by Ars Aevi over the past two decades. Unfortunately, however, the current administrative and political attitude has not yet recognised or accepted either the importance of these values or the long-term development plans of Ars Aevi.

Today is day forty of my personal public protest against the injustice of the current administrative and political attitude towards the values of the Ars Aevi Project and those who made them possible. Hoping that the flute will reach the angels of wisdom to open the doors to the Ars Aevi Collection and the construction of the Ars Aevi Museum as designed by Renzo Piano, I would like to greet you with its sounds.



## **Amila Ramović, Executive Director Ars Aevi Sarajevo**

On behalf of the Ars Aevi team, I wish to welcome you to this presentation. Allow me to say that we are moved and honoured that you have come here—we could say that you have all broken the siege of Sarajevo again, imposed this time by the Croatian Airlines. And some of you have done it twice, Zdenka did it in 1994 and we are very grateful and very happy to have you Zdenka here! It is also my pleasure to welcome Ivica Šarić, Minister for Culture of the Sarajevo Canton, who is personally responsible for the fact that the Ars Aevi Collection has a home in the Skenderija Centre. Skenderija is an institution that I shall introduce a little later during my presentation, but their collective, along with the support from the Minister Šarić, has accepted us as a family and we are struggling together to make this museum possible.

Ivica Šarić is perhaps more sensitive to our initiative because he himself is a renowned artist, a well-known opera singer, and we are very happy to have him on board. He has expressed a wish to greet you and address a few words, and so I invite him to join us here.

## **Ivica Šarić, Minister for Culture of the Sarajevo Canton**

Dear friends, distinguished guests of Sarajevo,

I am very pleased that your conference entitled 'Museums and the City' is to conclude in Sarajevo. Artistic and museum practice in our city have a long and interesting past. In this context, the Ars Aevi Collection and its future Museum of Contemporary Art Sarajevo have a very special place. In her recent past, Sarajevo has survived huge human and material tragedy.

Unlike other countries in the region that are in transition, we have started from zero. Many of the things required for our recovery were of vital importance for the lives of the citizens of the Sarajevo Canton, not least the need to strengthen the city's cultural life, both in terms of material means and as regards increasing the number of professionals devoted to the arts.

None of this could have been done without our friends, or without truly persevering enthusiasts such as our hardworking Ars Aevi team, people whom I have always personally supported and who deserve our acknowledgement for their work. This is why I think it is particularly important that you are visiting this collection and that you will be able to see and learn more about this original international project.

The Sarajevo Canton supports the efforts and activities of the Ars Aevi team and, together with our international partners, endorses the construction of the Ars Aevi Museum. Needless to say, we strongly believe that our joined forces and common determination will help us achieve our final goal. To conclude, I extend to you my most cordial regards and I hope your work in Bosnia and Herzegovina is successful and pleasant. Thank you.

## **UNDERSTANDING LOCAL CONTEXT VI - *Ars Aevi Art Depot***

**AMILA RAMOVIĆ**

Dear friends, again I thank you for your attention. I will try to make my introduction of the Ars Aevi Project as brief as possible because, as many of you are aware, the work of twenty years is a long story to tell and it is sometimes difficult to pinpoint the most important issues among the number we have dealt with.

Before I proceed any further, I would like you to understand the context that we are coming from. For us is very important that you have had the opportunity to see Šejla Kamerić's film, because the experience it relates is a very important part of us of who we are, and that has made us reassess the values in what we do, the plans and future goals that are worthy of our efforts. We therefore hope that the experience of Sarajevo, however difficult it might have been, has made us better human beings, teaching us to look more profoundly for value in the things that we do in life.

The Ars Aevi Project was born from an idea, which is as idealistic as Enver's ideas can be, and that is the most naïve, plainest of concepts: that art is a value that is common to us all and a value that can bring about true change. In Sarajevo, however, the idea of art as value doesn't have the banal or pathetic quality it sometimes evokes. In fact, there was one very specific moment when art as a value for society was reassessed: during the siege of Sarajevo art was one of very important aspects of city's life and one that its inhabitants carefully nurtured. During the war, the production of art was more intense than ever before and has been reaching very high levels, even more than today, in terms of the volume of the artistic practice but also of artistic criteria. This was also the case in popular culture: musical production, for example, was predominantly very avant-garde and, actually, very artistic. And like everything else in those days, it wasn't driven by any kind of market value. And, when you face having nothing, being unable to accumulate any goods or financial gains, only basic human needs are left. So, more than ever before, the citizens of besieged Sarajevo persistently kept attending hundreds of the exhibitions and concerts, recognising art's value in its ability of creation as opposed to destruction, traces of which was visible all around.

