

AFTERMATH

changing cultural landscape

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AFTERMATH: FACETS OF A CHANGING CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

Miha Colner & Dejan Sluga

¹ Today, the distinction based on intention and purpose of photographs has been generally accepted, the same as the phrase in the text used for photographic works produced for the context of contemporary art.

The Aftermath. Changing Cultural Landscape project originated from questions about images of place and time following the disintegration of Yugoslavia as seen through the lens of contemporary art photography.¹ We invited artists who, in our opinion, created relevant visual documents of a particular time and place and who by their subjective approach “captured reality” at a more complex level of perception than is usually delivered by the instant photo-medium. Considering that they are principally photo documents, the selected images should also convince as being relevant works of contemporary visual art, both in regard to their subject matter, as well as form. In the context of the project’s conception as implied by its title, we were looking for series of works that are multi-layered and address broader subjects of social and political change, cultural

and economic (r)evolution as well as social and existential stories of individuals. Within this conceptual framework we paid special attention to works highlighting aesthetic issues that call into question the role of photography as a document or that consider photography primarily as a medium of contemporary art practice.

Selected works and artists demonstrate pluralism - a variety of approaches which in this case can play an integrating role. The same applies to the co-curators and organisations who participated in the project: Photon – The Centre for Contemporary Photography (Ljubljana, Slovenia), Film & Film (Pula, Croatia), Contemporary Croatian Photography (Zagreb, Croatia), Remont – Independent Artists’ Association (Belgrade, Serbia), The National Museum of Montenegro (Cetinje, Montenegro), Collegium Artisticum



TOMAŽ GREGORIČ
from the *Peripheries* series, 2005



BOJAN MRĐENVIĆ
from the *Reconstruction* series, 2011

(Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina) in Stacion – The Centre for Contemporary Art (Prishtina, Kosovo). The project also crossed the borders of the former state; substantially funded by the Commune di Pordenone that showed considerable interest and actually gave the initiative to presenting contemporary photography from former Yugoslavia beyond its geographical frames as well as contributing significantly to the creation of this publication. Indeed, it combines a selection of visual material from all the artists shown in the exhibition together with a series of discourses on the subject in the form of essays contributed by participating professionals. It is the sheer variety of their views and approaches that is crucial in overcoming any one-dimensional artistic narrative in relation to current social phenomena.

The project was also funded by the European Cultural Foundation through its BIFC (Balkan Incentive Fund), which to a large degree enabled the operation of a large group of professionals and artists. Thanks to this indispensable support, the project will further pursue its mission in the form of exhibitions and an intense discussion

programme on many forthcoming tours. The project was initially realised as the central project of the *Photonic Moments 2012* festival, which is a part of the European Month of Photography. As such, it was given a special relation to some guest exhibitions, in particular the first exhibition of the Magnum agency, *Magnum's First*, and solo exhibitions of the masters from the idealistic 1960s, such as Edi Šelhaus (Slovenia), Ervin Debeuc (Croatia) and Mario Giacomelli (Italy), which presented the period of another "aftermath" (after WWII). The images of *Aftermath* reveal a significantly different spirit; if we should draw conclusions about the "fitness of humankind" from these comparisons (at least in this part of the world), we would get a critical or at least ambivalent image. Anyway; we hope that the *Aftermath* project will at least in part contribute to a more complete picture of the world we live in and provide an answer to the question of what contemporary photography can actually tell us about the "state of affairs"; and to what extent it is more or less successful than media seeking to document reality on the one hand, and artistic abstraction and conceptualisation on the other.

PHOTOGRAPHY AS TESTIMONY OF PLACE AND TIME

Miha Colner

In 1991, after some years of precipitated national(istic) propaganda, Yugoslavia collapsed like a house of cards. In parallel with the establishment – or better still restoration – of hate speech, which ultimately led to the disintegration of the federation and towards a civil war, a new social and economic system was gradually introduced. Indeed, following the lead of other East-European countries, an attempt to introduce a particular type of market economy was made in 1989 through the reforms of the then Yugoslav Prime Minister Ante Marković, but the process was interrupted by the deteriorating situation in the country and was only re-launched in the context of the newly-formed states. In addition to the ideological, economic and value transitions of the countries of the Socialist Block, Yugoslavia was fatally marked by a brutal interruption of connections (economic, political, cultural and almost everything relating to everyday life) between once closely connected territories.¹ Thus the transition process left profound scars on the physical as well as mental environment.

1991 represents a sharp cut between new and old; a decisive ideological division and marks the beginning of a new era. The birth of new states brought also a re-writing of history and the emergence of nationalist ideas and often violent modifications to cultural identities. As a result, art practice was confined to working within renovated social contexts. This very division gives ground to the idea of the *Aftermath. Changing Cultural Landscape* project which provides an insight into contemporary photography in the former Yugoslavia region over two decades after its disintegration. It is focused on photography that both reflects and comments on the tectonic movements in society and the immediate environment. In the search for common figures in what was once a closely connected cultural space, this subject makes a logical choice; indeed, it was the change of social systems that radically marked this territory. The new state of mind immediately triggered reactions in the field of art and photography.

"The mental shifts of society, supported by the tendentious activities of the mass media and new propagandists, occurred at numerous levels of cultural, political and ideological life"² writes Dubravka Ugrešić in her essay *The Culture of Lies*, and continues: "The Great Manipulators and their well-equipped teams (composed of writers, journalists, sociologists, psychiatrists, philosophers, political scientists, and generals) composed a new vocabulary of ideological formulas:

democracy, national independence, Europeisation, and created new symbols: parliaments, emblems, anthems; they changed names of streets and markets, and inhabited the same buildings. They dismantled the old system in order to build a new one from the same elements."³ This new nationalistic discourse originated from the very top of the cultural and intellectual movement and yet, a number of influential intellectuals fled abroad, so the question is who are the protagonists, who are the sensitive and critical observers that can reflect the phenomena of this altered cultural landscape through their artistic productions? Usually they are marginal voices within an ideologically divided and materially stratified society, who, with their original artistic statements have no influence on the general state of mind, but nevertheless testify to the existence of a determined social opposition that firmly defies the new mass ennu.

In 1991, the rock band Ekaterina Velika released the album *Dum Dum*, that in a visionary and critical manner predicted the forthcoming tragic events; it was their final attempt to prevent what subsequently happened. In 1992, part of this same group, together with some other Belgrade musicians, joined a group called Rimtutituki to perform in public actions against militarisation, nationalism and conscription. Both initiatives in favour of peace failed to significantly change the course of events. Equally marginal and limited over the past twenty years have been the artistic attempts to critically illustrate the new economic reality – society's stratification and the so-called wild privatisation of public property. A socially engaged cultural work can represent the universal experience of individuals trapped between opposing ideologies and ethnicities, between different traditions and views; it can tell stories of people who couldn't or wouldn't blindly accept the new social norms which entered the territory of former Yugoslavia as blind dogma. In Slovenia, it was the marginal artists in the main that directly commented on the profound changes in the social fabric.

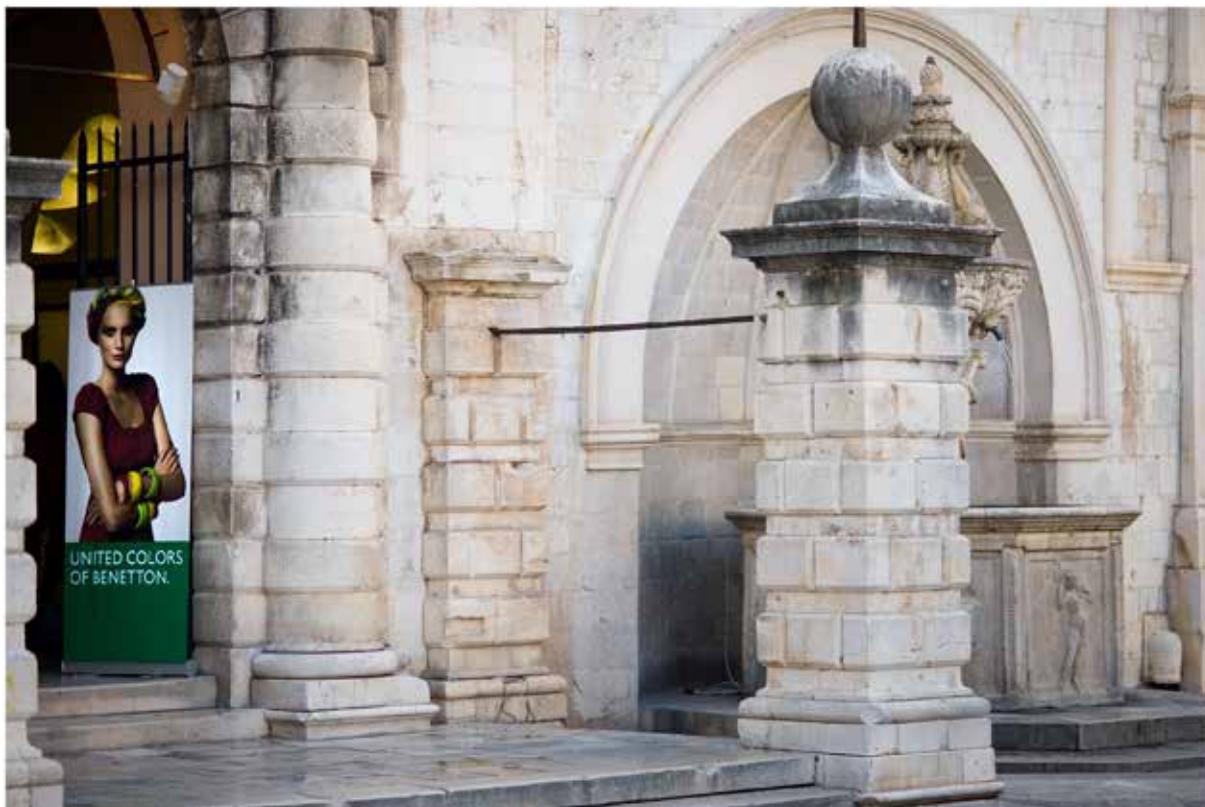
The principal role of art should be in addressing, reflecting and commenting on the state of mind of the place and time in which it is produced. How was this achieved in the field of contemporary visual art and photography? In the early 1990s, when the paradigm of profane postmodernism was implemented in the dominant artistic discourse, art world embraced the photograph as never before and photographers now consider the art gallery or a book a natural home for their work.⁴ However, its expressiveness and approach are completely different from some other

¹ Padraic Kenney, *The Burdens of Freedom: Eastern Europe since 1989*, Zed Books London / New York, 2006; p. 26.

² Dubravka Ugrešić, *Kultura laži (Culture of Lies)*, Študentska založba Ljubljana, 2006, p. 104.

³ Ibid. p. 55.

⁴ Charlotte Cotton, *The Photograph as Contemporary Art*, Thames & Hudson London, 2009, p. 7.



DARIJE PETKOVIĆ

from the *Occupation in 26 Pictures series*, 2008

photographic genres – such as photojournalism or advertising photography. The subjects addressed by artist-photographers in the former Yugoslavia region are often closely related to the turbulent changes in the social, economic and cultural landscape – in a physical (direct) and a symbolic (figurative) sense. As an autonomous medium of expression, contemporary photography addresses various phenomena in its immediate environment, be it war, the manipulative function of mass media, the visible consequences of a collapsing economy or the visual manifestation of national ideologies. The images of these photographers reflect a changed way of working and an aspiration for specific results that include a high degree of ambivalence and self-reflection. Thus *Aftermath* does not illustrate events, but testifies to the long-term consequences of these same events, and the artists draw attention to the relativity of social phenomena and historical facts. Indeed, ambivalence is inherent in contemporary photography because such a non-explicit way of working in a world saturated with images and communications

may cause a reaction adequate to subject. Images often become even more horrific, and more effective, in their absence.⁵

The *Aftermath* project is focused on artists critically addressing social processes in their local environment often resulting in extremely subjective emotional narratives. Their use of the photographic medium creates a massive deviation from the (once) predominant paradigm that photography 'always tells the truth'. Indeed, the current representation of photography is one that both derives from and confirms the suppression of the social function of subjectivity.⁶ As a result, changing social conditions often prove to be the motor of production; they are used by numerous artists to express considerable scepticism towards the predominant historical, national and political discourses. It seems that the traumatic and turbulent recent history enhances the need by artists from former Yugoslavia to address these processes, but at the same time they are fully aware that the transition in these territories not only results in the collapse of socialism and

⁵ David Levi Strauss, *Between the Eyes: Essays on Photography and Politics*, Aperture New York, 2005, p. 94.

⁶ John Berger, *Another Way of Telling*, Penguin Books London, 1982.



MILAN ALEKSIĆ

from the *Bad Maintenance* series, 1995-2012

the emergence of nationalism, but also reflects a considerable dose of omnipresent global trends from the contemporary world – gentrification, stratification, increased control, propaganda and commodification at various levels of life.

What was the art photography created over the past two decades within the territory of former Yugoslavia like? Following the heterogeneous social and political conditions within individual administrative enclaves, broader cultural and specific photographic production can be divided in two parts: the first and the second decade. The 1990s are a time of interrupted connections, the period when artists were forced to work on their own, more often than not in isolated contexts. Always explicitly aspiring to the western world, the Republics of Slovenia and Croatia immediately accepted the offer of political discourse leading

towards an ideological shift; toward democracy, the free market and consequently, a new cultural policy. On the other hand, whilst Bosnia was plunged in the chaos of total war, Serbia and Montenegro and in part Macedonia, officially preserved the impoverished models of a former socialist social and economic system. Thus former Yugoslavia was actually divided in eastern and western blocks that didn't have much communication.

Over the last decade, the post-Yugoslav territory has again been unified under the brand of a uniform political and economic system. After ten years of political instability the last 'features' of socialism were finally eradicated and the area became completely open to ruthless economic exploitation. From this perspective, the photo series *Occupation in 26 Pictures* by Darije Petković says it all: indeed, it exhibits views of Croatian cities marked with the

principal symbols of national identity and icons of global corporations. The visual metaphors allow him to question the purpose of patriotic struggle for independence and the consequences of economic occupation. Though local, his story holds a universal truth; cultural landscapes of Slovenia, Macedonia or Croatia have become identical; filled with testimonies to the new economic order and national symbols. Today, the images of the centres of Belgrade or Zagreb's share the visual identity of any European metropolis.

What are the common features of these selected artists, whose social environments and life experiences are so different - and yet similar? Indeed, the cultural milieu of former Yugoslavia is somewhat different from the rest of Eastern Europe, an area which Boris Groys claims has the experience of communism as its only common cultural identity.⁷ The former Yugoslavia region possesses specific common cultural characteristics based on extremely contemporary genres and styles, such as pop music,

film and photography, whilst their creators employ similar models to their colleagues internationally, just adapting them to their own place and time. For example, the genre of topographic recording of abandoned spaces created by changed economics and a collapsing industry was developed in the 1960's within the USA and Germany by Stephen Shore and Bernd and Hilla Becher. But this approach only became of interest in the former Yugoslavia region during the collapse of the socialist economy. Thus the attitude of artists to the transition process is never completely indifferent; their views are self-reflective and critical, although their works do not offer ultimate value judgements. They are attentive external observers and commentators on a world that is irrepressibly changing, whilst bringing into their work an expression of ambivalence and scepticism towards the generally adopted discourses. As a result, their engagement is manifested in particular in the stimulation of an individual's cerebral activities.

⁷Boris Groys, *Contemporary Art in Eastern Europe*, Artworld, Black Dog Publishing, 2010.



GORANKA MATIĆ

Rimtitutiki – Concert for Peace, Belgrade, 1992

THE GEOGRAPHY OF DESPAIR

Svetlana Slapšak

It so happened that I was simultaneously preparing a text on nostalgia for Yugoslavia, whatever that might be, and on the photographs of young photographers from countries - heirs of Yugoslavia, for the project *Aftermath. Changing Cultural Landscape*: at the time, I could not avoid the "echo" of a cultural landscape which I had been following for many years in the research conducted by my husband, an archaeologist working on non-invasive processes of discovering the past, in Greece. This meant, first and foremost, that I neither had a nostalgic nor a historically romanticised view of cultural landscape, and that what interested me, most importantly, was the objective-subjective, ephemeral-temporal photographic evidence. Simply put, the exhibition together with the project was mind-blowingly inspirational for me. I had to divide the work of photographers into two sections, to avoid assimilation and entropy: on the one hand are

photographs showing evidence of change/deterioration and obliteration of places where something was happening and indeed happens still, including daring comparisons of pictures from then and now, social analysis of the appearance of people and telling portraits. On the other hand are Sandra Vitaljić's photographs of places where something horrible happened. This division is not an evaluative decision – it is purely the result of my desire to give the greatest weight of consideration to the problem the dead, the forgotten, and the lost. For, it is my deep conviction that, this is precisely the unresolved problem that determines the ongoing presence of all others- poverty, insolence, impudence, hopelessness, unhappiness...and cruelty to animals. It is a network of emblematic meaning from which emerge discomfort, despair, and fear of a repeat of what happened. Because of the forgotten dead, for twenty years now, we have not been able to rid ourselves of the Yugoslav war, and all



TARIK SAMARAH

Battery Factory in Potočari, from the Srebrenica series, 2003



BOJAN SALAJ

Snapshots (detail), 1992

the while the threat of another has not faded. Any Balkan mogul could start a war tomorrow, with the aid of former killers, the still unnamed and still unjudged fortysomethings. For, only a few parade monsters have ever been captured and ended up at The Hague. Sandra Vitaljić's photographs are an introduction to the project, a critical-historical intervention in the cultural landscape and into the culture of observing the landscape. For this reason, I must write about them first. And, in order to preserve some sense of reason, it is necessary to "stick to" a cultural-historical constant: in this case, the European motif of the omnipresence of death, also in the "intact" and "natural" landscapes of Sandra Vitaljić. Now then, how to re-read *Et in Arcadia ego*...

We consider certain interpretive texts "classic" because they close down certain sections of meaning, for several generations, at least: this is the case with Erwin Panofsky's text on the motif

of death in Arcadia.¹ In the chapter on motif of *Et in Arcadia ego* (Latin for "I am in Arcadia Too"), based on the analysis of the paintings of Guercino Nicolas Poussin and texts reminiscent of Virgil's The Eclogues, Erwin Panofsky concludes that the "I" is death itself. Death scythes even in idyllic, utopian Arcadia; thus, the inscriptions on Poussin's lonely grave (his painting *Les bergers de l'Arcadie*, 1637-8), of someone who died in Arcadia, represents an error in meaning. The painter Franz Caucig/Kavčič, a brilliant artist and intellectual of mixed origin of the European Mediterranean-Alpine region, who has been adopted by Slovenia by nationality, gives one of the most interesting examples of an alternate reading. He arranges his painting *The Tomb of Mycon* (before 1810) as a monument to women's memories: a woman passerby explains to two other passers-by who is buried in the grave almost completely concealed by vegetation. An anonymous grave, an

¹ Erwin Panofsky, *Umetnost i značenje - ikonološke studije* (*Meaning in the Visual Art – Studies in Iconology*), Nolit, Beograd, 1975.

accidentally discovered post-mortem remnant, a sign: the melancholy European imagery of death and transience grew out of the ambiguity about the identity of the dead victim. Erwin Panofsky came to America where he developed his theory and his research while fleeing, a potential victim, what was then the largest European wartime killing of civilians. His conclusion may not be in any way connected with personal experience, but it raises a traumatic issue of his generation and to a large extent, the generations that followed, the question of a right to memory. Poussin's error, an incorrect inscription, bypasses the identity of the deceased with greater ease than Guercino's warning of omnipresent death, a death deprived of funeral rites, perhaps the result of a crime (his painting *Et in Arcadia ego*, 1618-22 features an abandoned and found human skull).

After seeing Sandra Vitaljić's series of photographs, I set about a re-reading of Panofsky. Panofsky introduced an element of responsibility (memory) in his interpretation of images, as I detected in the photographs of Sandra Vitaljić, giving meaning to the whiny European dispute over mortality. Guercino emphasised the responsibility of memory both verbally and visually (skull + Latin inscription): this accumulation largely corresponds to the complete absence of signs in the photographs and accompanying documentary text of Sandra Vitaljić. The texts together with photographs openly invoke a positive connotation of knowledge that began with the Renaissance, continued throughout the Enlightenment, and is disappearing before our eyes. Sandra Vitaljić fearlessly rejects arbitrariness, "personal poetics", aesthetic cages or deserts, and only invokes documentary, historical memory as the only human response to a perfect, universally censored and politically determined indifference of nature. Indifference of nature is a semantic field of discursive fraud, such as, that war is "natural". Indifference of nature helps to conceal crimes, and consequently deny responsibility. Indifference of nature is the blinding blank screen on which collective lies are endlessly projected - religious, political - there is no real difference. Indifference of nature evokes "cyclicity", one of the many cognitive-rhetorical catches with which we censor our human culture of death, death as we invented it. *I am in Arcadia Too*: death, our invention, our cultural heritage, our memory code, our struggle to preserve our memories against oblivion. Sandra Vitaljić radicalises Panofsky, she separates death from nature and loads its clear, cultural inscription. Political manipulation of

fraudulent and deceptive nature can be clearly read in the sought-after beauty of the manipulation, in the stripping away of European misconceptions about the beautiful and the natural.

Viewing Sandra Vitaljić's photographs invokes other theorists and researchers, especially those who have written about memory, certainly first Pierre Nora, with his concept of *lieu de mémoire* "place of memory" - a place producing memories around a monument, memorial or simply around places where something happened - approximately corresponds to what Sandra Vitaljić is saying in her photographs. She neither interprets, nor deconstructs places of memory - she constructs them anew out of oblivion, censorship and discursive violence. After her photographs, these places become places of memory; Nora did not predict this. The collective did not record places of memory, but, hid them. Moreover, this is not about conflicting memories but about something much simpler, about erasing memory of the other. This obviously dangerous and threatening other may be from the distant past, or from a more recent past, or even from yesterday; what is important is that their presence in the memory threatens the lie of the establishment.