So, the Ars Aevi Project was born in 1992. The idea stemmed from Enver Hadžiomerspahić, who started developing it, with his friends, in 1992, during the siege. But its life did not begin there, but in the work Enver and his colleagues started before the war. Here we have Ilija Šimić, President of the Ars Aevi Foundation, who was then the Minister for Culture in Bosnia. A very successful biennale of contemporary art, the Yugoslav Documenta, was held in Sarajevo prior to the war, of which Jusuf Hadžifejzović was one of the artistic directors (you shall meet him later), and Enver was the managing director. And they had plans to build a museum of contemporary art, to expand the biennale ... Just when they were

planning to set a number of extensive projects in motion, one day, without any previous announcement, bombs began to be thrown from the hills of Sarajevo, people were killed by snipers and homes, museums and libraries were burnt. This situation was as shocking to us as it would be to you at this particular moment. So, a few months later, what Enver basically said was that he didn't want to accept the imposed state of the siege and its implications: not being able to do what you want but only what they want you to do, which was to hide in the basement. He decided that if he couldn't do anything to change the situation then he might just as well ignore it and continue to develop his project for the art museum.

However, the original idea of the museum would undergo a number of changes since then, because art museums today are like modern basilicas—a symbol of success in capitalist society—and Sarajevo's museum could no longer be that. So the concept changed and the museum became a museum that sought to capture what is most valuable in the creative power of art. In the ambience of the siege, it was logical to reason that value in art is not generated per se, but stems from the people who make art a part of our common heritage. And this is how the Ars Aevi Museum became the museum of artists instead of the museum of art works. Therefore, in Ars Aevi, the artists are invited to found *their own* collection, *their own* museum in Sarajevo - Ars Aevi is the inspirer, Sarajevo is the meeting point and the artists combine their energies to build something of even higher value.

*Ars Aevi* in Latin means art of the epoch, although in actual fact it is an anagram of Sarajevo in which our logo replaces the letter 'O' [Figure 1].



Figure 1

The museum developed around the idea of creating this focal point of artistic creation in the city, which would provide a counterweight to the negative, destructive forces around our society [Figure 2].



Figure 2

The project evolved over the years. From the beginning it was followed the idea of a museum of artists, aiming to make a statement, that could bring change on a micro-level, i.e., change the idea of a museum of contemporary art in a specific place like Sarajevo and, on a larger scale, perhaps add to the debate on the purpose of art museums today. However, to make such a museum was much easier said than done. There were many options. There was a possibility for us to say – ‘Well as this is war, it’s 1993 and we have shells falling all over the place, we could issue an open call to artists of the world to donate their works for our collection’. But this, of course, would greatly complicate the future of such a collection: its quality, its relevance, its museological aspects. On the other hand, Sarajevo could have appointed an artistic director, one who would select artists from around the world and invite them to become a part of this project. But this would be an auteur project, and would have had a predictable character defined by the artistic director’s persona. This is why a strategy was devised according to which Sarajevo would invite other institutions, renowned international museums of contemporary art, to each form a part, a nucleus of the Ars Aevi Collection and become Ars Aevi’s partners in a huge joint venture.

The Ars Aevi Project, therefore, has its core in this unique Ars Aevi Collection, the focal points of which are always created by three different parties working together: an institution (museum, contemporary art centre), that is organising a founding exhibition for the Collection; the artistic director, who assumes full professional responsibility for the selection of artists; and, of course, the artists themselves, who are the essence of the project.

Let me present the collection in more detail. On the map, marked in red are the cities in which the nuclei were already created: to date, in Italy, Slovenia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkey [Figure 3].