In this day and age it seems that the visual, rather than the verbal-acoustic, has a stronger effect on humans. There perhaps lies the key to understanding the many changes in the short history of man - from that unknown revolutionary moment when he began to surround himself with plays. I am only interested in the view on culture and from culture (the term is widely understood as any impression of man on the world), by definition, loaded with various practices and by memories of practices.

The multitudes of texts sometimes make this view seem impossible. I have a memory of watching a documentary *Water and Blood* (1993) by Sarajevo group Saga. These are only a few minutes of video footage of the massacre of citizens waiting in line for water, similar to a film about the massacre of citizens waiting in line for bread in 1992. I watched both films at the Amsterdam Documentary Film Festival in 1995. Most of the audience did not withstand even a minute of watching. Global media censorship of scenes of violence and death, with an absolute taboo on the American body and slightly permeable taboos on other bodies, had been introduced a few years before and marked a complete inability of the world to see the reality of the war in Sarajevo. Scenes of dying people, or rather dying people themselves, were literally floating in space, rotating around the Earth, in between satellites, never reaching receivers and



SANDRA VITALJIĆ

Ovčara, from the *Infertile Grounds* series, 2009

in this manner, the ritual fantasy of wandering souls of many cultures materialised. At the time it seemed to me the only possible answer to the Saga footage was to record the names of the victims whose bodies, or body parts, appeared in front of us in their death throes. It would be some sort of ritual burial, and preservation of memory. The footage would only be available as archival material, under rigidly controlled rights of access. Again, visual testimony was crucial in The Hague process of proving crime; when Nataša Kandić discovered and submitted into court as evidence, a video showing the killing of a group of Bosnian prisoners conducted by the so called Scorpions group, the images corroborated witness testimonies. The video had been in circulation via a video store in Šid: the Scorpions group, of course, had a lot to say to camera; the camera recorded the discovery of

dead bodies, recognisable from previous footage, in a recognisable location. The image stood in place of a key witness. Actual witness testimonies were thus determined to be less reliable.

My experience in Amsterdam was marked by deep disgust. Specifically, a reporter from the SRNA news agency was the only one in an audience of several hundred people who made a comment about the film – that it is a forgery, in order that Serbs could be accused of war crimes. This despicable intervention, worthy only of contempt, gains a completely different meaning following a viewing of Sandra Vitaljić's photographs: it is about a systemic solution. This lack of the visual is obvious in the documentary masterpiece of Claude Lanzmann's, *Shoah* (1985): the film, which is more than eight hours long, does not show a single image of dead bodies; there are only some people who speak, and places where other people



BOJAN MRĐENVIĆ
from the *Welcome* series, 2007-2012

were killed. Neither does Lanzmann insist on the architecture of concentration camps in the film. My strongest memory of the film is of the grass around the abandoned railway tracks leading to Treblinka. Two survivors, one dressed in a uniform of a senior officer of the Israeli army, testify in the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem: only one of them speaks, while the other, the one in uniform, gives silent testimony to the camera the entire time. The pervasion of the unseen and unspoken creates the most convincing argument for the truth of the crime. Compliance with all the ritualistic/cultural aspects of death makes Lanzmann's film, undoubtedly, an exceptional testimony to the crimes.

These two examples indicate that Sandra Vitaljić's decision to show the places where crimes happened, places which were deliberately hidden, is deeply thoughtful. There is a recent scientific discipline that that, compared with Sandra Vitaljić's messages, offers an unusually optimistic view of nature and people. It is the aforementioned 'non-invasive archaeology' which reveals human traces without changing the "natural" state through a multidisciplinary approach and use of various instruments. From a differently trained view, the ability to communicate with natives in their language, to digital-satellite technology, this approach is superior in the process of uncovering monuments of the human past that should not be excavated, because, they provide sufficient information about the method, chronology and the concept of settlement – often revealing entire contours of cities under ground, as in the case of Tangara in Boeotia which was thought to have been completely destroyed. In comparing existing historical data, this additional data can fundamentally change our understanding of the past. This scientific discipline shares a great deal of its technology and epistemology with forensic science. Slow, but reliable, these disciplines reside in limbo between the dead body (endless TV series about forensic investigation) of aggressive pop-culture and its theorisation in culture or forensic aesthetics. If this is the supremacy of the human imprint, then the photographs of Sandra Vitaljić are not only a bitter reminder, but a clearly contextualised political action.

In Sandra Vitaljić's photographs, the ground on which peasants were killed in hopeless rebellion against feudal lords, is as hidden, demonised, deliberately and forcefully forgotten as any where Serbs, Jews, Roma, Muslims, Croats, or any ethnic group and any ideological-political group - communists, quislings, were killed. The historical span includes well-know, historically attested,

testified-to, and often even legally processed locations. In all cases, the status of knowledge had been cynically erased, often by way of showing a frightening example of something banished from memory. For this reason, Sandra Vitaljić's photographs first "empty" any meaning then oppose this violent oblivion with a straightforward, dry historiographical text. With this action, Sandra Vitaljić turns the legal and intellectual cannon of The Hague, which gives less weight to words than to images, on its head - verbal evidence supplements and exceeds the void visual evidence.

A fern caught in the sunlight, a strip of fog, a pitiful tree in a rockery, a reflection in a pond, patchy grass, remnants of a wall long overgrown: do they mean anything? Of course not: they are a mere indication of European cultural entry into examining responsibility which is both the only way of surviving in the future, and the only means of regulating the present. Sandra Vitaljić's photographs are guideposts for archiving, field research, hands-on academic work and ultimately for civilian courage in the publication of the results – confirming what is already widely known by the victims, survivors in particular, and in much greater detail. The artist is definitely asking for too much. In accordance with European cultural hypocrisy, one possible answer is that her work will only be viewed as "artistic". In this case, *I am in Arcadia Too* will remain an irretrievably misread motif.

The political message of the photographs grouped under the other section of *Aftermath. Changing Cultural Landscape* is equally strong. The "geography of despair", which also includes the inevitable universality of despair above and beyond specific regional characteristics, is how I termed my attempt to define this political message. I can hardly imagine a better argument against the stereotype that characterises the most popular scientific, artistic and pop-philosophical interpretations of the war in Yugoslavia: differences, which lead to the war, are being maintained, for the sake of peace, as a guarantee of the European institution, in say Bosnia and Herzegovina. In a recently published article (in Serbian, Bosnian and Croatian languages), I made a comparison between this logic and Rubik's cube: if the disordered and chaotic, arbitrarily arranged, multi-coloured cube served as a simple metaphor for the relationships between Yugoslav nations and nationalities, than the ordered, unscrambled, divided-into-individual colours (entities) cube, the logic implemented by the European institution in Bosnia and Herzegovina, can only denote preparation for future chaos which might be caused by, among other things, the concealment of memory.

PREVIOUS DEVELOPMENTS: FROM CONTEMPORARY YUGOSLAV TO CONTEMPORARY POST-YUGOSLAV PHOTOGRAPHY

Milan Aleksić

In discussing post Yugoslav photographic scene, it might be useful to remind ourselves of two events: one realized and one planned. The realized exhibition *Contemporary Yugoslav Photography* and symposium *In Between - A Photographic View of Yugoslav Culture* was held in 1989 at Cornell University in the United States. The planned project *Fictographs*, has been conceived in 1996, as curatorial proposal but remains unrealized to date.

1. Contemporary Yugoslav Photography exhibition and *In Between - A Photographic View of Yugoslav Culture* symposium was presented at Hartell Gallery, Ithaca, USA.

The exhibition was curated by Barry Perlus and Milan Aleksić.

One is facing at least two problems while trying to recently talk about this exhibition: the first being the very notion of the term "contemporary" from the title. For, if the "contemporary" is not determined by a specific time frame it becomes immediately obvious that we are dealing with an impossible set of definitions. One cannot talk presently in terms of "contemporary" and "Yugoslav" for the simple reason that Yugoslavia no longer exists. Similarly, it is impossible to review production from twenty years ago as contemporary (belonging to this period of time) unless the quality of artistic and curatorial vision does not indeed impose itself as a product of eternal and lasting value. The problem clearly lies with the term "contemporary" itself which resists the passage of time and history. It is logical that presently only contemporary post-Yugoslav photography can exist.

The second problem is more insidious because of psychological disorder potentially associated with reconsideration of the exhibition. The psychological disorder, which only recent medical practice suggests may have a possible positive therapeutic effect, has been known to cause anxiety, insomnia, irregular heartbeat, depression, and - in accordance with the severity of symptoms - has been treated throughout history, even with electroshock therapy. One is talking here about nostalgia.

However, it is still useful to recall Contemporary Yugoslav photography from 1989. It can form a bond between our past and present selves in which nostalgia can potentially make further interconnections between memory, emotion, sense of continuity and meaning.

The exhibition *Contemporary Yugoslav Photography* featured the works of Stojan Kerbler, Tomaž Lunder, Branibor Debeljković, Dragoljub Kažić, Milica Marinčić, Zoran Tomić, Tomislav Peternek, Dragan Tanasijević, Ivan Posavec, Mio

Vesović, Mark Gosar, Mario Hlača, Vladimir Gudac, Vlasta Delimar, Boris Cvjetanović, Sanja Bachrach & Mario Krištofić, Nenad Bračić, Dragan Pešić, Stanka Djorić & Drago Dangubić, Ljubomir Šimunić, Fedor Vučemilović and Milan Aleksić.

The reasoning behind the selection was simple: It was based on the quality of works and strength of individual artistic vision and experience of the artists. Such a degree of complete thematic freedom however did not result in a cohesive vision and interpretation of given aspects of Yugoslav environment, culture and community of the period. It rather provided an authentic artistic sample on the basis of which a thesis of Yugoslav culture and community could be formed and tested. Accordingly, the themes and topics were diverse ranging from voyeurism, exhibitionism, archaeology, villages, student demonstrations, film stills, experiments... It was as though Yugoslavia was not a theme in itself but only a logical framework and environment for artistic and curatorial works. At the accompanying symposium the works have been most lucidly interpreted, as usual, by people outside of art history field.

Robert Asher, from the Department of Anthropology at Cornell University, noticed: "When I look around this exhibition of Yugoslav photography, I see local and I see universal... Yugoslavia is a very complex place with, as we have noted, many different languages. In the exhibit there are local traditions (different places in Yugoslavia), more broadly local traditions (something common perhaps to all of Yugoslavia), and something which extends beyond Yugoslavia. I expect to see, and do see, both the local and the universal in the exhibit." At the time, without any foreknowledge of the following ominous events and future disintegration, Asher posed several questions: "Why is it that no one in the photographs smiles? Not a single smiling person. Nobody even looks like he's going to smile at any time in the future." He thought "that the overall mood or tone of the exhibit was sombre."

However, the curators did not apply such an approach or suggested such possible interpretation in any aspect of the curatorial process.

Professor Debra Fried, from the Department of English at Cornell University, noted that "Any picture of another culture has resonances for us that to some degree are luxuries."

A few years after the exhibition in 1989, an opportunity for research and exploration of different cultures arose relatively unexpectedly and was brought about by the changing cultural landscape of the former Yugoslavia. The ways in which the same photographers and their successors are



MARKO GOSAR
Soldier, 1983



MIO VESOVIĆ
Kumrovec, 1986

functioning within the new cultural environment imposed itself as a logical question for further curatorial research.

The proposal for the *Fictographs* project was thus initiated with the main thesis of verifying how the photographers from the exhibition *Contemporary Yugoslav Photography* were dealing with their own experiences in the post-Yugoslav period.

If it is indeed true that images from different cultures resonate with a certain degree of luxury, then the proposed research into post-Yugoslavia as the source of development of new cultures would be worth every effort. Whether the new cultural

determinants will show to be luxurious in terms of offering great comfort and extravagant living, remains to be seen in the reverberations of cultural change from Yugoslavia to post-Yugoslavia.

2. *Fictographs, Photographers from Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia* project was developed in 1996 as the following curatorial and exhibition proposal.

The exhibition would consist of three separately curated exhibitions of photographs from Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia presented in the same place, at the same time. The last overview, of photography in Yugoslavia, entitled *Contemporary Yugoslav Photography* was in 1989. Meanwhile it gained significance as the last, unique and unrepeatable project of its kind. *Contemporary Yugoslav Photography* of the 1990's would inevitably be different. The problem with expected development that comes as a result of one decade of individual and collective achievements in the field, lies in the fact that neither *Contemporary* nor *Photography* has changed significantly. Rather, it is Yugoslavia which has violently changed in form and content.

In *Contemporary Yugoslav Photography* (1989), three participants come from Slovenia, ten from Serbia and nine from Croatia. Their work comes about as a result of, amongst other things, multiple mutual exposure to each other's work within the framework of Yugoslav culture. Presently, these artists live and work in different countries, isolated from each other, and the term 'contemporary scene' will necessarily have to be applied to three different segments of what was once a single unit.

The curatorial and artistic curiosity to follow the work of renown colleagues and friends and to exhibit together again, has been prevented by the unfortunate political developments beyond artistic comprehension and influence.

The only possible benefit from the forcefully torn apart cultural organism is the opportunity to observe the different organs, as it were, developing in total isolation from the other parts of the formerly unified body. Cultural disintegration - the exercise which under social laboratory conditions would be too cruel to perform otherwise - already happened. What remains in this case can be used to test out the following concept: How deep are our roots?

The experiment would include gathering photographers from the former Yugoslav region and cultural milieu to represent their new work together. Such a grouping would show how similar or different they were/are once released from a centrifugal cultural force. It would also test artistic self-defence mechanisms employed during the time of conflict and individual ability to survive artistically.

As no contacts are possible yet the organizational framework for the exhibition will include three separately curated exhibitions of Yugoslav (Serbian), Croatian and Slovenian photography. Each exhibition should feature photographs from approximately 5 photographers who will be able to fully represent their work with a selection of 20-30 pieces. These selections should not bear national, ideological or state identification, but should insist on purely artistic criteria and values.

Curators should come from the three countries involved with the fourth member of the curatorial team coming from either England, Germany or France, representing the museum or gallery institution willing to liaise with parties involved and to host the exhibition.

Curators: Milan Aleksić (Yugoslavia), Vladimir Gudac (Croatia), Stojan Kerbler (Slovenia).

The proposed project *Fictographs* exhibition remains unrealised. The closest realised project to it is the exhibition *Aftermath – Changing Cultural Landscape* in 2012. It is an ongoing project and as such, its impact and significance still remains to be seen. As with *Fictographs*, *Aftermath* too presents photographers from within the former Yugoslav region. In contrast to previous exhibitions, it is thematically focused on the period of disintegration and change. Recalling all these aspects gives us the opportunity to form connections between our past and present selves whereby nostalgia may provide us with a hopeful outlook on the past and with it a sense of continuity and meaning to life and experience in the future.



MILAN ALEKSIĆ

from the *Nature morte* series, 1987

BETWEEN PHOTOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTARY AND VISUAL ART

Dejan Sluga

The principal context of the *Aftermath. Changing Cultural Landscape* project is determined by the era after the disintegration of Yugoslavia and its abundant historical and political “matter”. All the selected works were produced after 1991 and all relate to the time and place following Yugoslavia’s break-up; some explicitly refer to the consequences of the disintegration, some implicitly tackle social and historical circumstances, and some deal with general social processes witnessed by the artists over the last few years. Without intervening with ambivalent interpretations and perceptions of historical and political change, the selected artists were left to give testimony to the consequences of particular ideas and processes – through actual themes and motifs within their photographs. Thus, these selected works reflect the artists’ reactions to the altered social conditions, phenomena and

processes that occurred in the fatal ‘90s; starting with the fall of former social systems throughout Eastern Europe, the escalation of various political particularisms into warring conflict in Croatia and Bosnia & Herzegovina, and then how this area was finally politically “stabilised” and became part of the European “democratic community.”

The very process of dissolution and several years of bloody war served up extraordinary possibilities for photographs aimed at mass media consumption. We know that wars always present opportunities for media exposure on the fate of communities and individuals in their most dramatic manifestations. Indeed, the wars in Yugoslavia and the time immediately following, produced multitudes of images for local and global media or news agencies to incessantly present their photographic productions; the first war in Europe after 1945 instantly acquired a dimension



ANTONIO ŽIVKOVIČ
from the *On Fas* series, 2004

of “anachronistic fascination.”¹ Most likely, in the first half of the 1990’s, there wasn’t a photojournalist working in that field who was not present in the Yugoslavia region² whilst simultaneously, the flood of images served a variety of purposes; the same pictures would appear in different contexts when, for instance, each opposing side accused the other of crimes committed – using the very same photographs. But in addition to this classic ‘topical’ photojournalism, excellent documentary work was produced during and immediately after the Yugoslav wars that replaced the directness of photographic impressions with a broader humanistic engagement, temporal distance and reflection, by focusing on the manifold impact of wars.

From this perspective, relevant bodies of work were produced by Tarik Samarah, Zijah Gafić or Milomir Kovačević, to mention just three photographers from the territory of former Yugoslavia (specifically, Bosnia & Herzegovina). The explicit distinction between photojournalism and “art photography” would in this case be at least arguable, just as it has been “fluid” throughout the history of photography, in particular when considering some of the most

debated dilemmas such as the “aestheticisation” of human misery, natural disasters and wars.³

Anyhow, the history of “engaged” documentary photography (in particular of wars) encompasses various approaches to the recording of reality. The best example to illustrate the development of practices and “aesthetics” of engaged photography is definitely provided by Magnum Agency who originated from the need to establish the profession of a photographer – at first as a war photographer, and soon after as witness to any human disaster – and ultimately creating an extensive palette of original artistic expressions. So we have on one side, for example, Robert Capa, one of the four Magnum founders, who with his images of the Spanish Civil War and the Normandy landings in particular, represents a prototype of the engaged war photo-reporter.

Decades later, Luc Delahaye surpassed the function of war reportage with his “aftermath” compositions which made him one of most appreciated photographers of our time. Both Capa and Delahaye are committed to objectivity and documentary, and their cases may serve to illustrate the two basic distinctions in approach to documentary photography

¹ As established by Susan Sontag in her work *Regarding the Pain of Others*, New York 2009.

² With the support of The French Cultural Centre, a photo exhibition entitled *Our Story* was organised in Sarajevo (2009-2010) displaying over 400 photographs of the war in BiH taken by world acclaimed photographers and war reporters, such as Patrick Chauvel, Luc Delahaye, Ron Haviv, Christopher Morris, Laurent Van der Stockt, James Nachtwey, Gilles Peress, Alexander Boulat and others.

³ It is known that “too aesthetic” photographs taken in concentration camps at the end of WWII caused amongst editors and readers alike a feeling of discomfort and



BORUT KRAJNC

Vodnikova cesta, Ljubljana, 18 August 2008, from the Emptiness series, 2004-2008

rejection, whereas amateur footage was more acceptable. Similarly there has been a negative perception of Sebastiao Salgado's work by some sections of the critical public due to his "aestheticization" of unbearable conditions in various mass worksites around the world. Both cases are also referred to in Susan Sontag's book mentioned above.

⁴ The requirement for proximity and authenticity may sometimes slip into biased or even "embedded" position of a photographer.

⁵ The most notorious examples are probably Joe Rosenthal's photography of raising the flag on Iwo Jima or a similar scene of a Russian soldier on the roof of Berlin's Reichstag taken by Jevgenij Haldej. Contrary to both pictures, Capa's long-debated *The Falling Soldier* is considered genuine.

⁶ A composed scene with "dead" Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan sold this year at an auction for a record price.

⁷ A large survey exhibition *Sense of Place. European Landscape Photography* at BOZAR Museum, Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels (14 – 16.9.2012) is dedicated to this genre.

– leading, on the one hand, to photojournalism and on the other, to "art photography". In the era of Capa and the dominance of "photographic humanism", both approaches are somewhat conjoined, whereas later the photographic recording of events increasingly diverges along two routes: one swearing on the need for presence, actuality, engagement, and in particular authenticity⁴ and the other cultivating a more detached, reflective and also conceptual "aftermath" approach. In other words: the principal dispositive of documentation, inherent within photography, presumes the use of various strategies; thus a photograph can be a witness, a memory, even evidence (when authenticity is the top requirement) or it can be a process of creation, invention and 'mis en scene'. Throughout history both approaches often overlapped so that today, once carefully created scenes might be considered authentic documents of time, whilst some quite iconic reportage photographs lost their "aura of authenticity" when the scenes were proven to be staged.⁵

Of course, better insight and sensibility will place Jeff Wall's composition *Dead Troops Talk*⁶ undoubtedly in the field of contemporary "staged" art, whereas a similar image by Luc Delahaye, titled *Taliban/Dead Afghan Fighter* was subject to some polemic due to the fact that his work transposes us to the "field of in-between," where we can actually simultaneously see both facets of the image's meaning.

Photographic images are part of a large media landscape and therefore – as always in similar circumstances – photographs have also become part of a dubious and manipulative media machine, which in the late 1980's was to a large extent generated by the authoritarian structures of Yugoslavia. Until the late 1990's, the media landscape was dominated by various ideological and political discourses that were explicitly contradictory and antagonistic. The extreme(ist) nationalistic discourse was then slowly replaced by a "consumerist-global" discourse that has over recent years in combination with the "rhetoric of democracy" persistently and unflinchingly, dominated.

Clearly, this had a huge impact on the whole spectrum of cultural production. The *Aftermath* project mainly poses the question of the status of photographic images in the context of the media and cultural landscape, establishing that along the ever-increasing flood of topical visual information (printed media, television, internet) fixed images still preserve their power for the individual and collective consciousness. Beyond just the preservation of actual motifs (testimony, documenting), successful photographs assimilate and synthesize history and culture of a particular time and for this

reason some achieve a universal value. On one part of this "scale" there are those iconic images from the history of photography known to everybody, whilst on another, contemporary art photography is established more by an artist's metaphorical and conceptual investment. The photo series exhibited in the *Aftermath. Changing Cultural Landscape* project have, despite their temporal distance, both an expressive and documentary function, whilst on the other hand they try to reflect historical events in an original and creative manner.

In this context, the *Aftermath* project tackles another particular, specifically photographic, aesthetic question. It is the question about the changes to the images of a previously common territory as recorded in every possible form by the photo camera over the last two decades, which is principally related to the development and role of the landscape genre. Of course, genre classification presents only one of many semantic layers and it is – in some works of the project – completely absent. Nowadays, it is often claimed in the field of contemporary art photography that the traditional genre divisions are no longer relevant; nevertheless, "landscape" still appears as a significant topic.⁷ The fact that contemporary photography (unlike broader contemporary art) still persists with the relevance of genre classification can to a large extent be attributed to the fact that "landscape" – in addition to "portrait" – represents a "constitutive genre" of photography, and in the 20th century it developed into productive subgenres, such as cityscapes and street photography, both of which become important testimonies of modernist development. Thus "changing cultural landscape" also refers to actual changes that can be observed in cities, places and the rural environment.

Some of participating artists prove to be acute observers of transformations attributable to social and economic processes, particularly within the urban landscape. They address the social consequences following the disintegration of Yugoslavia that caused changes to the environment – the (r)evolutions in social (sub)systems, transitions to a societies' economy, the migration of ethnic minorities and the various motivations for these migrations, consumerism, the impact on the environment, the effects of badly-considered urban planning, etc. Despite the prevalence of objective motifs (landscape or city parts, specific architecture, details of interiors) practically all the works implicitly – and often explicitly – narrate a social and yet individual story. The fate of things, places and people are thus joined in a uniform story of the recent history of a time and place.



ZIJAH GAFIĆ
Quest for ID, 2001/VII Network

BEYOND BEETHOVEN

Maurizio Bait

Listen, the crackling and cracking of all the stiff black leather jackets together with the stubborn chorus of moans, together with the funereal canon, shuttling from one to the other. The bleating of sheep lower down in the village and the cry of a kite above, in the sky.

(Peter Handke,
Die morawische Nacht)

It's the scene of an almost furtive, yet relevant funeral homage: a group of Kosovarian Serbs gets off the rundown coach in a clearing that the war has assigned to the majority Albanian ethnops. The grave yard is no longer there, just clumps of grass and stony spots. As the ancient Serbian custom requires, in that silent nothingness due to the removal of history, candles are lit, flickering in the wind, and goodies to eat are scattered round. Serbs have been picnicking with their dead since time immemorial. Sharing memories and the present, which melt together like freshly fallen snow does with dirty slush.

Then off at once, eating has finished. Fleeing behind the lines in Mitrovica, beyond the Ibar, marking what is still and is no longer Serbia.

This long story begins far from here, in the hot springs of the mountains of Salzkammergut and lower Austria. On a simple writing desk, albeit a writing desk sporting an electrical cigar lighter and a bell to summon servants with.

Bad Ischl, Emperor Franz Joseph's beloved hunting lodge. History is accomplished before the merry eyes of Elisabeth of Wittelsbach, still just fifteen, the year of her engagement to Franz, when she was carved in marble, a bust by the Friulan sculptor Canciani. The old monarch throws the die of war, signing a piece of paper, its faithful copy is still lying on that small desk. Beside it there takes pride of place an old carmine red leather armchair where the Old Man rests in the afternoon. It's still misshaped by those apostolic limbs, no one has ever dared take a seat on that miserable, and at the same time, imperial, chair. It's the end of June 1914, on St. Vitus's day, according to the Orthodox calendar, Archduke Franz Ferdinand has just been killed, together with his morganatic wife while he was crossing a bridge on the Miljacka on his chariot in Sarajevo. The Black Hand, a Serbian nationalist organisation, which prints a magazine called *Piemonte*, called the shot. The executor is a passionate young man: his name is Gavrilo Princip. Franz Joseph lights, with the start of this local war, the first fires of the Great World War. It is what Thomas Mann will define, in his *The Magic Mountain* the "clap of thunder", condemned to be repeated millions of times, till its echoes reach the third millennium.

The Habsburg Empire fell under the slashes of national movements. The same was for Yugoslavia between the two world wars, colonised by the troops of field marshal Kesselring, at the head of a Nazi Division named after prince Eugene of Savoy, the hero of the Battle of Vienna of 1683, and reclaimed

piecemeal by Tito's partisans' guerrilla and open battles.

The same has been for Yugoslavia after the death of its new Father of the Nation and its self-sufficient communism, which had chosen the Third way and the non-aligned position between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, after its brave apostasy of the Cominform in 1948. The new class of post modern communists, who more over were flogged by the regime's controversial ideologue Milovan Gilas in the unforgotten editorial "anatomy of a moral" on the party's paper, *Borba* (Struggle), were useless. Useless, too, the bureaucratic Territorial Socialist Leagues. The market, the crisis, the state apparatus's envies and appetites, flavoured by that formidable aromatic vinegar of the people, identity set up as monster, made the system implode from its very core. Everything has ruined, starting from humanness. And lots of little motherlands have not created a new Nation of possibilities for all.

There is in the Balkans' recent history an anecdote and a ghost of Banquo: this latter being the European Community, who, in Sarajevo's bloodied streets, abdicated all position of leadership in the thousand days of the siege, to then reach that forced, and unfortunately still unnatural peace Sarajevo that history textbooks classify as the Dayton Accords (December 1995). The self same Europe who today denounces its persistent incapacity to integrate, mediate, lead democratic living in common.

This anecdote, which was told to me once in a breezy tavern on the Karst near Trieste by Predrag Matvejevic, explains things better than a thousand treaties: according to the Germans, the Balkans begin after Salzburg, with the Taurn region of the Eastern Alps. For the Austrians, it's obvious: the Balkans begin with the Karawanks, which divide them from Slovenia. For the Slovenians, the Balkans lay from the middle course of the Sava downwards. For the Croats, the Balkans are Serbia, Bosnia, Macedonia. For the Serbs, the Balkans are in Greece. And for Greeks, charmed by the mythological sparkles of the Aegean, and their own, sundrenched obsessions, the Balkans simply do not exist.

What is a Homeland? What is the meaning of a Heimat today in the tormented lands that once were Southern Slavia, i.e. Yugoslavia?

That great Ruthenian, Joseph Roth, although he was talking of his old Austria, identified his real Homeland in the *Heimliche Heimat*, the inner Homeland each

of us carries within themselves. Johannes Urzidil, the writer from Prague who held the funeral oration on Kafka's tomb, liked to say that his homeland was what he wrote, that is what his soul manifested.

Peter Handke, the great Carinthian author, once extended his arms over the Drava in Maribor, facing the wind blowing from the South and was moved: »No, we are not without our homeland«.

Grenznatur, the liminal nature in all of us who, by blood or awareness of memory, has trodden on more history than the most conscientious of libraries.

Homeland is not a motherland *against* the homelands, of others it cannot be the ethnic cleansing that it has, however, been; It cannot manifest itself in the epiphanies of massacres. But all this range of impossibilities has already taken place. And it is ready to replicate its tragic script. The torching eddies of lapillus thrown from the skies and the far too many paediatricians in tears asking why are already yesterday's news, a scaffolding of sobbing raised to the same sky giving effective death. There is a legend in Carinthia about the Army from the sky, a Hunter in the wind bringing destruction in his wake. This legend has come true between the Sava, the Drava, the Drina and the Ibar. Noble Danube waters, born in Bavarian cheerfulness, fated to disappear in the limited immensity of Odessa's enclosed sea.

Emptiness is the real Place of writing, where silences are filled by the marks of states of mind, sometimes by the breath of Epos itself. But knowing is not enough, as Ingeborg Bachmann wrote. In the same way the void, at the bottom of things, in Sense of photography, the authentic Muse of the immobile moment, of that Duration it has dedicated its only poetic song to.

It is not the photographer's – nor the writer's – task to point out the solutions of the world. To tell the truth interpreting it is needed for the revelation of the "sad passions", as Baruch Spinoza theorised. It is required by the cause of disavowal of the pessimistic abyss of Kafka who, in his Trial, issued a verdict of definitive desperation: *Everything is deceit*. Kafka who, for shame and a sense of abomination kept himself on the strict outskirts of the territories of true love, like the land surveyor kept himself on the *Schwelle*, the threshold of the Castle. And who, in the little known short story *Description of a Struggle* stated: «Sometimes things don't stay in their place and words don't say them».

That's a good epitaph for Yugoslavia.

Talking in Vienna about Gustav Mahler and thus "bringing coals to Newcastle", as he himself stated, the father of the Frankfurt school, Theodor Adorno declared that Tradition feeds on innovation. He added, with word of burning truth, that Mahler's music finds salvation wandering through the ruins.

So, there is the viaticum of former Yugoslavia. In part already in the EC, in the Eurozone, even, in part on the threshold of this Common house currently devastated by public debt. In part much further behind, still hovering between a yearning for the West and the rearguards of rancour. Strolling nowadays in Zagreb, Beograd and Podgorica, forgetting history is quite possible. Not so in Sarajevo, where the caterpillar tracks and sniper's marks are still in everyone's heart. Not so in Kosovo, where no one yet manages to find an acceptable and profitable solution and which is still overspread by the mobile, ferocious empire of an unsustainable principle: the purity of identity.

Roads in this country persist in bringing to a multiplicity of false promises of destination, soaked in an illiberal sense of *organised democracy* (Aristotle would derogatorily call it *formal democracy*). Riddled by apostles who have no mission whatsoever.

But then, where does true hope live? In the midst of us, and it possesses a difficult and beautiful name: Culture.

Vaclav Havel, the lamented dissident playwright who later achieved the Presidency in Prague's Kafka Castle, strolling in his sandals through the laneways of Pirano once said he was sure that Europe would eventually integrate everyone and everything. It is, and remains, a handover from fate. His prophecy has by and large been fulfilled, however, there remains this diffused, polymorphic enclave, surrounded by Brussels' Community, but lacking genuine licences of freedom.

Culture does not mean learned note jotting of oblique knowledge. It is not erudition or calculus. And it is not fiction. Culture is the beauty, even the terrible beauty, of shared truth. In a piece of writing, a snapshot. *Truth* was written on the Golem's forehead, too. The Balkans will never be able to share tears, to each will remain their own. But only if textbooks stop teaching a history of mutually torn out papers, a true measure of the future will become probable.

After the celebrated funeral music intoned amongst the ruins by august cello players, today's Balkans have the progressive chance of adding to the *Ninth Symphony*, which is growing into a Song of a Free Europe, a passionate line by Schiller that in the spring of 1824 Beethoven chose not to keep in his chorus:

Joy, joy drives the wheels In the great clock of worlds.
One must overcome the curse of the past. One must go beyond Beethoven's mild trust.

**BOSNIA
AND
HERZEGOVINA**

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: ASYMMETRY UNTITLED

Branka Vujanović

The question of changing cultural landscape in Bosnia and Herzegovina after 1991 inevitably bears a traumatic weight. The landscape of siege and uricide, devastation and mass graves, remains in the sceneries through which Bosnian photographers (Kemal Hadžić, Milomir Kovačević Strašni, Dejan Vekić, Danilo Krstanović, Damir Šagolj, Šahin Šihic, Mladen Pikulić, Nihad Pušija, Nermin Muhić, Tarik Samarah) entered a special chapter in the history of art photography in this part of the world.¹ It is a special chapter due to the fact that most of these photographers turned to art photography during the war to cope with everyday horrors, to gain distance or control over what they have seen, as well as to 'keep a shrapnel of a traumatic time'² and to create a kind of photographic monument instead of a passing document in the media, saturated with shocking images.

This landscape opened up a way for an anarchic transition that brought about historical amnesia, political apathy and cultural disorientation. During the 1980s Bosnia and Herzegovina had started to draw its own centres onto the map of the former Yugoslavia but during the 1990s it fell into complete

cultural marginalization, and not only because of rigid cultural structures designated, in the main, by narrow national interests. "Due to the fact that the Cold War cognitive organization did not end with the fall of the Berlin Wall and also due to the fact that war in Bosnia and Herzegovina additionally brought about the exclusion of Bosnian culture from inter-linguistic and inter-cultural practice of meaning transmission, it is exceptionally hard to follow the process of positioning that reveals ever new asymmetries".³ One cannot avoid cultural-political asymmetry between ethnically divided Bosnia and Herzegovina and the presuppositions of parliamentary democracy. The so called 'national key' solution only emphasises this division and the meaning of national interests. This is accompanied by cultural-historical asymmetry between the pre-war and post-war landscape demonstrated by changes in ways of communicating and perception of reality.

In the process of production/construction of the cultural space of Eastern Europe or the 'second world', Bosnia and Herzegovina, as a territory that cherished the principles of Tito's Yugoslavia with



DEJAN VEKIĆ

from *Kao Sarajevo* series, 1992-1995

¹ Leslie Fratkin, *Sarajevo Self-Portrait: The View from Inside* (travelling exhibition and film series), Umbrage Editions, New York, 2000.

² Ulrich Baer, *Toward a Democratic Gaze in Spectral Evidence: Photography of Trauma*, The MIT Press Cambridge, 2002, p. 7.

³ Anisa Avdagić, *A Narrative of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Transition: Positive Subversions* in *Sarajevske sveske* no. 27/28, theme: *Tranzicija i kultura*, Mediacentar Sarajevo, 2010.

⁴ Aleksandar Adamović, *Washing the Tombstones* in Dunja Blažević (editor) *Maxumim*, exhibition catalogue, Centar za savremenu umjetnost Sarajevo, 2000, p. 13.

⁵ Robin Kelsey, Blake Stimson, *Photography's Double Index (A Short History in Three Parts)* in Robin/Stimson (ed.) *The Meaning of Photography*, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute Williamstown, 2008.

⁶ *Searching for Identity 92-02*, exhibition catalogue (curator: Asja Mandić, International project *Ars Aevi Sarajevo*), Collegium artisticum Sarajevo, 2002.

⁷ Maurizio Lazzarato, *From Capital-Labour to Capital-Life* in *Ephemera – Theory of Multitude, Theory and Politics in Organisation* vol. 4(3), 2004, p. 202.

⁸ Brian Holmes, *The Rules of the Game: Activist Art in the Creative City in Avanesian/Skrebowski* (ed.) *Aesthetics and Contemporary Art*, Sternberg Press Berlin, 2009.

utmost enthusiasm and where these principles were destroyed most violently, has lost the capacity for self-contextualisation within a post-socialist discourse. The generation of artists that came to artistic maturity during the war (Nebojša Šerić Šoba, Damir Nikšić, Anela Šabić, Zlatan Filipović, Andrej Đerković, Anur Hadžiomerspahić, Šejla Kamerić, Kurt&Plasto) reacted immediately after the war with clear messages in public spaces emphasising the meaning of cultural resistance and bringing “topics into the cultural landscape from which it is possible to read a new relation between art and society”.⁴ Due to its ‘double indexicality’⁵ a trace of reality that usually escapes the eye and as an index of the position of the one doing the viewing, a conceptual approach to photography in the work of artists that are not primarily photographers was one of the strongest means in exposing this relation. This was defined by one of the artists through the formula: “The time I live in is a state of emergency and it requires an effective reaction”.⁶ The conceptual and visual efficacy of ‘post-socialist realism’ combined with design and advertisement strategies become one of the main criteria of critically engaged art at the turn of the century.

Beside critique of the absence of a value system and erasure of memory locally, this engagement includes critique of hierarchical territorial positions (centre-periphery, Western culture-East European culture) and presuppositions of the ‘post-ideological’ era of global liberal capitalism that experiments with identities through visual culture. As stated by Maurizio Lazzarato: “In the societies of control, the aim is no longer to appropriate as in societies of sovereignty nor to combine and

increase the power of the forces as in disciplinary societies, but to *create worlds*. This is the condition for capitalist valorization today. By reversing the Marxian definition we could say that capitalism is not a mode of production, but a production of modes. In societies of control, the alternatives that are open are even more radical than those afforded by disciplinary societies”.⁷ Probing the problematic of cultural-economic asymmetry between the principles of developed capitalism with its production of modes, ‘branded patterning of existence’⁸ and the landscape of poverty, social marginalization and the vulnerability of basic conditions of life is, in this sense, inevitable. Critical engagement of photography also consists of recording the everyday existence of economically threatened social groups (as in Amer Kapetanović’s photographic series) as well as in the questioning of the asymmetry brought into the cultural landscape of Bosnia and Herzegovina by *nouveaux riches* (as in the “Time of Renewal” photographic series of Nenad Malešević).

Contemporary engaged photography in Bosnia and Herzegovina can only be discussed within the scope of the problems of engaged art as there is no developed photographic culture (there is no Photography Department at the Academies of Art nor is there a specialised platform for the promotion of art photography) and thus its art-historical and critical evaluation is also lacking. Engaged art registers historical, political and economic asymmetries that define the cultural landscape of Bosnia and Herzegovina at every step, primarily through self-organisation. Meanwhile the institutions of culture barely manage to survive because of a dangerous lack of clearly defined cultural policy and strategies of cultural self-contextualization.



MILOMIR KOVAČEVIĆ
from the *Tito in War* series, 1992

ANDREJ ĐERKOVIĆ

Denizen, 2009

www.djerkovic-andrej.co.ba

After the disintegration of Yugoslavia which was followed by war in Bosnia and Croatia new found countries were left without connections between themselves and the outside world. States adopted and implemented severe regulations with respect to obtaining citizenship in order to protect themselves. As a result a number of people in this (former) multi-ethnic territory are nowadays formally deprived of their basic rights to citizenship. *Denizen* is a photographic portrait of the Sarajevo based actor Alban Ukaj taken in the international zone of the Sarajevo airport. Despite the fact that for a number of years he has been resident in Sarajevo and an active protagonist of the city's cultural and social scene, winning several awards for best young actor, Alban unfortunately still does not have a Bosnian citizenship. Photographed near the baggage couraselp he serves as an allegory for the rigid bureaucratic regulations imposed upon him such his obligatory going out and coming in the country where he lives. The inter-territorial zone of the Sarajevo airport could be seen as the only territory where he really belongs.

Andrej Đerković, born 1971 in Sarajevo, is an artist and photographer. He lives and works between Geneva and Sarajevo.



ANDREJ ĐERKOVIĆ

Denizen, 2009



ANDREJ ĐERKOVIĆ
from the *Dum Dum* Series, 1992

ANDREJ ĐERKOVIĆ
United, 2009



AMER KAPETANOVIĆ

Twice Christmas, 2009

www.amerka.ba

After the war and consequent economical collapse the social situation in certain parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina is still alarming as a number of people are still entirely dependant on humanitarian support. Through documentary photography Amer Kapetanović reflects the consequences of war and transition that followed. He documents poverty and social distress by coming closer to marginal social groups in a direct naturalist style. The Twice Christmas series of photographs was created in April 2009 in eastern Bosnia and Tuzla. The photographs show individuals and families of low social status who are either partly or entirely taken care of by local Red Cross activists. For ten years now, Swiss Red Cross has been organising humanitarian aid action called Twice Christmas where they collect donations in Switzerland and transport it to those who are in need.

Amer Kapetanović, born 1973, is a professional photographer and an artist. He lives and works in Sarajevo.



AMER KAPETANOVIĆ

from the *Wish You Were Here* series, 2005



AMER KAPETANOVIĆ
from the *Twice Christmas* series, 2009



NENAD MALEŠEVIĆ

Age of Renewal, 2005-2011

Nenad Malešević's photographs from the Age of Renewal series demonstrate his reaction to the remnants of war and misery, to obvious manifestations of decadence and disorganisation within the transitional society, evident in his living environment. Although he draws comparisons with the socialist agit-prop images of renewal in the aftermath of World War II, these photographs do not express the usual after-war enthusiasm, contentedness, and faith. Instead they display the unregulated distribution of wealth and the signifier of social segregation. This gap between the poor majority and newly formed class of monopolists and tycoons is articulated with a high degree of critical engagement and irony. The Age of Renewal series is a part of a trilogy (Place of Transition, People of Renewal) which documents and comments on the political and social situation of Republika Srpska and Bosnia and Herzegovina, both troubled with infamous pasts and uncertain futures.

Nenad Malešević, born 1981 in Sarajevo, a founder of Protok Art Association, works in the fields of experimental film, video, graphics, photography and theory. He lives and works in Banja Luka.



NENAD MALEŠEVIĆ,

13 January 2006, from the Age of Renewal series, 2011



NENAD MALEŠEVIĆ,
27 August 2009, from the Age of Renewal series, 2006-2011

NENAD MALEŠEVIĆ,
22 November 2011, from the Age of Renewal series, 2011



TARIK SAMARAH

Srebrenica

In the summer of 1995, at the very end of the bloody war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, an infamous massacre took place in Srebrenica – the UN protected enclave in eastern Bosnia. In his Srebrenica series Tarik Samarah documents the aftermath of this event by visiting places that are still imbued with the traumatic experience of the past. While some images show complete absence of the event, empty spaces and occasional belongings from the victims (or the survivors) of the bloodshed, the others explicitly document the present day reality, settlements of the refugees, grief of the survivors and excavations of mass graves. Tarik Samarah, born 1965 in Zagreb, has been working with artistic and documentary photography for the past ten years. He lives and works in Sarajevo.