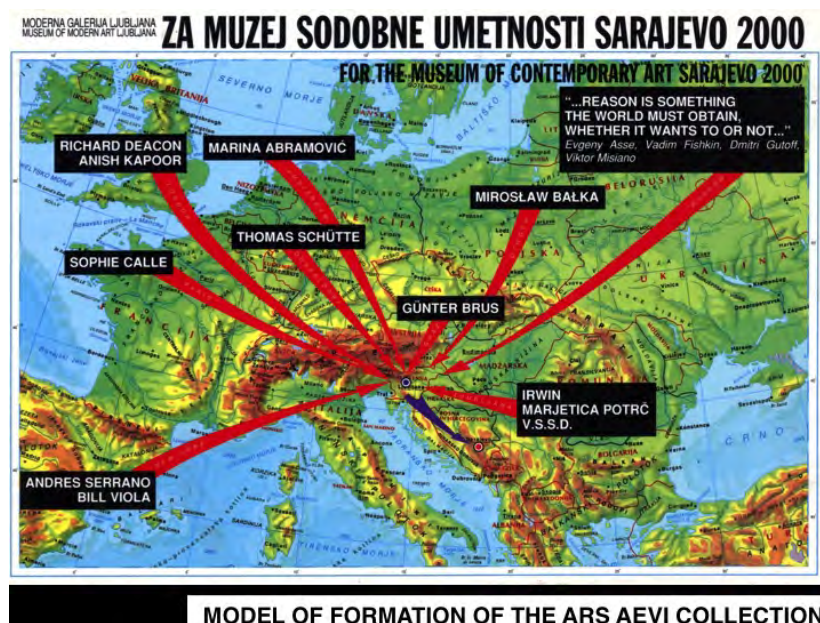
### ARS AEVI COLLECTION NETWORK



Figure 3

We are very happy to welcome Zdenka Badovinac here with us, whose contribution to this project has been absolutely invaluable. Applying the same cooperation model we had with Moderna galerija Ljubljana, art centres and museums in Milan, Prato, Venice, Sarajevo, Bolognana, and then Istanbul also joined Ars Aevi. I am pleased to be able to illustrate the concept with the leaflet produced by Moderna galerija Ljubljana in 1997, designed by the members of the IRWIN group, which explains the actual process [Figure 4].

Ljubljana became the meeting point of the artists by organising this exhibition with Zdenka Badovinac as the artistic director. Zdenka invited thirteen of internationally well-known artists (and groups) to join the Ars Aevi Museum Project and become co-founders of the Ars Aevi Collection.



MODEL OF FORMATION OF THE ARS AEVI COLLECTION

#### Figure 4

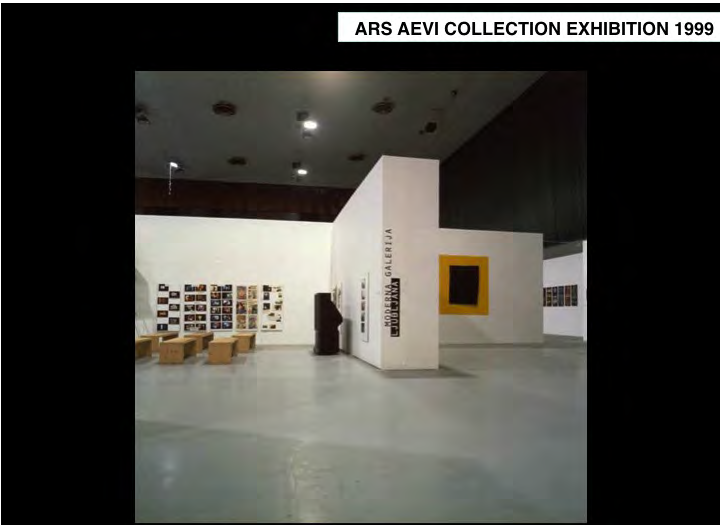
The artists came from different parts of the world. It is very important to stress here the collection's concept is international, and that we are not limited to any borders that could disrupt the free development of the collection. This concept has been maintained throughout the process. After the call was made and the preparations were completed, the museum, in this case Moderna galerija Ljubljana, organised an exhibition presenting the works by the new artists who had joined the collection. In the next stage, the Ljubljana nucleus of the Ars Aevi Collection was transferred to Sarajevo and became the property of the Ars Aevi Foundation. The artists who had joined the collection thanks to Zdenka's selection, who was a true visionary fifteen years ago, are known representatives of the art of today—Marina Abramović, Miroslav Baška, Günther Brus, Sophie Calle, Richard Deacon, Anish Kapoor, VSSD, Bill Viola, Marjetica Potrč, the Russian group with Evgeny Asse, Vadim Fishkin, Dimitri Gutoff and Viktor Misiano, Thomas Schütte, Andres Serrano and IRWIN with Bogoslav Kalaš—and their participation has made this collection a historical fact.

The concept as such was embraced by our partners, artistic directors Enrico Comi in Milan, Bruno Corà in Prato, Zdenka Badovinac in Ljubljana, Chiara Bertola in Venice, Lóránd Hegyi in Vienna, Lucrezia De Domizio Durini in Bolognano, several curators who have selected local artists in Sarajevo, and Beral Madra in Istanbul.