TARIK SAMARAH

Kamenica near Zvornik, from the Srebrenica series, 2002



TARIK SAMARAH
Eastern Bosnia, from the Srebrenica series, 2002

TARIK SAMARAH
Karaula near Tuzla, from the Srebrenica series, 2003



DEJAN VEKIĆ

Kao Sarajevo, 1992-1995

www.dejanvekić.com

As a young photographer who had just launched his career, Dejan Vekić was detained in besieged Sarajevo, where ordinary life had become a constant state of emergency. Sarajevo was under siege for more than three years thus and citizens tried to survive in their own way. During the long period of war cultural production remained vivid; alongside Radio Zid where the local music scene was played and promoted various artists also continued to work despite severe circumstances. Vekić worked on his series *Kao Sarajevo* for three years documenting his intimate vision of what was his then reality. However, the series goes beyond mere documentary photography by the sense of ambiguity and ambivalence in the images. The black and white technique and neutral lighting in overcast weather emphasises the overall melancholy. By documenting particular situations and testimonies from his fellow citizens Vekić tries to depict the will and determination of the human being in the dehumanizing condition of war. The war influenced the process of making these photographs in every aspect. In wartime Sarajevo photographers were obtaining developing chemicals from foreign photojournalists and producing prints in their own darkrooms.

Dejan Vekić, born 1971 in Sarajevo, is a freelance photographer working the fields of art, film and advertising photography. He lives and works in Sarajevo.





DEJAN VEKIĆ
from the *Kao Sarajevo* series, 1992-1995



CROATIA

After the torchlight red on sweaty faces
After the frosty silence in the gardens
After the agony in stony places
The shouting and the crying
Prison and place and reverberation
Of thunder of spring over distant mountains
He who was living is now dead
We who were living are now dying
With a little patience
Here is no water but only rock
Rock and no water and the sandy road
The road winding above among the mountains
Which are mountains of rock without water
If there were water we should stop and drink
Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think
Sweat is dry and feet are in the sand
If there were only water amongst the rock
Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit
Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit
There is not even silence in the mountains
But dry sterile thunder without rain
There is not even solitude in the mountains
But red sullen faces sneer and snarl
From doors of mudcracked houses

T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*

The photographic images mutually related to the *Aftermath / Changing Cultural Landscape* exhibition prompted me turn to the T. S. Elliot poem *The Waste Land* in order to clarify, to myself, the meaning of the syntagm cultural landscape and by extension the concept of aftermath. In his 1931 text *A Short History of Photography* Walter Benjamin concludes that another nature speaks to the camera than to the eye, other in the sense that the space occupied by human consciousness gives way to an unconscious space.¹ In his theses *On the Concept of History* he will open up a question with regard to the meaning of syntagm *state of emergency*, a question which would become a kind of leit-motif of Giorgio Agamben's philosophical thought towards the end of the twentieth century. And it is the very notion of state of emergency that I recognise to be the function of the crypto-referent in the works of Domagoj

Blažević, Boris Cvjetanović, Silvestar Kolbas, Srđan Kovačević, Bojan Mrđenović, Ana Opalić, Darije Petković, Jasenko Rasol, Sandra Vitaljić and Borko Vukosav which are simultaneously documents of the aftermath and reflections of the change in the cultural landscape. However, here arises a problem in the form of the question in which dimension the change becomes perceptible, and the aftermath recognisable as an aftermath? And furthermore, how a landscape becomes a cultural category with its inherent historicity. History – Benjamin writes – the object of construction whose place is formed not in homogeneous and empty time, but in that which is fulfilled by the here-and-now (*Jetztzeit*).² Giorgio Agamben claims that *Bild* – picture, is one of the most enigmatic concepts of Benjamin's thought and appears in one of his last writings within the theses *On the Concept of History*.³

...IN A CERTAIN CONSTELLATION

Leonida Kovač

¹ Walter Benjamin, *Mala povijest fotografije (Little History of Photography)*, (translated by Snješka Knežević) u *Estetički ogledi*, Školska knjiga, Zagreb, 1986, p. 154-155.

² Walter Benjamin, *Über den Begriff der Geschichte (On the Concept of History)*, Croatian translation published as "Povijesno-filozofijske teze"



ANA OPALIĆ

Place of Mass Execution, Bosnia, from the Afterwards series, 2006-2009



DOMAGOJ BLAŽEVIĆ

Scent of the Forgotten Gardens, 2009

in Walter Benjamin, *Novi andeo* (translated by Snješka Knežević), Izdanja Antibarbarus, Zagreb, 2008, p. 121.

³ Giorgio Agamben, *Vrijeme što ostaje: Komentar uz Poslanicu Rimljanima* (*The Time that Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*) (translated by Mario Kopic), Izdanja Antibarbarus, Zagreb, 2010, p. 133.

⁴ Benjamin, *Povijesno-filozofske teze* (*On the Concept of History*) p. 115.

⁵ quoted from Agamben, *Vrijeme što ostaje* (*The Time that Remains*), p. 133.

⁶ Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood*, Faber and Faber, London, 2001.

The true picture of the past whizzes by - Benjamin writes. Only as a picture, which flashes its final farewell in the moment of its recognisability, is the past to be held fast ... For this it is an irretrievable picture of the past that threatens to disappear with every present which does not recognise itself as meant in it.⁴

Elsewhere Benjamin states it is not the case that the past casts its light on the present, or that that present cast its light on the past; the picture is rather the place where the past and the present converge in a certain constellation. And while the relationship between then and now is entirely temporal (continuous), the relationship between past and present is dialectical, unpredictable.⁵ I read the photographs from Silvestar's Kolbas' *Kino Crvena zvijezda* (Red Star Cinema), or Ana Opalić's *Poslije* (Afterwards), or Sanda Vitaljić's *Neplodna tla* (Infertile Grounds), or Bojan Mrdenović's *Buducnost* (The Future) series in terms of Benjaminian convergence, that is, the

dialectical relationship between past and present. *An image is a stop the mind makes between uncertainties.*⁶ What would I have seen in them had I not known what had occurred previously at the place that subsequently became the scene immobilised within the photographic frame; or for instance, had I not been familiar with the fact that Kolbas found the filmstrip, intended to be projected as moving image, in a burned cinema and through the process of photographic enlarging extracted a static image of a bridge that no longer exists? The meaning of photography, like the meaning of any other entity, is inevitably the subject of cultural definition, claims Allan Sekula. If we accept the basic premise that information is the result of culturally determined relations, we cannot then ascribe to photographs an intrinsic or universal meaning.⁷ Landscape in the photographs of Ana Opalić or Sandra Vitaljić ceases to be a genre that can be considered in the context of the aesthetic history of the photographic medium and its inherent formalistic discourse,

and becomes a scene of mass crime. Mass crime is cultural fact. Nevertheless, seen as a crime scene, these landscapes are irreducible to the category of documentary photography. For, event in the image cannot be seen. That is why I say this is a photographic crypto-referent; because the state of emergency that undoubtedly dwells in the referential field of photographic images shown in the *Aftermath / Changing Cultural Landscape* exhibition is not the referent introduced by Barthes. If we recall: "Photography's Referent is not the same as the referent of other systems of representation. I call "photographic referent" not the *optionally* real thing to which an image or a sign refers but the *necessarily* real thing which has been placed before the lens, without which there would be no photograph".⁸ The necessarily real which exists as a crypto-referent in all photographic images from this exhibition, is not a thing at all, for it is necessarily insusceptible to objectification, and thus to the imaging, hence its existence eludes the possibility of any signifying system. This is establishes an entirely contingent relationship with the concept of reality, if reality is comprehended as the effect of representational practices. However, a state of emergency as a referent of all photographs laid under the common denominator within this exhibition is the "optionally real thing" placed in the focus of the camera lens; it is real only in the interference with another referent, which I will discuss here in terms of historical memory.

"The tradition of the oppressed" – Benjamin writes – "teaches us that the "emergency situation" in which we live is the rule. We must arrive at a concept of history which corresponds to this. Then it will become clear that the task before us is the introduction of a real state of emergency; and our position in the struggle against Fascism will thereby improve. Not the least reason that the latter has a chance is that its opponents, in the name of progress, greet it as a historical norm. The astonishment that the things we are experiencing in the 20th century are "still" possible is by no means philosophical. It is not the beginning of knowledge, unless it would be the knowledge that the conception of history on which it rests is untenable."⁹ The photographs in the *Aftermath. Changing Cultural Landscape* exhibition do not express astonishment. They neither spectacularise the missing event, nor its site. In expressing the contradictory claim that a photographic image with its (historically) immanent process of spectacularisation, does not spectacularise, I am referring above all to the claim with which Debord begins his reflection on the society of spectacle. "In societies dominated

by modern conditions of production, life is presented as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly lived has receded into a representation."¹⁰ Debord further deduces that the first intention of the reign of spectacle is the disappearance of historical knowledge in general, primarily almost all information and sensible comments about the recent past. The spectacle skillfully organises the lack of knowledge about what is happening, and immediately afterwards the oblivion of what could still be comprehended. The photographs under the common denominator of the constative and the imperative, of changing cultural landscape, place themselves in front of spectators as a defence against oblivion, but devoid of the singular, violent, unambiguous, indoctrinating rhetoric. *Moj dida ili poznaje poeziju ili samo tuguje za kućicom* (My grandfather either knows poetry or only grieves for his little house) - writes Domagoj Blažević on the 'passepartout' beneath his photograph which shows, in sharp focus, a white snail shell perched on a branching outgrowth, caught in a barbed wire fence, behind which looms an out of focus orchard. Blažević's "photo-novel" titled *Nek' mirišu avlije* (The Scent of Forgotten Gardens) ends with grandfather's bowed head in the centre of the frame beneath whom is written "keep the story", leads to the questioning of the effect of the current bio-political paradigm which Giorgio Agamen describes thus: "The political system no longer orders forms of life and juridical rules in a determinate space, but instead contains at its very centre a *dislocating localization* that exceeds it and into which every form of life and every rule can be virtually taken. The camp as dislocating localization is the hidden matrix of the politics in which we are still living, and it is this structure of the camp that we must learn to recognize in all its metamorphoses into the zones *d'attentes* of our airports and certain outskirts of our cities. The camp is the fourth, inseparable element that has now added itself to – and so broken – the old trinity composed of the state, the nation (birth), and land."¹² And therefore, it is not surprising that Darje Petković titles the series of photographs of contemporary landscapes built by corporate design and saturated with advertising messages after the film title: *Okupacija u 26 slika* (Occupation in 26 Pictures) which thematises the terror of fascism in Dubrovnik during World War II. It is a matter of occupation that deprives the lives of young women and men portrayed in Kovačević's *Prije odlaska* (Before Leaving) series of photographs, of their "prospects", turning them into a nameless mass of precarious workers – cognitariat.

⁷ Allan Sekula, *On the Invention of Photographic Meaning in Thinking Photography* (ed. Victor

Burgin), Macmillan Press, London, 1982. p. 84-86.

⁸ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, Vintage, London, 2000, p. 76

⁹ Benjamin, *Povijesno-filozofske teze (On the Concept of History)* p. 117.

¹⁰ Guy Debord, *Društvo spektakla (The Society of the Spectacle)* (translated by Goran Vujasinović), Bastard Books - Arkzin, Zagreb, 1999, p. 35.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

¹² Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, (translated by Daniel Heller-Raozen), Stanford University Press, 1998, p. 175-176.

DOMAGOJ BLAŽEVIĆ

*Scent of the Forgotten
Gardens, 2010*

[http://cargocollective.com/
domagojblazevicstories](http://cargocollective.com/domagojblazevicstories)

During the war in former Yugoslavia a certain number of people were displaced in order to save their own lives and find safety. Large scale displacements that took place in multi-ethnic territories of Croatia and Bosnia led to dramatic changes in the demographic structure of several regions. In his work Domagoj Blažević deals with the intimate ethnographic records of transition in everyday life. The Scents of Forgotten Gardens series is an intimate one-day diary of his family's gathering at his grandfather's home in a village next to Bjelovar (Croatia), which the family exchanged for their Bosnian estate during the recent war. Like many others, they were victims of deportation and thus ended up being refugees. Because of the national divisions of the territory in Bosnia and Herzegovina they were not able to return in their hometown after the war. Through his intimate point of view Blažević questions the demographic and social processes that are the consequences of war and economical transition. Photographs of everyday objects, enriched by the artist's narrative interpretations, become intimate testimony of one family, of one (lost) nation, of the echoes of war in a story about identity and life.

Domagoj Blažević, born 1978 in Split, currently lives and works as a freelance photographer between New York and Split.



DOMAGOJ BLAŽEVIĆ

My grandpa exchanged his house during the war, so he doesn't live in Bosnia anymore but here, Scent of the Forgotten Gardens, 2009



ŽRTVENIK: LONAC OD SUZA I MOLITVA ZA NOVI RAST

DOMAGOJ BLAŽEVIĆ

The sacrificial altar - a pot of tears and a prayer for growth, Scent of the Forgotten Gardens, 2009



IZGUBIENI KORAKI: NA MEĐI JE SUSJED NAPAO SUSJETA

DOMAGOJ BLAŽEVIĆ

Lost step - neighbour attacking neighbour at the border line, Scent of the Forgotten Gardens, 2009



OSTRTOGLAVIĆ JE U SEBE

DOMAGOJ BLAŽEVIĆ

Dive into yourself, Scent of the Forgotten Gardens, 2009

BORIS CVJETANOVIĆ

Traces, 1987-2012

Boris Cvjetanović is one of the most distinctive Croatian photographers of recent decades and an artist who shows great social sensibility. In the *Traces* series he juxtaposes old and new images of the same locations, and therefore re-contextualises their social significance. The artist has been closely connected to the town and area of Labin for several years. In 1987 he documented the thirty-day strike of Labin's miners for Studentski list. This work in process was completed in late 2000s when Cvjetanović revisited the same places marked by industrial tradition in order to document their destiny in the post-socialist and post-industrial era. Again these places became a material for the artist's sociological, historical, architectural, and political research on seismic changes in the past two decades.

Boris Cvjetanović, born 1953 in Zagreb, is a professional photographer and freelance artist. He lives and works in Zagreb.



BORIS CVJETANOVIĆ

Krapanj 1987, from the Labin series, 1987-2012



BORIS CVJETANOVIĆ

Krapanj 2010, from the Labin series, 1987-2012



BORIS CVJETANOVIĆ

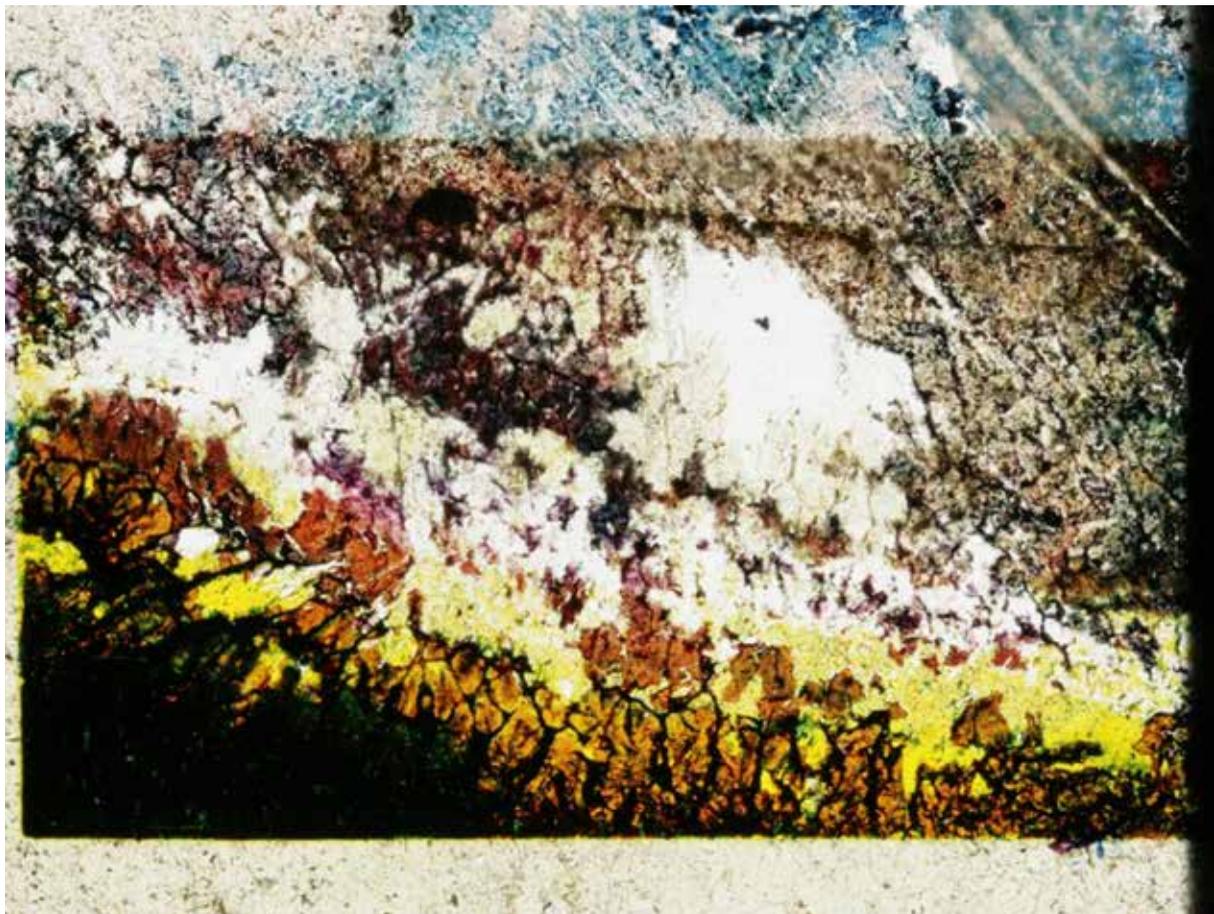
Between Raša and Krapanj Near the Abandoned Mine 2010, Me and Once Miner Vlado, from the Labin series, 1987-2012

SILVESTAR KOLBAS

Kino Crvena Zvezda,
1993-2011

In one of the shelling attacks on the artist's hometown Vinkovci during the civil war in 1991, the local cultural centre with a library and a cinema was hit and burned to the ground. In the ruins of the building Silvestar Kolbas found leftovers of unknown film tapes and kept them for sentimental reasons. After several years he finally enlarged these found images. One piece of film contained a black and white picture of a passerby around the old bridge in Mostar. It was probably a part of a newsreel shown before a feature film. Kolbas produced a series of photo-grams from the enlarged details of the tape. For him images from the Kino Crvena Zvezda series sum up the entire war; Photographs made by enlarging dirty and contaminated films symbolise feelings of utter loss caused by war.

Silvestar Kolbas, born 1956 in Petrovci, is a photographer, cameraman, film director and educator. He lives and works in Zagreb.





SILVESTAR KOLBAS
from the *Kino Crvena zvezda*
series, 1993-2011

SRĐAN KOVAČEVIĆ

Before Leaving, 2010

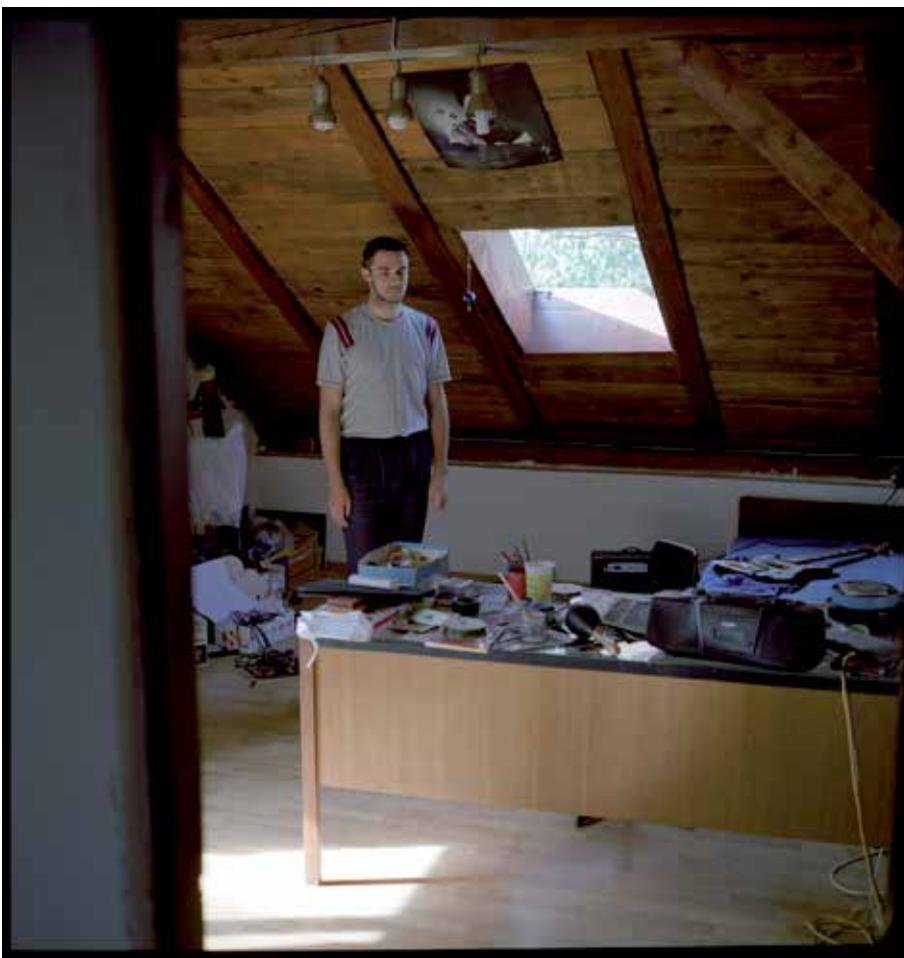
In past few years the overall globalisation and embracing of neoliberal ideology has led to the deterioration in social status of young people throughout Europe. Economic migration became a common phenomenon people in search of a better life. Inspired and shocked by that very fact Srđan Kovačević started documenting the process of geo-political change in his immediate environment, within his group of friends and acquaintances. The *Before Leaving* series of photographs was initiated incidentally. A few years ago, a number of his friends left the country and consequently he happened to portray their lives just before their departure. The dramatic experience of leaving a place, putting an old life behind them in order to start a new one is mitigated by the sense of calm of the photograph. It has to be said, the protagonists documented in their homes, highlighted by their posture, staged or spontaneous, are not only those who are leaving immediately, rather *Before Leaving* cuts through a particular generation dealing with the significant moment in all of their lives.

Srđan Kovačević, born 1982, is a freelance photographer, cameraman, cinematographer and an artist. He lives and works in Zagreb.





SRĐAN KOVAČEVIĆ
from the *Before Leaving* series,
2010



BOJAN MRĐENOVIĆ

Budućnost, 2008-2012

Through his photographs Bojan Mrđenović is continuously dealing with the present reality in Croatia. In the straight and objective "New Topographics" style he documents ruined and abandoned buildings of the former, now closed, *Budućnost* (future) trading company, which was once one of the driving forces of the local economy. The photographs are marked by serenity and depict static, hidden and forgotten motifs devoid of human presence. Although absent, human presence is ingrained in the reminiscences of the once functional infrastructure, the physical remnants of which have become a part of the new cultural landscape. The *Budućnost* series bears witness to the aftermath of social transition by documenting remnants of the past. Mrđenović critically analyses the decline of the somewhat visionary socialist economical system and the new forms of global neo-liberalism. Formally he builds balanced compositions to emphasise the monumental effects of particular buildings and their placement in the environment. The artist documents present reality in series of repetitive images showing the decay, destruction and demographic changes as a result of war and economic transition in Croatia.

Bojan Mrđenović, born 1987 in Virovitica, is a student of film at the Cinematography Department of the Academy of Dramatic Art in Zagreb where he lives and works.





BOJAN MRĐENVIĆ
from the *Budućnost* series, 2008-2012



ANA OPALIĆ

Afterwards, 2006-2009

www.ana-opalic.htnet.hr

By exploring traumatic events of the recent past and their consequences Ana Opalić's *Afterwards* series documents and depicts specific locations, where, during the Civil War, there were direct conflicts between Croatian and Yugoslavian armies. Initially the artist focused on the hills around Dubrovnik - on the route Srđ-Strinčijera-Bosanka-Žarkovica – but later expanded to the rest of Croatia. Fifteen years after the first conflict and after the area has been declared clear of landmines, Opalić decided to make a series of photographs walking along paths connecting the demarcation line. She was interested in the visual appearance of places that were, to her mind, crime scenes. Is it possible to recognise such a place? The unease which one feels walking along those paths prompts one to imagine what might have happened at that particular place. Without referring to different historical discourses, through her intimate perspective, Opalić nevertheless discusses the perception of past events and changes in political and social reality. Ana Opalić, born 1972 in Dubrovnik, is an artist working predominantly with photography and video. She lives and works in Zagreb.





ANA OPALIĆ
from the *Afterwards* series, 2006-2009



DARIJE PETKOVIĆ

Occupation in 26 Pictures,
2008

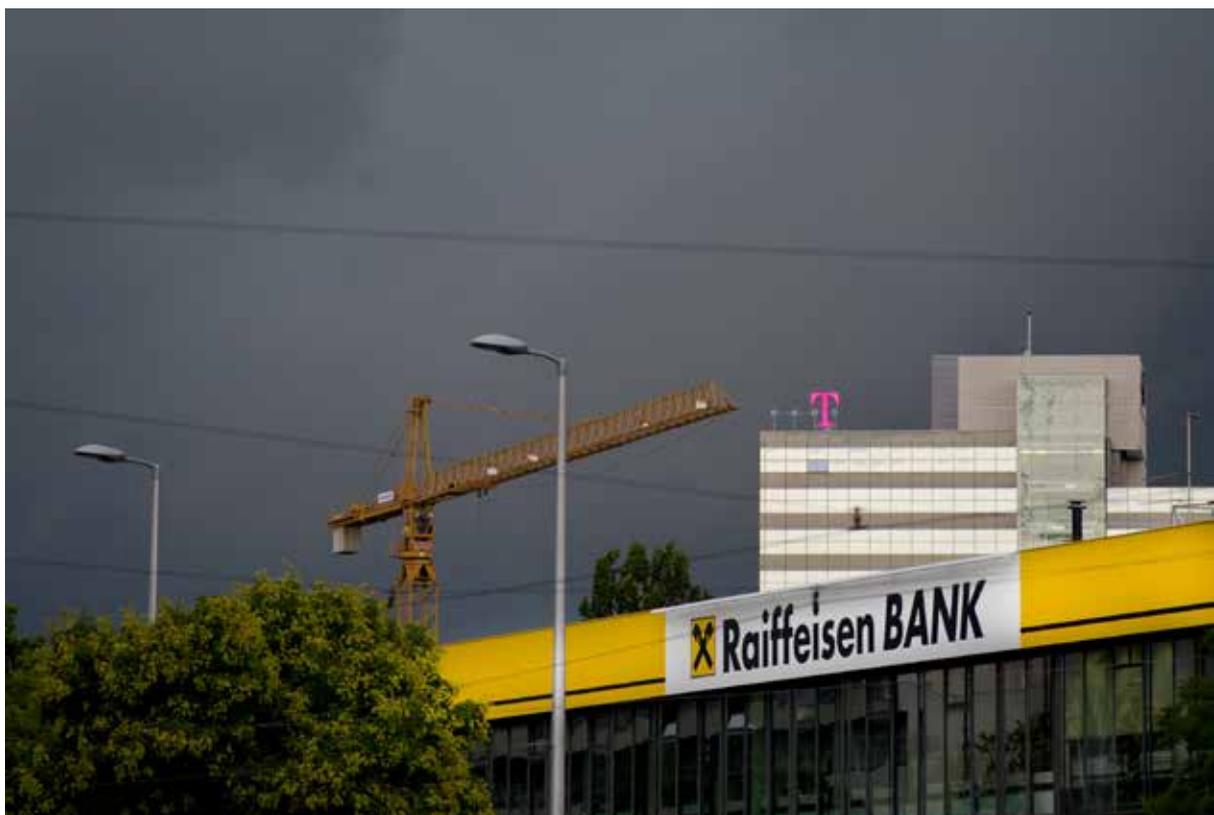
In Lordan Zafranović's film *Occupation in 26 Pictures* the multi-national city of Dubrovnik is being ethnically cleansed during WWII by Nazi and Croatian (Ustasha) armies. The idyllic city becomes a place of terror and gruesome massacres where former friends take different sides in a global conflict. In his same-titled series Darije Petković is questioning and reflecting on the processes of disintegration of the domestic economy. It shows monumental images of present day Croatia as a representation of *Zeitgeist*. He closely examines, selects and documents crucial symbols of national identity, cultural heritage and economic power, and merges them into a consistent narrative. He shows facades of office buildings belonging to domestic or multi-national corporations with their aggressive advertising. As with any economic occupation is also utterly unpleasant that the social, economic and cultural production of the domestic economy simultaneously ceases to develop because there is no interest in investment. Petković is deliberately explicit in his visual research of economic changes by showing the most obvious examples of financial takeover and malversation. Sharpness and directness make Petković an extremely sensitive observer who discovers these fine details in the images he captures. In his photography, he draws most important effects from light and texture, often from very long exposures that give his images a special softness.

Darije Petković, born 1974 in Zagreb, is a photographer, assistant professor in the Cinematography Department at the Academy of Dramatic Arts and artist. He lives and works in Zagreb.





DARIJE PETKOVIĆ
from the *Occupation in 26 Pictures* series, 2008



JASENKO RASOL

Winter Gardens, 2006

The gardens I photograph have emerged in the no-man's land of the non-urban zones, in empty spaces that exist in the city, always next to large housing estates. For the gardens to crop up, you need a sizeable plot of land, absence of private ownership and the residents of the nearby buildings. This is the constellation that generates those suburban gardens I wonder at. I photograph the gardens in wintertime, off season, bereft of people. They do not serve their function then and this adds to their lack of definition, adds new meaning to them. Because of their transience, the gardens are the places where things are given a new function. The predominant processes are recycling, improvisation, formal disorder and offhand ecology. The gardens are contemplative playgrounds for the grown-ups, or places of refuge for the city dwellers who feel nostalgia for the rural lifestyle, or sanctuaries for the socially vulnerable. The gardens are a reflection of the need for context that transcends the fundamental function of the street. They are symbolic spots missing in the urban fabric of the city because they are beyond the pale of primary architecture. The gardens are places for superstructure; as city squares and parks have always been. Yet, the gardens are spaces with no future: the spaces are predestined to become shopping malls and other inevitable office and residential developments. The current state of formal neglect is probably more progressive than the transitional urban development plans in the offing. The gardens are the exact opposite of what they seem; if we compare them with what will be there in the future, they are elite places in a neutered city architecture. Four years later, I wanted to photograph the gardens again. A good part of what I had photographed no longer existed. No surprises there. The city spreads and gobbles up the remaining meadows. The uncertainty from the text above is gone: the remaining gardens make it clear that their only constant visitors are the socially vulnerable. Jasenko Rasol, born 1969 in Zagreb, works as independent cameraman and photographer and artist. He lives and works in Zagreb.





JASENKO RASOL
from the *Winter Gardens* series, 2006



SANDRA VITALJIĆ

Infertile Grounds, 2009-2012

www.issavitale.com

Sandra Vitaljić's *Infertile Grounds* series of photographs are marked by trauma, historical events and human experience. The locations in the photographs are not just beautiful landscapes but sites that have gained strong symbolism due to their historical context and the fact that they have in one way or another, contributed to the formation of Croatia's national identity. Woods, fields and rivers that are part of Croatia's folk tales and myths have also become part of a rhetoric legitimizing political discourse and ideology. Some of the documented places are very well known; hence every resident of Croatia, and the neighbouring region, will bring a range of common knowledge and media generated interpretations to their reading of the photographs. Other places have been entirely forgotten or have only recently been discovered. The actual number of victims on all sides has always been manipulated for political purposes. Old victims were revived in political speeches calling people to arms. The recent bloody war in former Yugoslavia during the 1990s was a repetition and a continuation of the events of WWII. Although the bodies themselves are not visible in the photographs, they are nevertheless still present, in the pictures as in our daily lives.

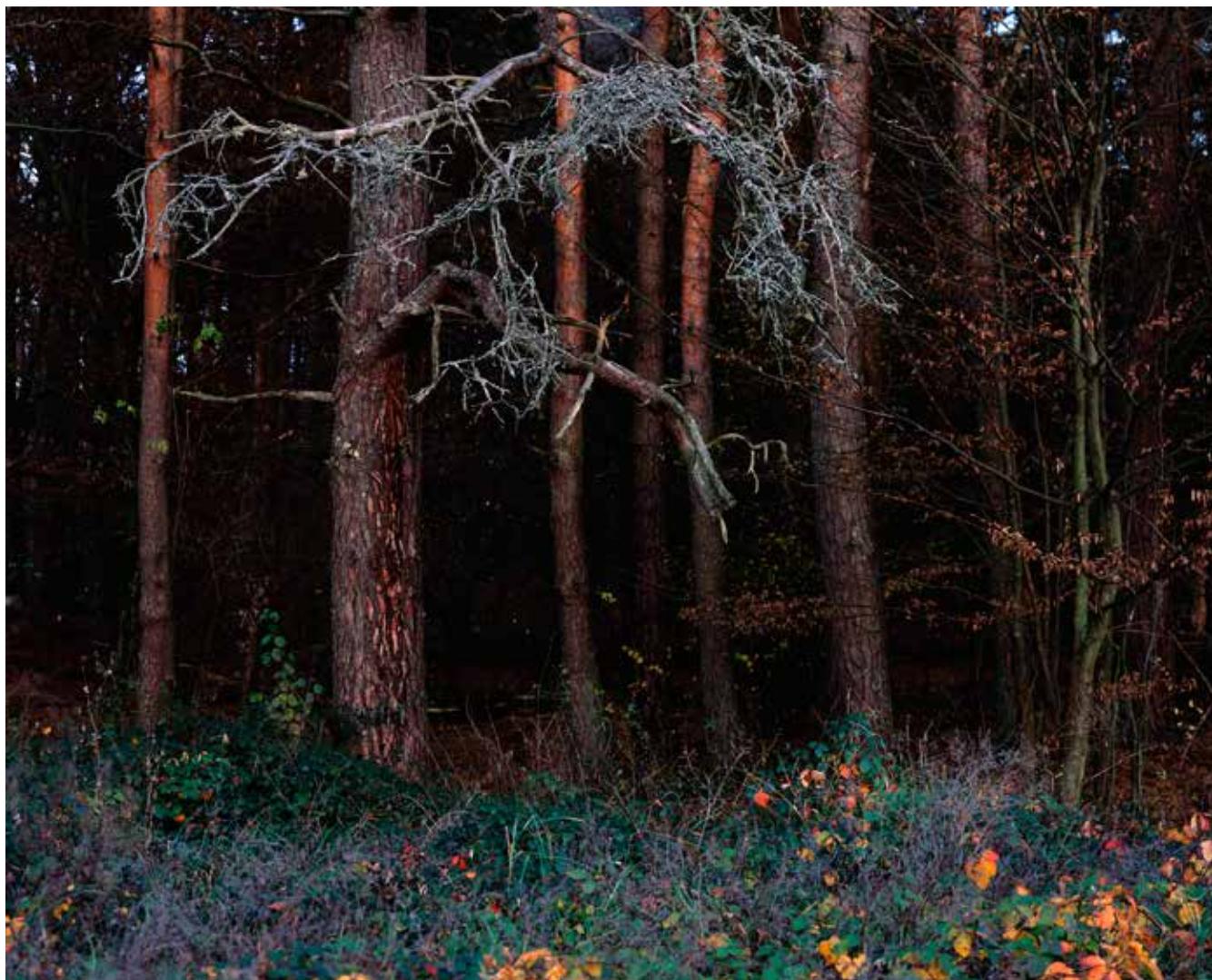
Sandra Vitaljić, born 1972 in Pula, works as an artist and as associate professor at the Cinematography Department of the Academy of Dramatic Art in Zagreb where she lives and works.



SANDRA VITALJIĆ

Medački Džep, from the *Infertile Grounds* series, 2009

On September 9th 1993 the Croatian army launched a military operation called Medak Pocket, which had the aim of reducing the pressure of the Serbian rebels on the city of Gospić. Medak Pocket is an area 4-5 km wide and 5-6 km long involving villages of Divoselo, Čitluk and Počitelj. Although the Croatian forces had achieved a tactical victory and temporarily pushed Serbian forces from the area, the operation was marked by controversy because of skirmishes between the Croatian army and UN peace keepers, and the killing of 36 Serbian civilians, most of them older than 60, after the end of the military operation. Serbian properties were systematically looted and destroyed to prevent Serbian population from returning. In 2000 another 11 corpses were found in one septic tank in the part of the town which used to be inhabited by Serbs. Although part of the Serbian population eventually returned to the area, Medak Pocket is still largely abandoned.



SANDRA VITALJIĆ

Bučje, from the *Infertile Grounds* series, 2009

At the very beginning of the Croatian War for Independence, the Serbian rebels, assisted by the forces of the Yugoslav Army, organized a concentration camp in Bučje, near Pakrac. The prisoners were held in the building of the veterinary clinic. A dozen women were detained in a separate area. The camp was operational from August to December 1991. More than 300 Croatian soldiers and civilians were detained in the camp at various times. They were tortured, starved, beaten and humiliated. Twelve people were killed and the fate of 41 people is still unknown. After disbanding the camp, the detainees were taken to Stara Gradiška prison and they were exchanged in January 1992 under the supervision of the International Red Cross. No one has yet been convicted for the crimes at the Bučje camp.

BORKO VUKOSAV

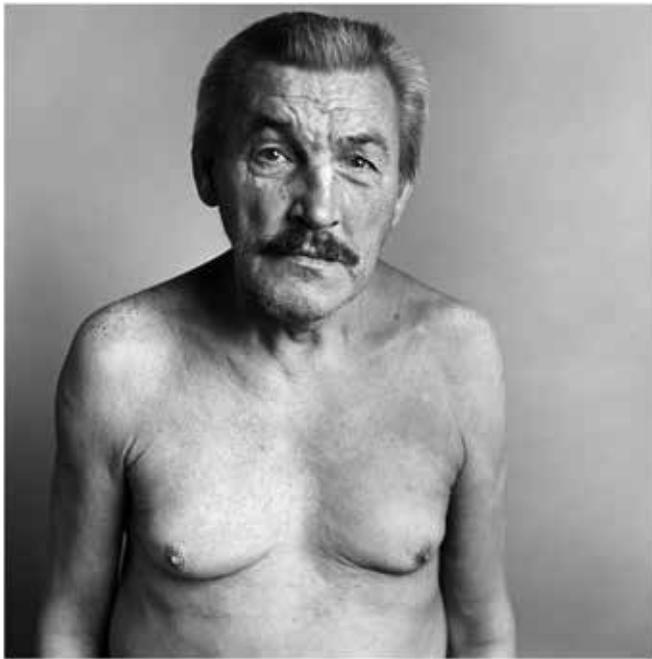
P (Person/Possession), 2011

www.borkovukosav.com

After the collapse of social welfare and the Socialist state personal possession became the main indicator of social status within society. Stratification of society and economic transition was first caused by war and afterwards by the ruthless process of privatisation of collective ownership. Through photography Borko Vukosav reacts to the most acute and topical situation his generation is faced with – the ongoing struggle for material status and instability within the competitive capitalist system. The P (Person/Possession) series of photographs is made as a diptych. The first, black-and-white part is a studio portrait of a selected person. Every protagonist was portrayed standing naked in the same light and composition. The studio environment was used with the aim of completely isolating a person from his/her intimate space and personal context. All portrayed people were deliberately displaced from what characterises their social, intellectual status and religious beliefs. By contrast the coloured part of the diptych documents the personal living space of these people with the intention of capturing the smallest of detail. Since the bed is believed to be the most intimate of personal spaces, the compositions focus the bed and belongings in its proximity.

Borko Vukosav, born 1984 in Dubrovnik, is a freelance artist and photographer. He lives and works in Zagreb.





BORKO VUKOSAV
from the *P (Person/Possession)* series, 2011



KOSOVA

READING AFTERMATH

Albert Heta

As in many other fields of research in Kosova, one cannot find traces of an engaged art photography or developed contemporary photography until 1989. What came after, the military occupation of Kosova in the period between 1989 and 1999, also marks the struggle for liberation and attempts to improvise social life under military occupation and apartheid, (seemingly) without room for critical art practices or conceptual developments in fine art photography. But even before this (dark) decade - since the end of World War II and the anti-fascist struggle - the country that is nowadays one of seven newly founded states in the area of the former Yugoslavia, was neither given the space nor has it ever reached a transition beyond principles of an education system and an art practice based upon and created as a tool in the struggle for articulating the (other) oppressed political identity and achieving political freedom. These conditions, and many more, make the Kosova context completely different from the other six newly founded states in the area of the former Yugoslavia.

The selection of artists and works for the Aftermath project is based on our reading of the initial concept of the project, concentrating on several components of a new society that also signifies the result of the fall of the former Yugoslavia and the newborn social and political context. These works are produced by artists that were born after the destruction of Yugoslavia (1989), and they themselves and their practice is the aftermath of that time and political context; these are works by artists who were refugees fleeing the country as a result of the war in Kosova whose work is created as a result of migration; these are works and artists that have started to search for a time in the past as well as works that concentrate on alternative signifiers of the war for liberation, that are not always selected by the mainstream to narrate the future voyage of this new country.

All selected works were created after 1999. The challenge remains open to continue the research into art photography that followed, documenting or commenting on the social, economical, cultural and political changes from 1989 to 1999, a time which otherwise seems to be completely occupied by mainstream photography.