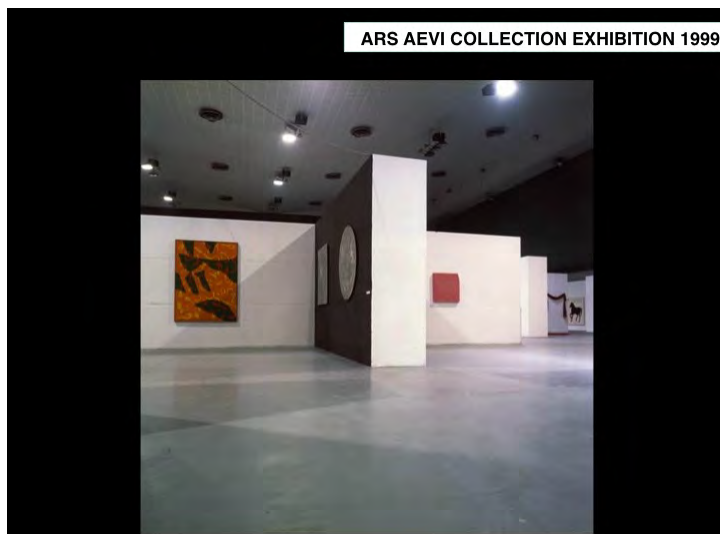
With our partners we have also created a special nucleus of works by artists of the younger generation selected once the artistic directors had established their official nucleus of the Ars Aevi Collection. The Rendez-vous nucleus presents emerging artists from the East and the West together with an artist from Sarajevo. We are very pleased that some of these artists such as Maja Bajević, Šejla Kamerić or Damir Nikšić, who ten years ago belonged to this younger generation, are now very well established artists from Bosnia and Herzegovina and form a part of the Ars Aevi Collection.

So, to date the collection comprises one hundred and sixty-one art works, and the process of enhancing the collection continues. The map I have presented shows that we foresee new partners joining in this process. This year, Petar Čuković from Montenegro is forming a new nucleus for the collection, and next year Branislava Anđelković at the Belgrade Museum will create her selection for Ars Aevi. We also have agreements with the Zagreb Museum of Contemporary Art, although we still haven't quite established the final concept; in Greece, Sania Papa has confirmed her intention to work on this project; Lóránd Hegyi in Saint Etienne is constructing another exhibition after being artistic director of the Vienna Nucleus, so he will be working in France next year. We also hope that we will be able to work in the area of Spain, for instance, and this is not necessarily a direct invitation to anyone, because we believe that the collection is developing naturally throughout the Mediterranean region, at least in these first steps.

When the collection first came to Sarajevo in 1999, it was displayed in the grand halls of the Skenderija Centre, that measures ten thousand square metres, and its presentation was actually the most memorable event in the history of contemporary art in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the last fifteen years [Figures 5-7].







Figures 5-7

The way in which artists accepted this ethical concept as a strong unifying bond was fantastic: they were all here for that show, they were all working, installing their works and promoting the project, and, spiritually, they are still here. And the collection, as you can see in this presentation, is also physically still here in Sarajevo, but it is now displayed in a very different form, in the Art Depot, which you shall see in a few minutes. Only a few works were not displayed since they belong in the outdoor space [Figure 8].

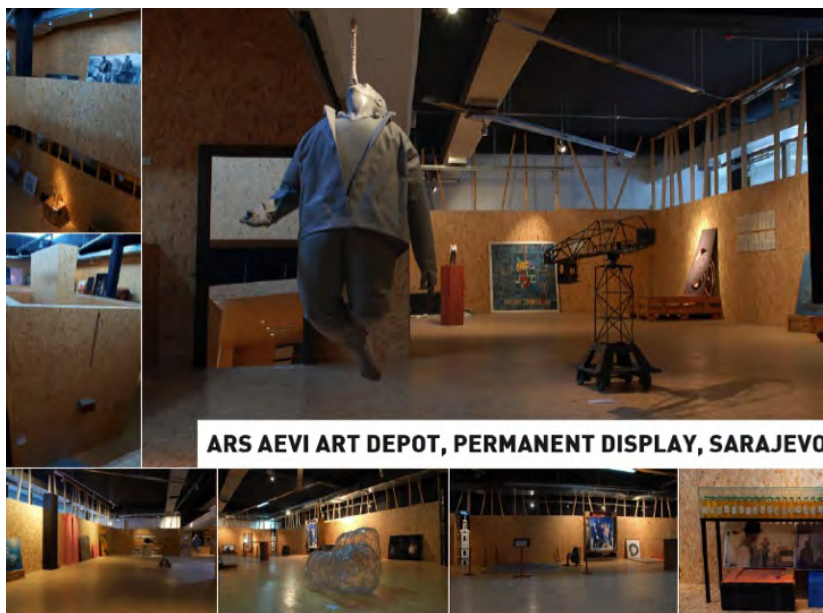


Figure 8

One of them is the installation by Daniel Buren which was then installed on the plateau of the Skenderija Centre, which in part actually inspired Renzo Piano's design for the museum [Figure 9].



Figure 9

Renzo Piano joined the project in 1999 and, when Enver explained to him how artists from all over the world were building up a very important international collection for Sarajevo, he said that he wanted to join the project as a Goodwill Ambassador of UNESCO and that he would like to contribute to the project without any financial compensation. He said that if the other artists were contributing their works for the project, he wanted to donate his work—the design for the museum. He has been very dedicated to this project from the very beginning and his first activity here was to actually establish the location together with our authorities. The location is the one we visited today, in the very centre of the city. Renzo Piano has done many studies for this location, he has been here several times and, as you can see, the first time he was here he was actually marking the corners, a gesture that symbolically expressed the victory of actually winning this space for art in Sarajevo. His designs were developed over the following five years until they reached the preliminary design leading to the highly developed detailed design [Figure 10].