VIGAM NIMANI
Untitled, 2011

QËNDRESË DEDA

D, 2008-2011

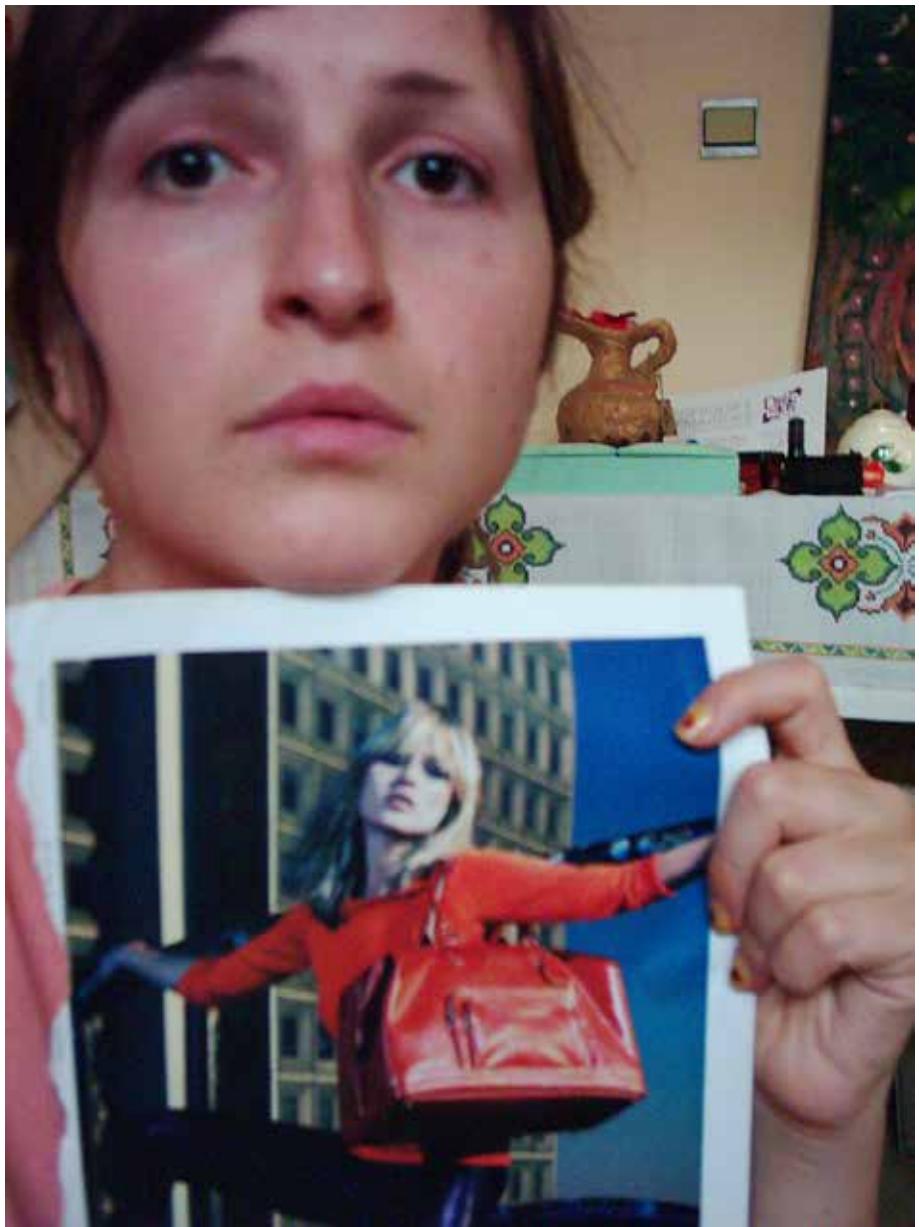
Qëndresë Deda is an artist who works across different media usually putting herself in a role of an object and subject. When using photography she treats camera as a mirror.

Although her works appear to be very personal and intimate she deals with the phenomena of her immediate surroundings. The photographs from the D series, made during the period of three years, documents and depicts wishes, dreams, fears and nothingness.

Qëndresë Deda, born in 1988 in Prishtina, graduated at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Prishtine, Department of Graphic Design. She lives and works in Prishtina.



QËNDRESË DEDA
D, 2008-2012



MAJLINDA HOXHA

Family Portrait / Untitled,
2008

Majlinda Hoxha is an artist who deals with ideas of displacement, decentralisation and loss. She uses the language of displacement and fragmentation, a set of objects, images and memories to articulate the process when home becomes “unhomely”; when familiar becomes unfamiliar. Using photography Hoxha explores the idea of the uncanny, which perpetually inhabits the language of aesthetics, and investigates how memory and the unconscious contribute to this ambiguity.

Majlinda Hoxha, born in Prishtina, is an artist and photographer. She was based in New Zealand 1999-2010. Currently she lives and works in Prishtina.



MAJLINDA HOXHA
Untitled, 2008



MAJLINDA HOXHA
Family Portrait #1, 2008

GENC KADRIU

60149 km, 2012

The MZ motorbike, according to the plate in the Museum of Kosovo, "belonged to the legendary warrior Adem Jashari, which was used in many of his combative activities, and it has a mileage of 60149 Km". Genc Kadriu, born 1974 in Dobërdup, is a visual artist and poet working across various media. He lives and works in Prishtina.



GENC KADRIU
60149 km, 2012



GENC KADRIU
Rita's Bike, 2012

ASTRIT ISMAILI

Gjyshja, 2011

The *Gjyshja* (Grandmother) series is process of recreation of a conceptual image of the only existing photograph of my grandmother showing her at a young age. The image was lost during the war in 1999. I saw this image for the first time when I was only seven years old. Thirteen years later, while I was living in New York, I decided to recreate the image and in this way it became the subject of my work.

Astrit Ismaili, born 1991 in Prishtina, he is studying Drama at the Faculty of Arts in Prishtina where he lives and works.



ASTRIT ISMAILI

Gjyshja, 2011



VIGAN NIMANI

Untitled, 2011

By using the principles of snapshot photography Vigan Nimani depicts the traces of ideological, social and economic transformations in urban and rural areas of Kosovo. In the Untitled series he highlights particular details found in his immediate environment. These photographic documents represent the artist's personal view on several crucial shifts in recent local history: decaying remnants of the past and booming harbingers of the new order.

Vigan Nimani, born 1981 in Prishtina, has graduated from the Painting department of the Academy of Fine Arts, University of Prishtina where he lives and works.





VIGAN NIMANI
Untitled, 2011



MACEDONIA

*Dossier '96*¹ by Igor Toševski was the first significant project in the mid 1990s that described more precisely the contours of the new traumatic social changes that developed as a consequence of the transition of the Macedonian post-socialistic society which also, to a considerable extent, influenced the understanding of the artist's positions and his critical commitment against the permanently uncertain and unstable political and economical reality. It was a one year long research project that documented deliberate mass production of rejects or faulty factory products as means of cheap and manipulative privatisation of the socialist factories. From all that waste Toševski made a series of installations, directly alluding in each of them to the use of industrial material in the late-modern aesthetics of the artists like Robert Smithson, Tony Cragg and Michelangelo Pistoletto. Toševski made the same parallel also with his series of photographs that document in detail the places of his researches where all the portraits of destroyed and abandoned factories, their working sections, chimneys and silos undoubtedly refer to the iconic photographs of Bernd and Hilla Becher and their archaeological typology of the industrial architecture. By taking these ready-made artistic and cultural models and relocating them into the local context as visual metaphors of the brutal decay of the elementary social and, most of all, existential values in the ideologically and morally stripped

transition milieu (as he says "The tons of mugs, dishes, pieces of textile, plates, glass, plastic... remind of the crowds of fired workers declared as 'unusable' subjects."), Toševski re-examines his own positions of an artist, aware of the unbridgeable gap between the artistic language and the everyday reality of this severely devastated and unfair social ambience.

But, by the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000, following the occurrence of the generation of artists raised during the period of transition, the artistic practice significantly changed its means and methods, replacing the idea of artworks autonomy with multimedia installations, thus diving directly into the social tissue and confrontation with the turbulent political events. The easy accessibility and the simple production of digital photographs and videos contributed substantially to these processes: the use of the photography and its narrative and dialogue forms of dealing with the everyday surrounding, in a way contributed for the artistic practice in this period to correspond in a wider sense to Hal Foster's thesis on "the artist as an ethnographer", as someone who documents the socio-topos and the transitional culture, and at the same time offers with his art a critical distance and their interpretation.

The most significant contribution in this sense can be credited to the works of Robert Jankuloski and Oliver Musović. Robert Jankuloski in his

"WHY?" A CHANGE IS NEEDED..."

Zoran Petrovski

¹ The project *Dossier 96* was carried out in the course of 1996 and 1997 in five cities in Macedonia in the form of five conceptually related installations with different materials taken from the factories in each particular city. The final installation, in its integral form, was exhibited in the Museum of the City of Skopje in 1997.



ROBERT JANKULOSKI
from the *Natura morta* series, 1999

photographic installations, since the 1990s used different procedures of deconstruction or integration in the traditional techniques or genres, presenting them with new meaning in the current social or historical context. His most ambitious project *SeeYouSeeMee* (1998-2001) was inspired by the aggression and the totality of the application of photographs in political and advertising campaigns. The artwork consisted of the moronic caricature face of Jankuloski printed in huge quantities and exposed same as in the election campaigns, literally all over the city, even on the garbage cans. The two-year long campaign ended with using the posters as wallpapers in a gallery showroom. By the constantly growing multiplication and integration of the contradictory social and cultural references into this unique photograph, Jankuloski managed to accumulate them with its intrusion into seemingly different contexts. He tackled some complex questions on the political domination and the elimination of the communication between the individual and the political in the public space. Jankuloski uses the same conceptual procedures when integrating old photographs whose re-contextualization into the actual historical and social ambience acquired new meaning. The series *12 silver soldiers*, rendered in the period of the military inter-ethnic conflict in 2001 includes representation of soldiers in uniforms from the many past and present wars on the territory of Macedonia. Their exposition in this common context mocks them, rendering senseless their idea of power and threat and turning them into pure imposters. In his latest project, *Natura Morta*, Jankuloski makes a series of stereographs where the focus of the object constantly levitates between the flowers, the symbol of life, and the gravestones and post-mortem photographs, playing with the iconographic and allegorical messages of this classical painting genre and presenting them with different metaphorical meaning by placing them into the actual historical moment. The decade-long photo-cycle *Neighbors* by Oliver Musović, where he documents the sociotopes of the everyday life in his own surrounding, can be compared to an actual ethnographic-anthropological study of a collective identity. With his non-expressive, factual use of the low-tech photograph, in *Neighbors 1* (1999) Musović described the small individual customs and habits of the tenants of the building he lives in, recording only

their entrance doors and the building corridors. The short and witty, yet precise textual descriptions, the usual integral element of Musović's photographs and projects, add to the plastic aspect of the social milieu picture of Dračevo, a typical working class suburbia of Skopje. *Neighbors 2 - The Yard* (2002), still lacking the obvious presence of the tenants and with a photograph in the manner of a police-criminal file, follows the traces of their anarchic, obstinate attempts to urbanize and socialize their micro-space. In his last, third, part of the cycle, *Neighbors v. 2.010* (2010), Musović records the changes of the same space, showing the fade-out of the need for socialization of this common space and its growing abandonment and lifelessness. The black/white photographs that in the first two series contributed to the documentary impression of his project, Musović now suddenly replaces with colour photographs, as he himself states, in order to "focus more on the natural processes of ageing and decay, presenting how the nature interacts with the post-socialistic urban landscape." This sudden turn of the role of the colour photograph as an expression of the degenerative social and cultural conditions is also present in the some of the accompanying comments, which used to be neutral and descriptive. This time, Musović however chooses to send a direct message taken from a graffiti written on one of the walls of his building. "The first graffiti on the building appeared some years ago. It was a single word in Macedonian - ЗОШТО? (WHY?) - written in red with the usual graffiti style letters. Don't know who wrote it, or what it actually meant. Couple of years afterwards, during the spring clean up of the yard, when the neighbours whitewashed the tree trunks for protection from insects and sunscald, they painted white paint over that graffiti. Not long after that, on the same spot a new graffiti appeared. This one, a little longer, is a phrase – ПОТРЕБНА Е ПРОМЕНА... (A CHANGE IS NEEDED...). I imagine that the author is the same as the one of the previous graffiti, as it is sprayed on the same spot and seems somewhat dialogical, argumentative. Centrally, in front of the graffiti, from a crack in the pavement an apple tree sprouted. It grew almost 2 meters high, before finally this spring during the cleaning of the yard it was cut down (the chopped tree trunk lays at the left). Yet, the graffiti was not painted over this time, although the trees were whitewashed again."

Oliver Musović, *Neighbors v. 2.010*



OLIVER MUSOVIK
Untitled, 2011

ROBERT JANKULOSKI

Natura Morta, 2012

In the *Natura morta* series Robert Jankuloski applies a conceptual use of photography as a medium, employing its expressive performance features with the aim of creating a conceptual idiom. He creates fragmented or coherent narrative sequences, conceptualising various aspects of artistic language and complex history of photography, including numerous interesting phenomena of contemporary reality. In this project, Jankuloski uses his own photographs and ones taken by other artists (i.e. Macedonian photographers who lived in the first half of the 20th century). He generates an amalgamated mixture which carries the idea that a still life image can be created with different techniques and elements of recording our reality in a documentary-like manner. Within this narrative framework, Jankuloski composes a photographic image and an expressive line, experimenting with various images of graveyards and placing the floral wreaths laid out on the graves in the focus of our attention. Flowers represent a symbol of life in the vicinity of death.

Robert Jankuloski, born 1969 in Prilep, is a freelance photographer, cameraman, educator and founder of the Macedonian Centre for Photography. He lives and works in Skopje.



ROBERT JANKULOSKI

from the *Natura morta* series, 2012



OLIVER MUSOVIK

Neighbours, 2010

www.olivermusovik.tk

The third part of the *Neighbours* series shows images from the yard of the apartment building where the artist lives, a space shared and shaped for and by the tenants. Eight years after the second part of the *Neighbours* series, he recorded the changes that occurred since, only this time more focusing on the natural processes of ageing and decay. In the first part of the *Neighbours* series he was observing his neighbours and getting acquainted with their habits and he revealed the unwritten affairs and written house rules, the rituals of people who shared the paradigm of housing, every day for many years. The communal spaces - staircases, vestibules, front doors - and the people who inhabit them, become mutually constitutive because of the reflexive process that continually changes them, both materially and mentally. Such mutations and exchanges of energies between people and places are of permanent and continual interest to the artist who transforms and presents his findings with humour, warmth, and curiosity, appreciating the ordinariness and boredom of the small stories about common people, not excluding himself from this series. In the third part of the *Neighbours* series Oliver Musovik also captures nature interacting with the post-socialistic urban landscape through his development of a highly appropriate visual way of presenting of such a concept, using low-tech, gray scale photography.

Oliver Musovik, born 1971 in Skopje, is an artist working in the field of artistic research into social relations. He lives and works in Skopje.



OLIVER MUSOVIK

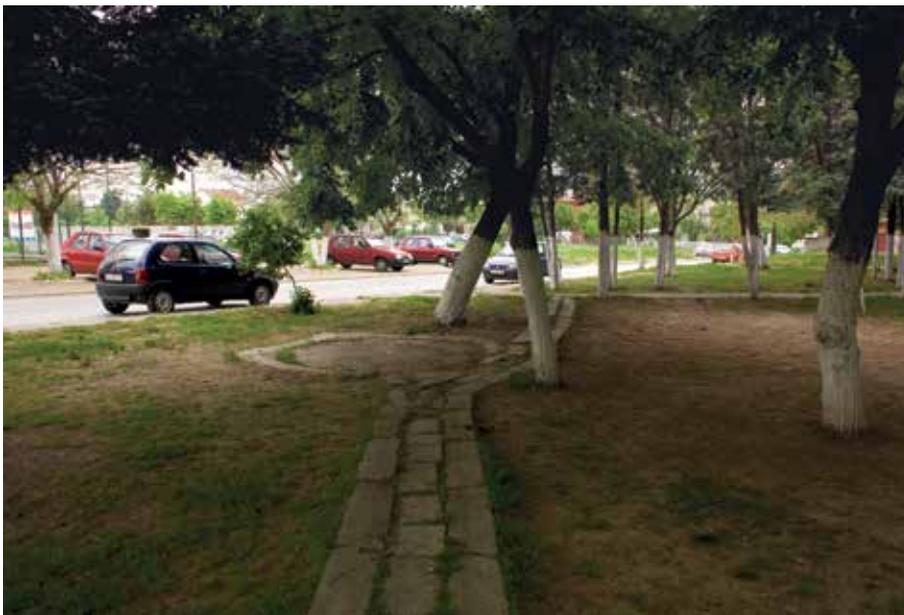
Swing, from the Neighbours series, 2010

A couple of grandfathers built the swing for the use of their grandchildren. There are no seats suspended from the cross beam, instead each of the contributing families has a seat of their own and when using the swing, they come with the seat, attach it, sway the child for a while, and when finished, take the seat off. The children grew up, and now no one really uses the swing anymore.



OLIVER MUSOVIK
Graffiti, from the Neighbours series, 2010

The first graffiti on the building appeared some years ago. It was a single word in Macedonian – ЗОШТО? (WHY?) – written in red with the usual graffiti style letters. Don't know who wrote it, or what it actually meant. Couple of years afterwards, during the spring clean up of the yard, when the neighbours whitewashed the tree trunks for protection from insects and sunscald they painted white paint over that graffiti. Not long after that, on the same spot a new graffiti appeared. This one, a little longer, is a phrase – ПОТРЕБНА Е ПРОМЕНА... (A CHANGE IS NEEDED...). I imagine that the author is the same as the one of the previous graffiti, as it is sprayed on the same spot and seems somewhat dialogical, argumentative. Centrally, in front of the graffiti, from a crack in the pavement an apple tree sprouted. It grew almost 2 meters high, before finally this spring during the cleaning of the yard it was cut down (the chopped tree trunk lays at the left). Yet, the graffiti was not painted over this time, although the trees were whitewashed again.



OLIVER MUSOVIK
Gazebo, from the Neighbours series, 2010

The gazebo built some ten years ago in the yard from scrap materials by the tenants of the building, with intention to be a place for socializing, fell as a result of its own success. Namely, the gazebo became too popular. During the day, people from the building would usually occupy it, watching over children playing in the yard, or just socializing, talking politics and sports, or playing chess. During the night the gazebo was frequented by young people (usually outsiders, not from the building) who would seat there, sometimes with alcohol, talk and laugh deep into the night, sometimes even till morning. In summer (during the summer school break) at some nights the noise coming from the yard would become excessive, to a point that the people in the building could not sleep. The tenants complained over the disturbance to the police several times, but to a little effect. The night noise became constant. After years of frustration with the situation, one night this spring, a young enraged neighbour took an axe and chopped down the posts of the gazebo. The next morning, the neighbours cleaned up the remains, leaving only the gazebo's round concrete base and the approaching path.

MONTENEGRO

“To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognise it “the way it really was” (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger. Historical materialism wishes to retain that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to man singled out by history at the moment of danger. The danger affects both the content of the tradition and its receivers. The same threat hangs over both: that of becoming a tool of the ruling classes. In every era the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to over power it.”¹

The cultural space that existed in Yugoslavia up until the early nineties had enabled a movement of information and artists and an increasing presence of artists in all major exhibitions in the former Yugoslavia also meant that there was a greater dynamism to the art scene in general. With the disintegration of Yugoslavia and dwindling of its art scenes the circumstances changed significantly causing a standstill,

or rather a communication breakdown between the - until recently - closely connected areas. As a result, there was a shutting down of scenes into micro frameworks and a sort of cultural isolation in which it was difficult to make a significant breakthrough. This affected the smaller cultural milieus most of all - such as Montenegro - that had only recently stepped in line with contemporary art trends (especially considering new media). However, the forced creation of “art in a closed society” (D. Sretenović) without the possibility of comparison could not produce any significant artistic results in the long run, so it was only natural that the scenes and environments would once again begin to interconnect. These disrupted connections were most successful re- established among emerging artists who began their artistic careers during the turbulent nineties. Those for whom the wartime events or long-term repercussions of war and widespread crisis imposed an obligation to

METAPHYSICAL AREAS OF THE NOW

Mirjana Dabović

¹ Walter Benjamin, *Eseji (Essays)*, Nolit Beograd, 1974, p 81.



VOJO RADONJIĆ
Untitled, 2003



DUŠKO MILJANIĆ
from the *Transition* series, 2009

² Želimir Koščević, *Fotografska slika*, Školska knjiga Zagreb, 2000, p 127.

³ *Ibid.*, p 106.

⁴ Žil Delez (Gilles Deleuze), *Pregovori 1972-1990* (Pourparlers 1972-1990), Karpos Loznica, 2010, p 256.

define their work towards a new social reality full of trauma, were already connected on the thematic and activist levels – the actual opening of borders and the circulation of art and the artist has since made that connection more apparent, and certainly much more human and tangible. During the nineties a period of growing interest in photography - old and new - “was restored to such a degree that we could easily refer to its new renaissance.”²

This conditionally understood ‘new renaissance’ in photography brought about the arrival of photographers whose works were more analytical and critical in their assessment of social circumstances, a characteristic that was closely fostered and much more pronounced in their expression than among the considerably greater number of artist and artistic appearances belonging to the Montenegrin contemporary art scene. Although very different in their artistic expression, Vojo Radonjić, Lazar Pejović and Duško Miljanić – photographers belonging to different generations – nevertheless share a pronounced sensibility towards detecting social trends and subtly expressing critical views, very clearly, through the tendency of using a reduced language.

Although the oldest among them - Vojo Radonjić - is no longer with us, his work is as popular and present. Radonjić began his professional and artistic development and directly influenced the evolution of photography in Montenegro in the mid eighties, at a time when photography was on the margin and activities of photo clubs - the chief propagators of photographic culture in the country - were almost entirely non-existent. Thanks to his engagement photography gradually gained its rightful place - as a field of art in its own right, and achieved greater importance as regards other, non-artistic segments of social activity. It could be said that Vojo Radonjić practically carried out the role of promoter of contemporary understanding of art photography, singlehandedly, through various professional engagements in the field of photography and through a singular relationship with the artistic milieu in which he worked. His ability to catalyse positive creative energy has become almost legendary among people who knew him and worked with him. This relation is essential for understanding photography as a universal medium whose communicative potential and ambiguity overcome determinants of formal content, purpose, or categorisation.

A significant part of his work can be linked to a group of photographers who associate themselves with “new topography” who, through their personal relationship with photography, question the crucial importance of the meaning and significance of the idea of “the decisive moment”, as “the key to creating a good photographic illusion, and constructs

a new photographic aesthetic on a process - which, with only a part of its complex structure, documents creative reflection.”³ In contrast to this notion, against which most photographs have been commonly interpreted, these artists define a new term, “the decisive space” which displaces the punctum, a temporal category, through temporary, singular situations towards a broader time frame: a continuous, recognisable state that thus determines different qualities in perception of photographic images and changes its relationship to the manner in which images arise. This principle can be detected in very many of Vojo Radonjić’s works, especially in the series of photographs taken in a suburb of Podgorica, known as the Old airport. The series of photographs was created all at once, which is very characteristic of him, and is a remarkable example of his subtle communication of ideas through the landscape genre. Absurd scenes, without a single human figure, are a record of human activity through suppressed drama.

Lazar Pejović is one of the most important representatives of contemporary Montenegrin photography. His work is closely connected to other world trends in photography. His determination to have a predetermined concept sometimes leads to his conscious sacrifice of certain (photographic) qualities of the work. “Photography does not have to speak for itself ... in fact, it’s better when it does not say anything.” This dated statement by Pejović, completely in line with a trend as regards the change in the status of photography as an artistic medium in the late eighties and early nineties, strives towards an inversion: from “photography as art” to “art as photography”, and can serve as a starting point for understanding some important aspects of his work.

The level of complexity of interpretation that photograph might contain often depends on the observer, context, the passing of time, and the tendency of the photograph to outlast the ambitions and intentions of the artist, can be another way of interpreting the artist’s view that “the photograph is best when it (apparently) does not say anything.” This attitude can be applied to a group of works from the series *Montenegrin Beauty and Metaphysical Landscapes* that indicate a new perspective on the “transitional” Montenegrin landscape. The latter indicates distinctly ambivalent attitude towards our society, which is faltering and sinking ever lower in the obsessive need for a quick and easy way to accomplish the consumerist dream in which all the fundamental social relations and values have been disrupted. This is a society in which “We are no longer dealing with a duality of mass and individual. Individuals become “dividuals”, and masses become samples, data, markets, or ‘banks’.”⁴ As the one and only value category, the market and pursuit

of profit, have transformed Montenegro – a declared ecological state - into a blurred gray area where under the auspices of economic progress, all natural resources are being ruthlessly destroyed and cultural heritage completely disregarded. Pejović's works are printed in large format, packaged in a highly aestheticized form which further undermines the status and comprehensibility of interpretation for at first glance, among the lush green mountain scenery, it might not be possible to spot the signboard with the inscription "For Sale".

Duško Miljanić's work focuses on socially engaged themes from ecology, problems of socially marginalised groups in Montenegro to changes in the cultural landscape. In recent years, through a variety of forms - photography, documentary – he has developed a distinctive artistic expression; analytical, and characterised by high level of professionalism. The majority of these works, although dealing with specific topics, can be interpreted in the context of the consequences of the transitional processes,

still very present in the social climate and (cultural) landscape of Montenegro. The explicitly named *Transition* series is part of a larger collection of works that make reference to transitional fractures from different angles – fractures that in some sense, still resonate through the Balkans. The dark atmosphere, like a scene from a post-apocalyptic landscape, affect us poignantly and directly with its uncontrived gloom and eerie emptiness of devastated areas.

The specific "rhetoric of the image" (R. Barthes) and selected landscapes that challenge "conventional graphical models, visual and verbal language of public communication" do not come from deep provincial backwater, the margins of suburbia, but coexist at the heart of our post-transitional spaces. Since they were not only photographed in Montenegro, but also in other neighbouring Balkan countries such as Albania and Romania (which is a member of the EU), are difficult to differentiate and so can be interpreted as a reflection of the overall state of the south-eastern European (post) transitional social reality.



IGOR RAKČEVIĆ & LAZAR PEJOVIĆ
Untitled (project in public space), 2002

DUŠKO MILJANIĆ

Transition, 2009

www.duskomiljanic.com

Duško Miljanić thematic focus is socially engaged thinking, specifically in relation to ecology/rapidly spreading pollution, but also marginal social groups. In dealing with important social themes, he employs a direct approach and a succinct and sometime hermetic language. The consequences of transitional processes in the Balkans are still visible in the social climate and cultural landscape of Montenegro. Transition has been present for so long in the area that it has almost become commonplace, it has nevertheless had a strong effect on all spheres of life and has become the common destiny of all neighbouring countries for over two decades. The explicitly titled Transition series is part of a wider collection that deals with processes of transformation within our modern society, a society that strives towards the capitalist system but still carries the burden of past systems, and in some cases is not completely ready to carry out the process of change. The bleak, almost unreal atmosphere that dominates these images and motifs appear to be taken in the deep provinces but in reality they are not so difficult to locate, even on the outskirts of capital cities. They have become an almost legitimate part of "urban landscape" and are indirectly reflecting globalisation. Not only taken in Montenegro but in other Balkan countries such as Romania they can easily be perceived as a form of litmus paper for post-socialist societies which is in a permanent state of transition.

Duško Miljanić, born 1975 in Tivat, is an artist and photographer, and a member of the international photo group F8. He lives and works in Podgorica.





DUŠKO MILJANIĆ
from the *Transition* series, 2009



LAZAR PEJOVIĆ

Привет из Будвы, 2012

As an important representative of Montenegrin photography, Lazar Pejović brought significant changes in the field of contemporary photography by establishing a new canon with regard to the treatment of contemporary landscape. In his Untitled series he documented deserted landscapes marked by visible traces of human presence, while the waste of consumer society became a new "legitimate" factor of the landscape itself. These "foreign bodies" have become an inseparable part of nature and have created a new quality around which the scene is formed by creating a new aesthetics legitimised by the viewer. His predisposition towards the already planned concept is evident in his consistent application of the process, sometimes with the conscious sacrifice of some of photograph's qualities. These works do not criticize the present social climate or the devastation of the natural environment but rather present a new visual reality. His latest series of works "Metaphysical landscapes" (to which the exhibited work belong) are extremely ambivalent in that they offer the possibility of readings from different aspects: cultural, socially engaged, ecological etc. packed in a highly aestheticized form that additionally brings the position of interpretation into question.

Lazar Pejović, born 1969 in Cetinje, is an artist and professor of photography at the Faculty of Fine Arts Cetinje where he lives and works.



LAZAR PEJOVIĆ
Untitled, 2012



LAZAR PEJOVIĆ
Untitled, 2010



VOJO RADONJIĆ

Untitled, 2003

In the mid 1980s Vojo Radonjić began his professional and artistic development which has indirectly affected the development of photography, he is an important promoter of the new understanding of photography as art. His ability to be the catalyst for the development of creative energy was essential for the new understanding of the medium: as universal carrier of meanings with huge communicational potential often exceeding determinants of its formal content. The series of photographs made in suburbs of Podgorica titled Stari aerodrom (Old airport) were created in a single take, as he often did when working in cycles, and are a great example of the artist's ability to display subtle ideas through the landscape. Fences made out of plastic waste, car parts and improvised habitats made of cardboard are located in the surreal space that was created by the functional curvature of the horizon due to the curvature of the camera with a rotating lens. "The rotation of the horizon creates the feeling of the rotation the planet itself, we feel its diameter, its silent moving" which is enough to relocate landscapes, to make them universal, giving them the status of a representation of the world we live in. In the complete absence of human figures these absurd scenes and their hidden drama are the only evidence of a human presence. This terrible (and poetic) constellation is expressed with unusual and altogether unexpected elegance and serenity, without any undertone of judgment or call to act.

Vojo Radonjić, born 1963, was a photographer, artist and educator in Podgorica. He passed away in 2005.





VOJO RADONJIĆ
Untitled, 2003



SERBIA

Photographers and curators have strived to improve the status of photography within contemporary Serbian art from the middle 1980's onwards. It was the establishment of the *New Media Collection* in the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade, hosting the first large photo exhibitions in the 1970's that played a key role in the promotion of photography – at that time based on solid theoretical ground, with fully trained photographers and serious production – and it is from that time that we can actually begin to talk about a developing photographic movement. This period is characterised by a number of photographs that are the only testimonies and documents of concept-related issues across former Yugoslavia. Conceptual art opened the door to photography,¹ whilst photography, thanks to the principles formulated by conceptual artists, originated from formalist and aesthetic principles promoted by modernism. It was at this time that

photography began to break free from the idea of an autonomous artwork and started drawing relations to a broader social context and a new reality. Paradoxically, only in the 1990s and the first years of the 2000s has photography become a medium equivalent to painting and sculpture. Over the last two decades, the physical territory of the country we live in has continuously been reduced, and as a result both art space and scene underwent numerous changes. The response by artists to these changes and to the different cultural environment was either by withdrawing into their own worlds of individual realities or by trying to build up their position in a broader context. Through changing economic conditions, allied to the fact that digital photography doesn't require a large investment, together with other developments in photography the photographic art scene managed to make the largest shift.

CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY IN SERBIA

Saša Janjić

¹ Liz Wells, *Photography*, Belgrade 2006.



MILAN ALEKSIĆ

from the *Beautiful Houses* series, 2007-2008



VIKTOR ŠEKULARAC
Untitled, 1998-2004

Digital media, in particular digital photography, opened up a whole new field of activity mainly because it provided new possibilities and so facilitated and popularised photography. On the other hand, over the last two decades we have witnessed a decentralisation of a formerly monolithic socialist education system, i.e. the establishment of a larger number of private schools and academies that implemented modern curricula and contributed to the formation of a critical mass of artists who generated something that might be called „a new photographic movement“. This new generation is the first that didn't have to defend and explain the status of photography, and was free to „recycle the new transitional reality“² through their art.

New Generation

The selection of young photographers from Serbia provides one view of the new photography that developed over the last twenty years. The movement we refer to is not centred around just a few artists

or a single exhibition venue. It is primarily a group of individuals who work in divergent directions and often from opposite perspectives. Their poetics and approaches to photography are very different but it is this very difference that is interesting, both as a phenomenon as well as a feature that gives the Serbian photographic movement a specific character.

The photographs of Viktor Šekularac were produced immediately before and after the October 5th protest of 2000 (the mass protest against Milošević held in Belgrade) and presents the artists' reaction to Milošević's Serbia as well as to the changes that followed. His work gives an insight into a generation growing up in a period of constant crisis and war. His approach is direct, frank, sometimes naive but extremely innovative. Viktor's work is constantly balancing between two extremes; rough and coarse snapshot photography on the one side and highly aestheticized works produced in the style of advertising photography on the other. The reality of Viktor's photographs reflects a view on the world as seen through the eyes of a new lost generation.

² Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, Belgrade 2009.



IVAN PETROVIĆ
from the *Caffe Grizzly* series, 1999

³ Stevan Vuković, *Utemeljujuća vrednost prisutnosti*, catalogue of Golden Section exhibition, SKC, Belgrade, 2005.

Although a trained sculptor, Mirjana Boba Stojadinović now uses photography as her primary medium. Her field of interest is the public space in the broadest sense of the word, as well as a number of site-specific installations and actions recorded by photography. Her photographs are a review of the early 1990s to now. They balance personal and social memory, where each photograph bears a narrative charge supposed to provide an indication of numerous social collapses that occurred in the period in question. Whilst some photographs give a clear picture of destruction, others depict idyllic scenes that in their own way hide social focal points indispensable to understanding current social conditions.

The series of photographs *Golden Section* by Ivan Zupanc were taken in the surroundings of the Cathedral of Saint Sava, Belgrade. The cathedral is just one of many churches built over the last twenty-five years after the collapse of communist ideology and introduction of a clerical and nationalist discourse. The constant appearance of an intriguing object – a crucifix in completely unexpected visual contexts and everyday situations, makes the photographer reflect on his perception as well as all those mental and emotional conditions that affect him.³ Through these scenes in which religious symbols appear in the context of banal everyday life, he poses a number of questions, from theological to real-political. By employing a completely formal composition and clear deviation from direct narrative, Zupanc merely suggests answers rather than imposing them or preconditioning the primary context of their public viewing.

In the mid-1990s at the pinnacle of the xenophobic politics of Milošević's Socialist Party, the Chinese started to arrive to Serbia and at the time everybody believed it was just an episode, just a short stop on their way into the Eurozone. Soon it became clear however, that these people had come to stay and that Serbia was their new home. The Chinese have massively immigrated to Yugoslavia since 1997 following Slobodan Milošević's and his very influential wife, Mirjana Marković's visit to China. Indeed, fascinated by life in the "brotherly" communist China, she launched the idea of creating a *Chinatown* in Belgrade. One Way Ticket is a series of photographs by Milena Zarić taken in a Chinese flea market in Pančevo and the so-called Chinese shopping mall in New Belgrade's block No. 70, where most Chinese immediately started to work and sell articles produced in their former country. Milena's photographs are a sociological study,

a document of a particular time and state that reflects both the process of rapid transformation of society as well as globalisation.

Over the last twenty years, Belgrade experienced two parallel but completely opposite processes. On the one hand, several hundreds of thousands of (mainly young) people left the city, whilst on the other hand far more people arrived from various war zones. From a demographic and urbanistic perspective Belgrade experienced a total transformation into a deranged metropolis enclosed within its local framework. The *Belgrade(r)* series by Goran Micevski produced in the last five years investigates specific parts of a city that are changing, and are also the result of these changes. As someone who lives there and has a specific view of the city, Micevski records a multitude of phenomena; he intervenes, he quotes and draws parallels. By directly intervening in both venues and photographs alike, the artist gives additional emphasis to the absurdity of some phenomena and situations that are on the edge of being performance.

Paula Muhr in her series *On Show*, records the relics of time passed; the windows of old workshops, the newsstands and all those objects that do not fit in the context of "modern and progressive". Indeed, the prevailing economic conditions were most evident at a visual level and they hugely affected the social and cultural milieu. The transition process the entire region is subject to, provides an abundance of material and events, a unique visual archaeology to be recorded by an artist with a camera. Comic and sometimes ironical, her photographs tell a forgotten story that profoundly penetrates into the identity and spirit of the time.

The artistic body of work of Ivan Petrović presents a view on various aspects of life in Serbia after 1997. Sometimes more sometimes less critical but always engaged in the futile differentiations between "collective history and private memory". He documents, comments and records this new social reality which is somehow a motor and focus for his photographic interest. He participates in most of the events that he photographs, and the artist's narrative is an attempt to articulate a social discourse which is often left on the margins of current social events.

Grown-up in a time of crises and war, these photographers have a view of the world that is unique and somewhat different. They don't close their eyes to the topical processes of globalisation and the disintegration of subjectivity, and their activity constantly draws attention to the need to invent

new perspectives for presentation and communication. At the moment when art is suffocating under the burden of globalisation and excessive commercialisation, it is inspiring that the youngest generation of photographers preserves this critical attitude and tries to function in a system that transcends narrow local boundaries.

In the work of these photographers, the perception and articulation of the world around us demonstrates a process of constant revisiting

of art within social systems full of faults and inconsistencies. Through various processes of deconstruction and de-contextualisation, the new generation of Serbian artists re-codifies and identifies all the protagonists of such a system. They pose questions on particular visual and sociological phenomena as a base for their work, which is sometimes conceived as a direct provocation to a new social system cuddled in consumerist ideals and numerous stereotypes.



IVAN ZUPANC
from the *Golden Section* series, 2006

GORAN MICEVSKI

Belgrade(r), 2007-2012

goranmicevski.wordpress.com

After the break up of Yugoslavia the former capital Belgrade became a localised Serbian metropolis and went through tremendous changes during past 20 years. Decay of urban infrastructure, demographic movements and war in 1999 resulted in obvious transformation of urban structures. Belgrade population has grown during the post federal period and, as the biggest city in the country, it has maintained a strong urban (sub)culture that reflects and uses the new situation to fuel its creativity. The *Belgrade(r)* series of photographs, made over the past five years, explores specific parts of the city marked by ideological and economical transition. Rather than following a premeditated, clearly defined idea the artist presents us with a heterogeneous mixture of thoughts and problems that have been occupying his attention. The common denominator is the city of Belgrade – in the sense that it is a unique geographical and spiritual place and so inevitably affects our every action and situation. These photographs could not have been made anywhere else but here, or, to be more precise, they could not have been made by anybody but a person from there. However, there are no specific landmarks or distinctive urban sites featured: what connects all these works is a particular sense of the madness of life and madness of »endurance of life« in this place. Goran Micevski, born 1977 in Belgrade, is a visual artist who lives and works in Belgrade.



GORAN MICEVSKI

The Flood, from the *Belgrade(r)* series, 2007-2012



GORAN MICEVSKI
Graffiti, from the *Belgrade(r)* series, 2007-2012



GORAN MICEVSKI
The Tide, from the *Belgrade(r)* series, 2007-2012

PAULA MUHR

On Show, 2002-2007

www.paulamuhr.de

The images of shop windows, store entrances, kiosk fronts and other similar objects are result of my long street walks in various Balkan cities. The chosen windows are remnants of an era that has already ended and as such, are also gradually disappearing in the process of being redesigned. Deprived of their primary functional value, due to their out-datedness and rather quaint aesthetics, these old shop windows become non-places, metaphors of a society in rapid transition and objects of nostalgic investment. The strangeness of their design, the disparity of elements which are on show and the constant introduction of objects which are almost always comically out of place (the ubiquitous pots with plants) endow them with a specific visual identity. Some of them are empty, yet others are crammed with not only objects for sale but also with objects of purely personal value to the owners. These windows function as stages, often additionally accentuated by the theatrical way in which they are lit up at night. Owing to their kaleidoscopic quality and their transient nature they possess a specific narrative potential; they tell multilayered stories of the cities and their inhabitants.

Paula Muhr, born 1977 in Belgrade, is a visual artist working mostly with photography. She lives and works in Berlin.





PAULA MUHR
from the *On Show* series, 2002-2007

IVAN PETROVIĆ

Documents, 1997-2008

ivanpetrovic.wordpress.com

For the past several years, Ivan Petrović has been following and documenting situations in his immediate surroundings. His auto-curatorial Documents project brings together fragments of twelve different series of photographs representing a dynamic compilation of his intimate life as well as a view on different aspects of life in Serbia during this period. This photographic view is sometimes more, and sometimes less critically directed, but it always deals with futile differentiation between “collective history” and “private memory”. In both scale and consistency this body of work strives to provide an extensive archive of the artist’s life: every-day life of students in Belgrade, scenes from his hometown of Kruševac, and his unwitting two-month presence in Kosovo as a soldier in 1999, during the the period of NATO bombardment of Serbia. The series raises a number of questions about the phenomenon of the archive, photographic truth, and photography as testimony.

Ivan Petrović, born 1973 in Kruševac, is a freelance photographer, artist, and co-founder of Centre for Photography (Belgrade). He lives and works in Belgrade.



IVAN PETROVIĆ

from the *Vitak* series, 1999



IVAN PETROVIĆ
Dorothea's Swimming Pool, 2003

IVAN PETROVIĆ
from the *Suspicious Behaviour* series, 2008



MIRJANA BOBA STOJADINOVIĆ

New Passage, 2009–2011

Although a sculptor by training Mirjana Boba Stojadinović uses photography as her primary medium. Her field of interest is the public space in a broader sense of its meaning as reflected in a number of site specific installations and actions which are documented in photographs. The New Passage series of photographs represent a review of a period of the 1990's balancing between personal and collective memory. Each photograph carries the narrative tension that generally indicates a number of the social changes and collapses that occurred during this period. Through photographs one can guess and anticipate various moments: they are neither day nor night, dusk or dawn. Although some photographs give a clear picture of destruction and decay, others show idyllic scenes which in turn hide social tumult.

Mirjana Boba Stojadinović, born 1977 in Belgrade, is an artist working in various media. She lives and works in Belgrade.



MIRJANA BOBA STOJADINOVIĆ

Renovated building of Central Committee of Communist Party as Ušće Trade Centre in the Evening Sky, from the New Passage series, 2009-2011



MIRJANA BOBA STOJADINOVIĆ

The Day After Madonna's concert in Ušće, Dismantling of the Stage and Seats, from the New Passage series, 2009-2011

MIRJANA BOBA STOJADINOVIĆ

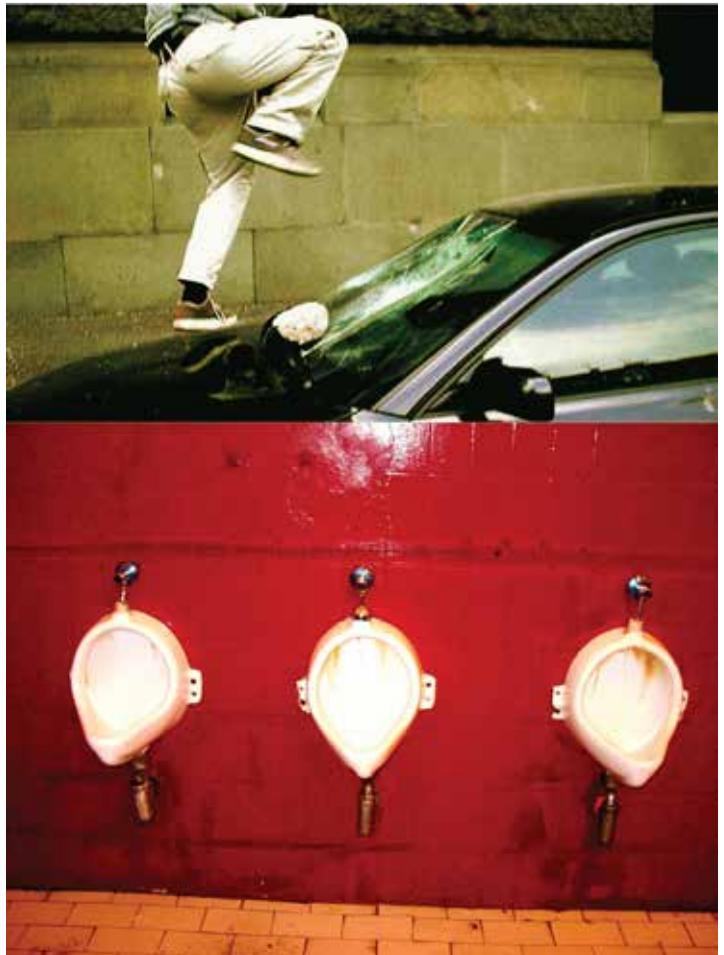
In the Background Museum of Contemporary Art, Exhibition Opening, from the New Passage series, 2011



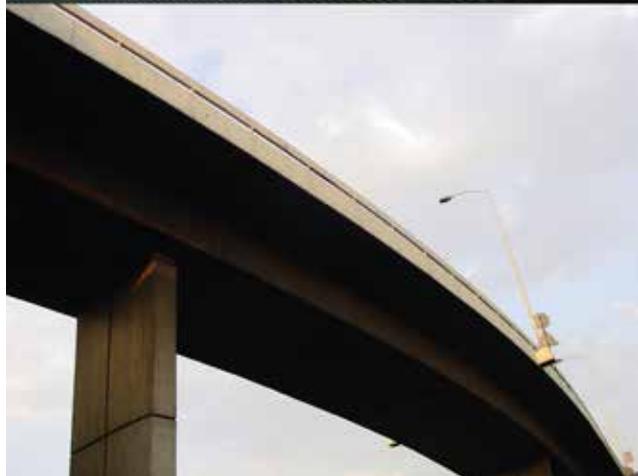
VIKTOR ŠEKULARAC

Untitled, 1998-2004

Photos of Viktor Šekularac were taken immediately before and after the 5 October (2000) events and represent artist's immediate reaction to Milošević's Serbia, and the transition that followed. Through his work we follow a generation that grew up in a situation of constant economical crisis and war. His approach is direct, honest, sometimes naive, but very innovative. Victor's work is constantly balancing between the two extremes: on the one hand he shows rough, raw, snapshot images, while in the other extreme he tries to achieve pure and cleansed aesthetic in a manner of advertising photography. The reality of Šekularac's photographs reflects the views of the world seen through the eyes of a so called lost generation. Viktor Šekularac, born 1980 in Belgrade, is a professional photographer and freelance artist. He lives and works in New York.