Figure 10

Both the concept of the project and the design indicates that Renzo Piano was very interested in reflecting the adjacent Museum of History and its architecture in the building of our museum. So the design of the museum is based on two cubes that are connected by means of a longitudinal axis. What was very important was that together we have opted for a building that would be of a much smaller scale, so it would measure approximately 7000 square metres, because we wanted to make sure that the future museum would not have maintenance problems affecting its daily activity and that it would not become a victim of its size [Figures 11-12].

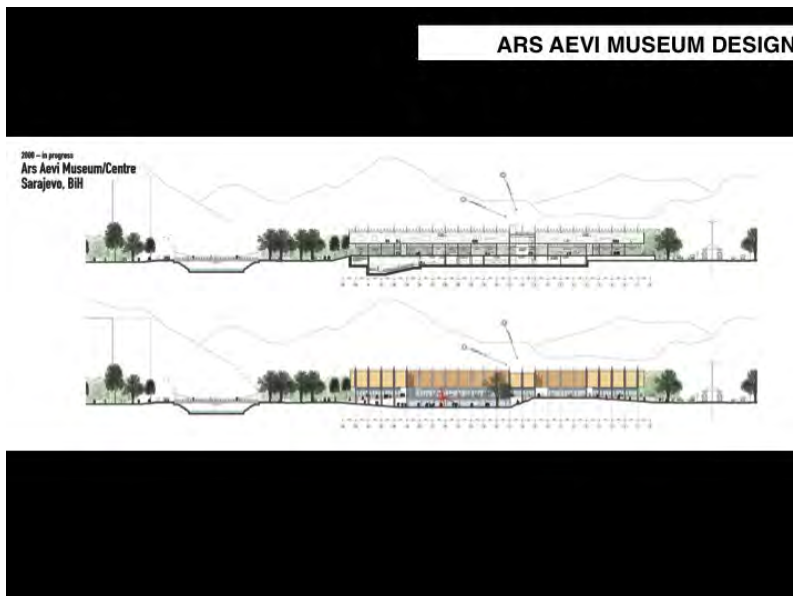


Figure 11

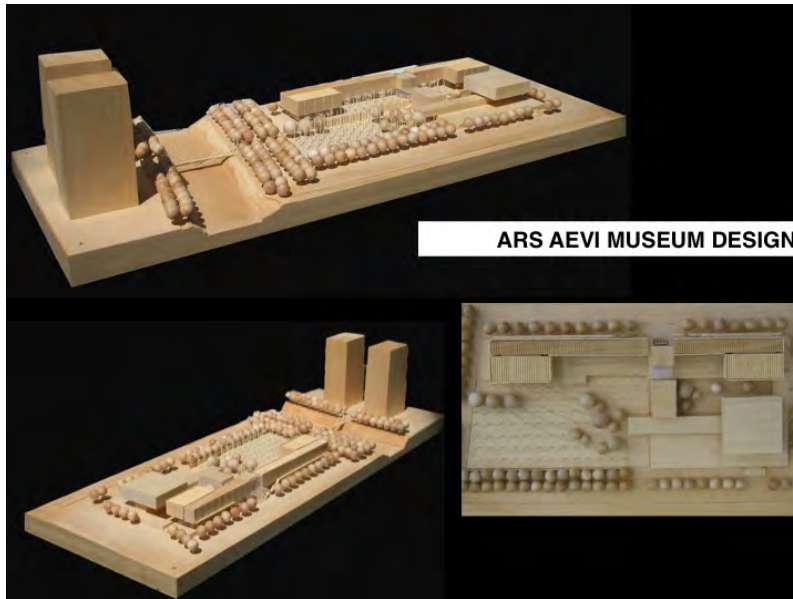


Figure 12

The long-term concept of Ars Aevi is something that we do not talk about a lot because it still sounds very utopian. However, approximately five years after building this museum we intend to start working on putting up another building by another renowned architect, with another renowned sponsor perhaps or even with a state that may be interested in joining us. And, on that path, in fifty years time Sarajevo may be able to have something that we would call the Ars Aevi Museum Complex, which would consist of several pavilions displaying the Ars Aevi Collection. We hesitate to announce this because we do not have any firm assurances that this could be feasible, but as you can imagine, when Enver was presenting the concept of the project in 1992, people thought it more than utopian—they thought it was utter madness. So another the reason why Renzo Piano's Ars Aevi Museum is of a more modest size is because we want to make sure that we can run it properly, but also because we want it to be the initial seed of something that will become a larger structure.

The first accomplished part of this dream is Renzo Piano's Ars Aevi Bridge, built as a sign of his dedication to this project. By making it a reality he confirmed that the Ars Aevi Museum was something that he was determined to complete. Therefore he himself organised the construction of the bridge and financed it with his partners, and it is something that he cares a lot about [Figure 13].



Figure 13

However, it is not the museum building which is the final goal of the Ars Aevi Project, but the artists, the network, the people. We hope that in the future our artists, curators and the other participants in our network and maybe even you, as new friends of our venture, will all recognise Sarajevo and this museum as a place where they can conceive and accomplish unique and important projects. And we think that it could actually become a platform, a regional meeting point for international contemporary art, because we believe that the Ars Aevi Museum will be relevant in the widest international context.

The work we do with those artists who are the founders of the collection is diverse, even though it is still limited due to our limited funding. I will just try to explain how these relationships develop. The first artist who gave his work to the collection was Michelangelo Pistoletto. We could say that we were very fortunate that it was so, because from the very beginning he set the 'bar of quality' of the Ars Aevi Collection. His first work, the first work in the collection, *La Porta dello Specchio* (The Door of the Mirror) that you will be able to see upstairs, was presented in 1994 by Enrico Comi for the Ars Aevi Collection. The first exhibition that Ars Aevi ever organised was in 2001, on the occasion of Pistoletto's large solo retrospective we organised in Sarajevo in the space of the National Gallery. So the artist spent many days here as we installed this fantastic display of his iconic works and the exhibition attracted huge public attention. At the opening the number of visitors was so large that people were literally carrying children on their shoulders, and it was an indicator that these exhibitions would have a good life in Sarajevo, as is still the case. Pistoletto kept coming to Sarajevo and we have had several projects with him here. He has also met with local students who he has invited to his Cittadellarte Foundation, some of whom he has selected for other artistic projects. Today, in fact, in Haniqah you saw the work that he sent us for the *Art of*

The *World in Sarajevo* exhibition project, which is as another example of his constant involvement [Figures 14- 15].

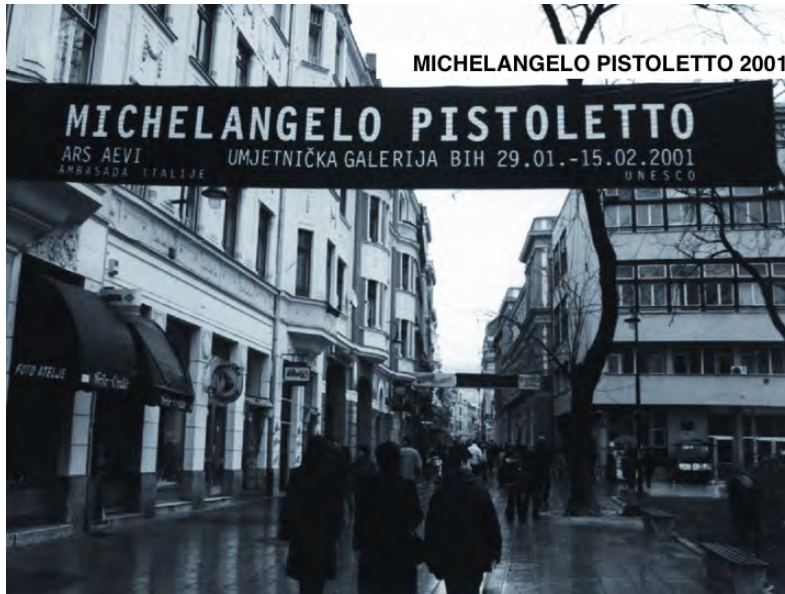


Figure 14



Figure 15

As regards international artists, we should also speak of our collaboration with Jannis Kounellis, whose project *Sarajevo: Le Porte* presented at the famous National Library in 2004 we would like to give a special mention. As I explained today during our visit to the this space, we were the first institution to enter the Library, a decade after it was heavily shelled and burned. Jannis Kounellis chose this space to create his installation, where he closed the openings of the atrium with different materials, including the books that came back to the Library for the first time after the war. Kounellis also continued to be involved with our project and is also taking part in the Haniqah exhibition [Figures 16-17].

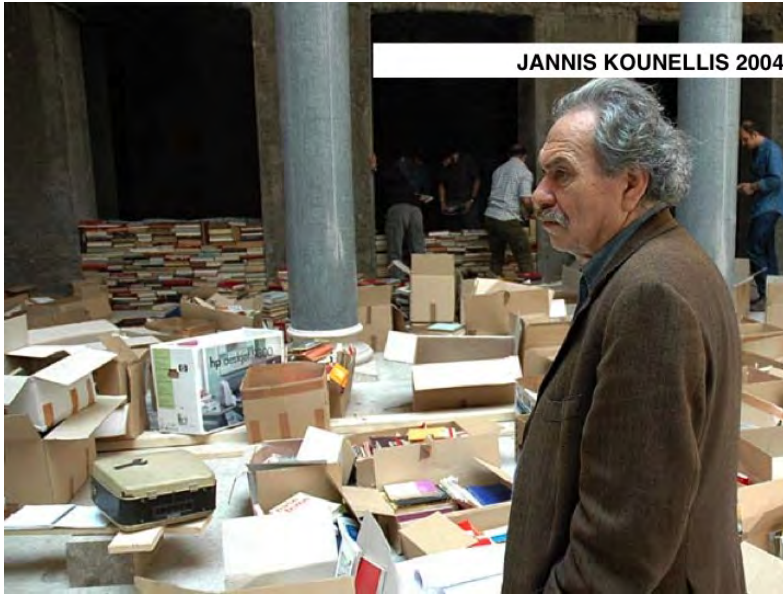


Figure 16



Figure 17

Maja Bajević is one of the artists from the local scene with whom we have worked in different ways and who has helped us set up Ars Aevi as it is at present [Figure 18].



Figure 18

We are very pleased that her work forms a part of our collection. *Double Bubble* has achieved great international acclaim, including its presentation at the last Kassel documenta. We are very proud to have organised her first large retrospective exhibition, here in Sarajevo, together with the National Gallery, and to have co-operated with her on the Bosnia and Herzegovina Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. So, together we made history, so to speak, when on occasion of our country's first participation in the Venice Biennale in 2003 we were able to present four very highly distinguished artists: Maja Bajević, Jusuf Hadžifejzović, Edin Numankadić and Nebojša Šerić Shoba [Figure 19].

After working on the pavilion, we began to promote the publication *ArteFacts: Bosnia and Herzegovina at the Venice Biennale 1993-2003*. The book is rather heavy and we consider it very important because it documents the first decade of existence of our country and its first artistic presentation at the Venice Biennale. The book presents fifteen artists, including eight artists who exhibited their works in Sarajevo during the war in the project entitled *Witnesses of Existence*. These artists were invited by Achille Bonito Oliva to the Venice Biennale in 1993, but never got there due to the siege, so the book documents their work from back then as well as their works in our exhibition. The catalogue opens, of course, with our distinguished artist Braco Dimitrijević—who is present here and plays a very important role in each of these stories—and ends with a younger generation of artists such as Bojan Šarčević, Anur and Damir Nikšić, whose works you have seen in the *Sing Sing* exhibition. We have dedicated ten pages to each of the artists, in the hope that the publication will help promote their works further. The exhibition was held upstairs in this very building, in the space that had been burnt during the war and was soon to be reconstructed.



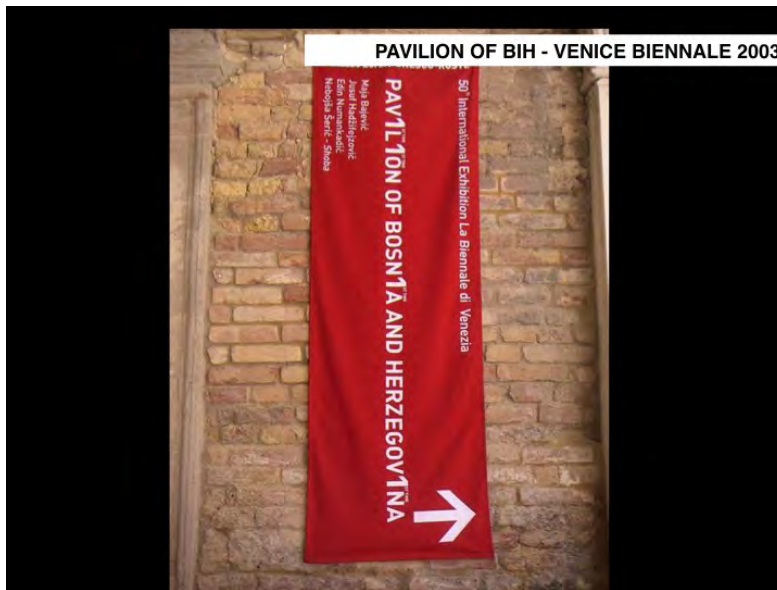


Figure 19

As you have seen the *Sing Sing* exhibition today, we need not discuss it further. However, it is a very important project that Ars Aevi is promoting at the moment, a group of distinguished Sarajevan and international artists: Anur, Juriša Boras, Kurt&Plasto, Damir Nikšić and Nebojša Šerić Shoba [Figure 20].



Figure 20

I am now presenting the slides of the various exhibitions we have organised with distinguished artists such as Dean Jokanović Toumin and Edin Numankadić. The one that many of you have probably seen is the Braco Dimitrijević show that we were proud to organise at the Ca' Pesaro Museum in 2009, within the Venice Biennale programme, and which was subsequently presented a year later at the National Library in Sarajevo [Figure 21].



Figure 21

Ars Aevi's editorial production focuses chiefly on presenting the exhibitions that we have produced. The Ars Aevi Collection main catalogue is the gem of our publications, but we are also pleased to present the promotional catalogue which you have in your bags at the hotel, and which offers an insight into the collection and into our architectural designs. The book begins with a short history of the Ars Aevi Project, and I think you will find it quite useful [Figure 22].

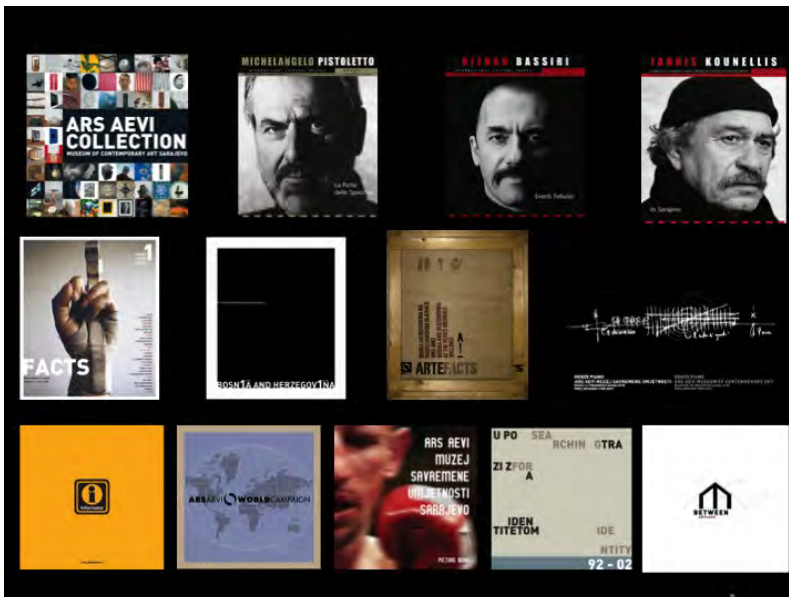


Figure 22

To conclude, I would like to say that our activities for the moment continue to be based in Sarajevo, where we are preserving and promoting our permanent collection in the space of the Ars Aevi Art Depot. More important, however, is the fact that the [Ars Aevi] Project is heading for the future. Alija Behmen, Mayor of Sarajevo, and Fikret Musić, the Canton Prime Minister, have officially announced

that they would like the Ars Aevi Museum to be built by 2014. As we've discussed today, 2014 will be an important year for us, for it is the hundredth anniversary of the First World War, that started here in Sarajevo, and in 2014 we shall be closing an important historical circle. We believe that the Ars Aevi Museum would be a very significant contribution to marking this anniversary, helping it to promote Sarajevo as an emblematic European capital with a very rich multicultural background.

Nevertheless, the museum project is just part of our activities. As you can see here on this map, now we have two focal points: one is the Art Depot and the other is the location of the museum. Our intention, however, is to further create many smaller focal points that will integrate the works by artists now exhibiting at Haniqah in the urban tissue of Sarajevo over the next few years [Figure 23].



Figure 23

Finally, you must remember that the Ars Aevi Collection is developing as a contribution that people are making to Sarajevo. We don't want it to be a one-way process—we want it to be an exchange and we hope that in future the network will not only spread to many other cities, but that we shall also be able to present the collection in different parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina and in our founding centres abroad. Our intention is to form a mobile display of the works as part of our permanent collection. In this way, the Ars Aevi Collection will not only be accommodated in Sarajevo, but will be present in a number of different museums in many different places [Figures 24-25].



Figure 24



Figure 25

We hope that, with the collaboration of our founders and partners, the Ars Aevi Collection will continue to be recognised a truly unique and successful model of artistic and museological collaboration.

Thank you for your attention. I now kindly invite you upstairs, although Zdenka would like to say something first.

**Zdenka Badovinac, Director Moderna galerija Ljubljana**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Amila for organising everything so well. In spite of the delay this morning, we have really seen and experienced a lot. Thanks to you too Enver, to Dunja Blažević and to our colleagues from the National Gallery. As I have been mentioned two or three times in your talk, I would just like to add that this is an extremely important project and that if the minister has come

I'm sure that you will soon have your building. But this is not just about the building—what I wish is for you to have the museum in the full sense of the word, which comprises museological knowledge. Hopefully, our meeting today will result in a future exchange of this knowledge that will also help you develop the best possible museum.

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