VIKTOR ŠEKULARAC
Untitled, 1998-2004



MILENA ZARIĆ

One-way Ticket, 2004

During the mid 1990s at the height of xenophobic policies pursued by Milošević's Socialist Party, many people from China started migrating to Serbia. Everybody in Serbia thought that was only a chapter of a story, a stop over on their way to the EU. After a few years it became clear that these people came to stay and that Serbia had become their new homeland. It is estimated that Serbia legitimately accepted about 100,000 Chinese people as citizens in accordance with an agreement of the two friendly countries and the two communist parties, the Serbian JUL and the Communist Party of China. One Way Ticket is a series of photographs taken by Milena Zarić in Pančevo flea market and in New Belgrade Block 70, in the so called Chinese shopping mall, where the vast majority of Chinese people began to work immediately selling goods from their former country.

Milena Zarić, born 1976 in Belgrade, is an artist working mostly with photography. She lives and works in Belgrade.





MILENA ZARIĆ
from the *One-way Ticket* series, 2004



IVAN ZUPANC

Golden Section, 2003-2006

The Golden Section photographic series was taken around Vračar Plato and the St. Sava Church in Belgrade. The constant presence of the cross, an intriguing mystical object, in completely unexpected visual contexts and its appearance in banal, everyday situations inspired the artist to rethink the state of his perception, as well as the mental, affective and emotional states that facilitate it. Displaying images that seem to be symbols of faith within the banality of everyday life raises a number of issues, from traditional ideas of theology to daily politics. Having used straight formal composition and clearly deviating from direct narrative, Zupanc only suggest the answers, however, he doesn't impose them as normative.

Ivan Zupanc, born 1980 in Belgrade, is a freelance photographer, cameraman and artist. He lives and works in Belgrade.





IVAN ZUPANC
from the *Golden Section* series, 2003-2006



SLOVENIA

Landscape holds a hallowed place in Slovene art history, particularly in regard to landscapes within *Slovene Impressionism*, which to a degree might be considered a significant element in the formation of a Slovene national identity. Unlike the art of Rihard Jakopič, Ivan Grohar, Matija Jama and Matej Sternen, all of which has long been placed on a pedestal within Slovene art, the special role of the originator of Slovene art photography, August Berthold (1880-1919) – the so-called *fifth impressionist*¹ – has not been given the attention it deserves. With his photograph *The Sower* (1906), he created the ultimate iconic image that in the following years, together with Grohar's homonymous painting entered the collective memory of the Slovene nation.² In his photography, Berthold was a pictorialist, which at the time placed him amongst the most progressive European artists. However, contrary in particular to the American pictorialists, he depicted mainly rural life and his approach to rural motifs was to a degree socially engaged. Thus he might be considered the pioneer of a movement that has - with artists such as Peter Kocjančič, Marjan Pfeifer, Stojan Kerbler or Jože Suhadolnik – been highly significant in Slovene art photography to this day.

To add a broader historical and anthropological perspective to the *Aftermath* project, attention should be drawn to the oeuvres of other artists from

the history of Slovene photography. Indeed, these works reflect social and cultural changes in specific milieus during turning points of history. The photographic documents of a rural way of life, illustrating various activities and trades, are held mainly at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum,³ whilst documents of the period after World War Two can be found in particular at the National Museum of Contemporary History where a special place is given to the work of the photographer Edi Šelhaus. From 1945 to 1955, Šelhaus created a photographic mosaic of the city of Trieste, and can be considered the most consistent "portraitist of the city" at that time. A similarly explicit topographic and thematic testimony of the time, and one characterised by the artist's distinctive aesthetics, is that of Stojan Kerbler, one of the most expressive art photographers of the second half of the 20th century. The subject of his work is defined by rural life in Haloze area and the everyday life of industrialisation at the aluminium plant in Kidričevo, topics to which he remained faithful during three or four decades of creativity. A nostalgic aesthetic and the somewhat archaic atmosphere of his photographs add to the notion of timelessness and immobility, which is an aesthetic dominant within photography of the period.

However, the outbreak of dramatic historical events in the 1990s started similarly dramatic shifts in the

THE SOWERS OF SOCIALLY ENGAGED IMAGES

Miha Colner & Dejan Sluga

¹ This is how he was first referred to by Dr Sarival Sosič at the exhibition *Slovene Impressionist and Their Time 1890-1920* at the National Gallery of Slovenia.

² After all, this image has become one of the selected national motifs of the common European currency.

³ Amongst others, the collection of the architect and photographer Rado Gregar (1893-1962), in particular his photographs on architecture that give us an insight into the changes in rural and countryside architecture. Simultaneously they testify to



MARIJA MOJCA PUNGERČAR

Jutranjka Brežice, from the *Closed Textile Factories in Slovenia* series, 2003-2007

the habits and customs of the majority of Slovene population in the period 1939-1960 which was also the time of epoch-making social changes.

position and approach of art photographers. The change to the social and economic system, the disintegration of Yugoslavia and consequent wars in the 1990's radically affected the process of change evident in the environment. The *Aftermath* project related to these circumstances through research by engaged photo documentation of these social and economic shifts both in Slovenia, as well as in other post-Yugoslav countries. The project focused on images of urban and rural landscapes, significantly different after 1991 from that perpetuated by earlier works; post-1991 photography documents industrialised, and predominantly urbanised spaces, but no less intensely marked by the spirit of the time.

Through the works of selected artists, the transition years in Slovenia are related to other territories of former Yugoslavia that – either due to the uncontrolled economic processes, or the several-year-war – changed even more dramatically. The Slovene story of transition is characterised by an ideological shift, the decay of industry, the commercialisation of public space, the privatisation of public property, a material segregation of society and – last but not least – disappointment for an ever increasing number of people. As articulated fellow travellers, the Slovene artists that make up part of the *Aftermath* project systematically followed various phenomena of social change. They all happen to be born between 1960 and 1970 and therefore belong to the generation that experienced both socio-political systems, making them even more aware of any changes in the cultural landscape. Hence their approach has every reason to be “engaged,” whilst simultaneously being aesthetically and conceptually well thought-out and explicitly contemporary.

With the re-introduction of capitalism in Slovenia, the industrialisation process employed a reverse logic – instead of additional expansion implied by the capitalist spirit, industry imploded, companies closed one after another and large industrial complexes became artefacts of history and archaeology. As a photographic witness to this process, Antonio Živkovič, through a series of devastated industrial scenes significantly completed the art form. With series such as *En Fas*, *Chimneys*, *Water Towers*, *The Doors*, *Night Shift* or *Reconstructions*, he created a fundamental topography of the Slovene industrial landscape, and one that is changing and vanishing in front of our eyes.

The “cultural landscape” and its significance in the context of national identity is the focus of Bojan Salaj's work. He started the *Interiors* series some years ago and it has been a “work in progress” ever

since. Salaj is interested in symbolic and semantic functions of the subject; his pictures instigate a reflection on the significance of the illustrated localities/spaces and their historical, national and cultural functions. Through photography, the artist offers his reflection on cultural phenomena, and he addressed the wars in the Balkans in a similar manner, mainly through their media representation. He created a series of photographs based on TV news with the meaningful title *Snapshots* (1994). The “televisionisation” of death was the ultimate confirmation of Yugoslavia's dissolution.

One of direct consequences of the changes in the social and economic system is an aggressive mercantilisation of the environment that promotes consumerism as the driving force of the system. The fundamental unit of such a system is advertising – inevitable in the world of electronic media and inescapable in the material urban world and ever increasing in rural environments. The billboards spreading throughout towns and rural areas like parasites were recognised by Borut Kranjc as one of the most intrusive elements of this process. Using guerrilla tactics he “caught” them whilst completely “void”; in the moments when they lack picture and spectacle, i.e. when the system has nothing to sell. Over recent years, Tomaž Gregorič has focused mainly on architectural photography; the principal iconographic topic of his series *Peripheries* is space, in its broadest sense. Interested in the anthropology of the “margin” between urban spaces and nature, Gregorič seeks the motifs of places at the periphery of the urban environment, which might be images of suburban areas, individual objects, social complexes or just urban infrastructure under construction. His eyes are to the same degree intrigued by that which is on the “other side,” where the transition between “town” and “nature” is vanishing, where the urban, architecture and culture are subsiding into the organic.

The artwork of Marija Mojca Pungerčar is closely related to the transition phenomena and attendant social implications. Focussing on her immediate surroundings, she records the changes in micro-space of small communities (*Outside My Door*, 2004) and the fatal consequences of macro-economic processes (*Closed Textile Factories*, 2003-2007). The project *Brotherhood and Unity* (2006) juxtaposes photographs of the construction of the principal Yugoslav transport artery over two different periods and systems – in 1958 and 2006. The artist presents the ideological and social shifts; voluntary work brigades built the first road, whilst the second was constructed by an underpaid migrant workforce.



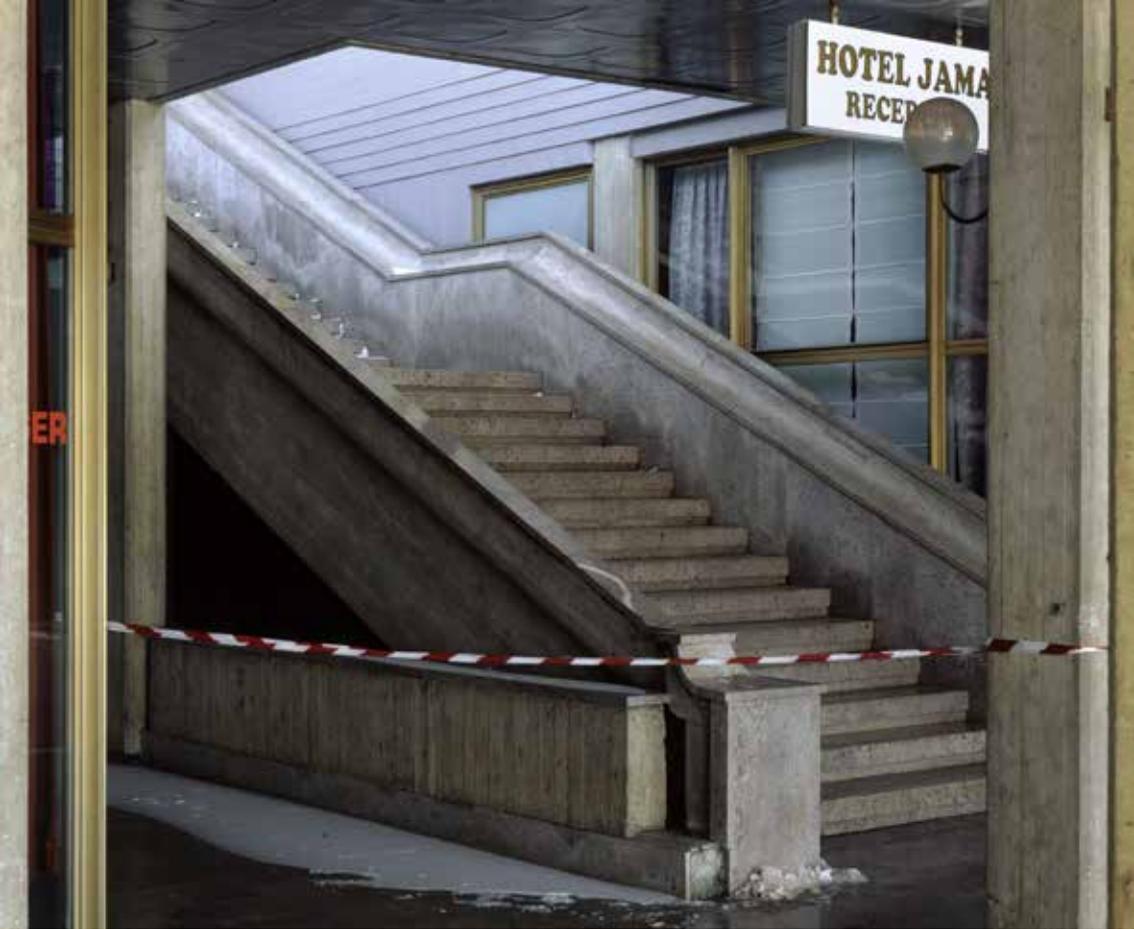
BOJAN SALAJ
from the *Interiors* series, 2004

TOMAŽ GREGORIČ

Peripheries, 2002-2006

Looking at the works of Tomaž Gregorič, the observer is faced with the motifs of urban, suburban or rural marginal places. However, the fact of particular locality is less significant than its universal appearance where the artist successfully merges naturalism and metaphysics. Documented places and situations represent a metaphor for certain fictive narratives, indicated and justified on the basis of collective cultural memory. The photographs thus show common, sometimes even idyllic image of everyday places that become horrifying for their "normality". In these often morbid and uncanny pictures one can trace the sense of unembellished reality and the universal picture of social and economical transition. Tomaž Gregorič, born 1969, is a professional photographer and an artist who lives and works in Ljubljana.





TOMAŽ GREGORIČ
from the *Peripheries* series, 2002-2006



BORUT KRAJNC

Emptiness, 2004-2008

As an artist and a photographer Borut Krajnc continuously reflects various micro or macro situations in his own environment; one of the most comprehensive photographic series is his process based project *Emptiness*, where he documented billboards, city-lights and other advertising spaces that are empty. Krajnc follows, professionally and privately, more or less evident traces of ideological and social shifts, transition from the old to the new social and political order, the expansion of the free market, the ruthless struggle for dominance and other general consequences of globalisation. His selection of 'empty billboards' as photographic motifs of public advertisement space that is seldom empty reveals absurd contradictions of today's capital ridden world.

Borut Krajnc, born 1964 in Ljubljana, is working as documentary photographer, photojournalist and an artist. He lives and works in Ljubljana.



BORUT KRAJNC

*Arja vas-Velenje Road, Velika Pirešica, 25 April 2007, from the *Emptiness* series, 2004-2008*

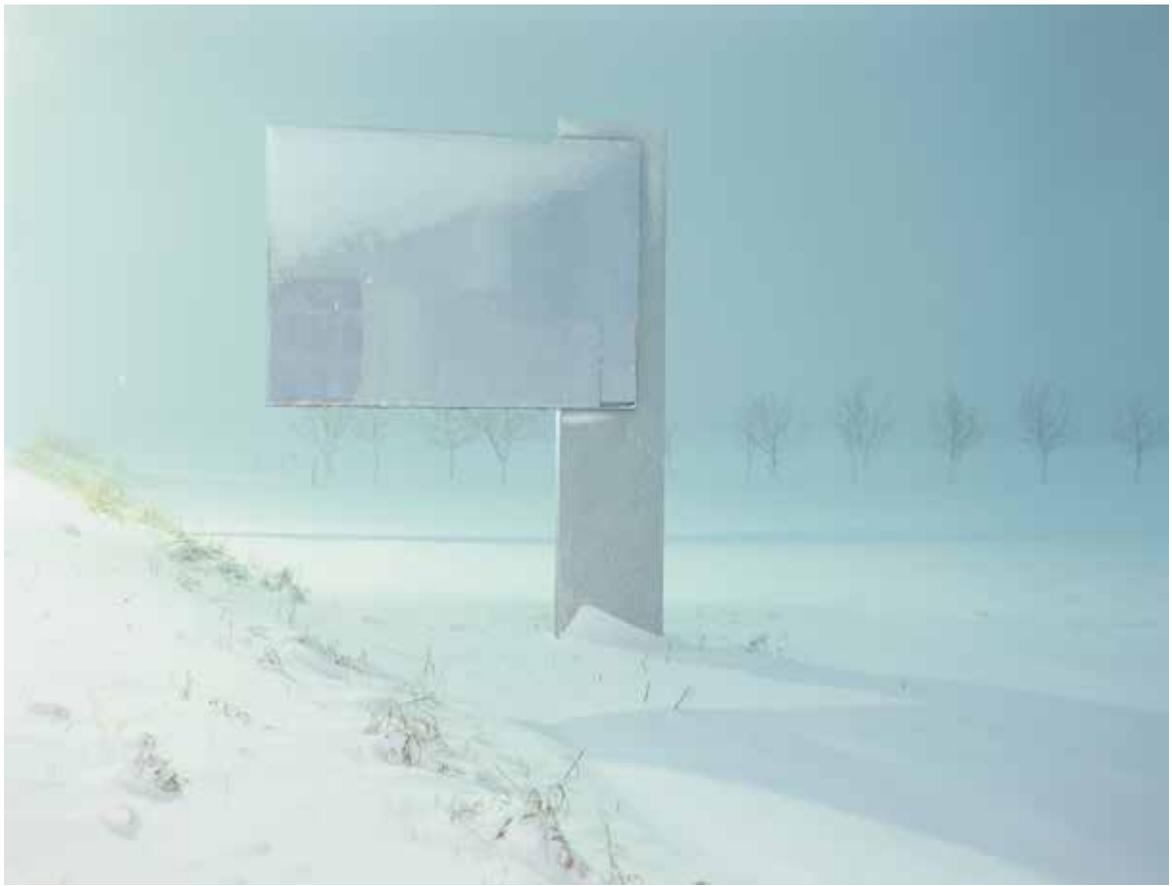


BORUT KRAJNC

Podutiška Road, Ljubljana, 30 April 2008, from the Emptiness series, 2004-2008

BORUT KRAJNC

Stane Žagar Road, Kranj, 25 January 2007, from the Emptiness series, 2004-2008



MARIJA MOJCA PUNGERČAR

Brotherhood and Unity, 2006

www.3via.org

As one of the socially engaged artists in the Slovenian context Marija Mojca Pungerčar has been widely documenting the immediate consequences of economical and social transition in Slovenia with projects such as *Outside My Door*, *In Search of Closed Textile Factories in Slovenia* and *Brotherhood and Unity*. The latter is based on found photographs taken by the artist's father, an amateur photographer, and paired with her photographs of exactly the same locations some 40 years later. Double images are presented in matching diptychs. The artist focuses on the photographs of the construction of the famous Road of Brotherhood and Unity, the main traffic route in former Yugoslavia. In the 1950s and 1960s the road was initially built by young volunteers, the reconstruction of the road into the highway in the 2000s that followed was built mainly by underpaid, migrant labourers from the former Yugoslav republics and other Eastern European countries. Pungerčar depicts and compares different moments in history determined by different ideologies; she documents the same place at different periods.

Marija Mojca Pungerčar, born in Novo Mesto, is a visual artist who lives and works in Ljubljana.



MARIJA MOJCA PUNGERČAR
from the *Brotherhood and Unity* series, 2006



BOJAN SALAJ

Snapshot, 1992

The inertia and oblivion which masks mass media images we are exposed to on a daily basis make us immune to everyday scenes of death and disaster. Bojan Salaj's Snapshot series confronts indifference, striving to make at least some of these scenes captured from a TV screen, a part of a collective visual memory by preserving them in an archive of reflections worth remembering. The principal subject of the majority of them is unimaginable death; yet this has created a powerful flow of images and visions throughout history. The pictures of violence, injury and death, together with other television screen images captured by the artist, attempt to redefine our view of those scenes we would otherwise avoid, and which – due to their tele-visual omnipresence – engender some sort of emotional apathy and indifference within us. In 1992, when the series began, the photographs were taken in the comfort of artist's living room, as a process of photographic documentation of the TV images. This was the beginning of the era of total domination of the electronically - mainly TV - mediated images, that coincided with the war in former Yugoslavia. In spite of his relative distance from the fighting Salaj has carefully followed and documented the events and thus, in his powerlessness, directly reacted on the mass media representation of death and disaster. Bojan Salaj, born 1964 in Ljubljana, is a photographer at the National Gallery of Slovenia and an artist. He lives and works in Ljubljana.





BOJAN SALAJ
from the *Snapshot* series, 1992



ANTONIO ŽIVKOVIČ

Reflection of a Memory, 2001

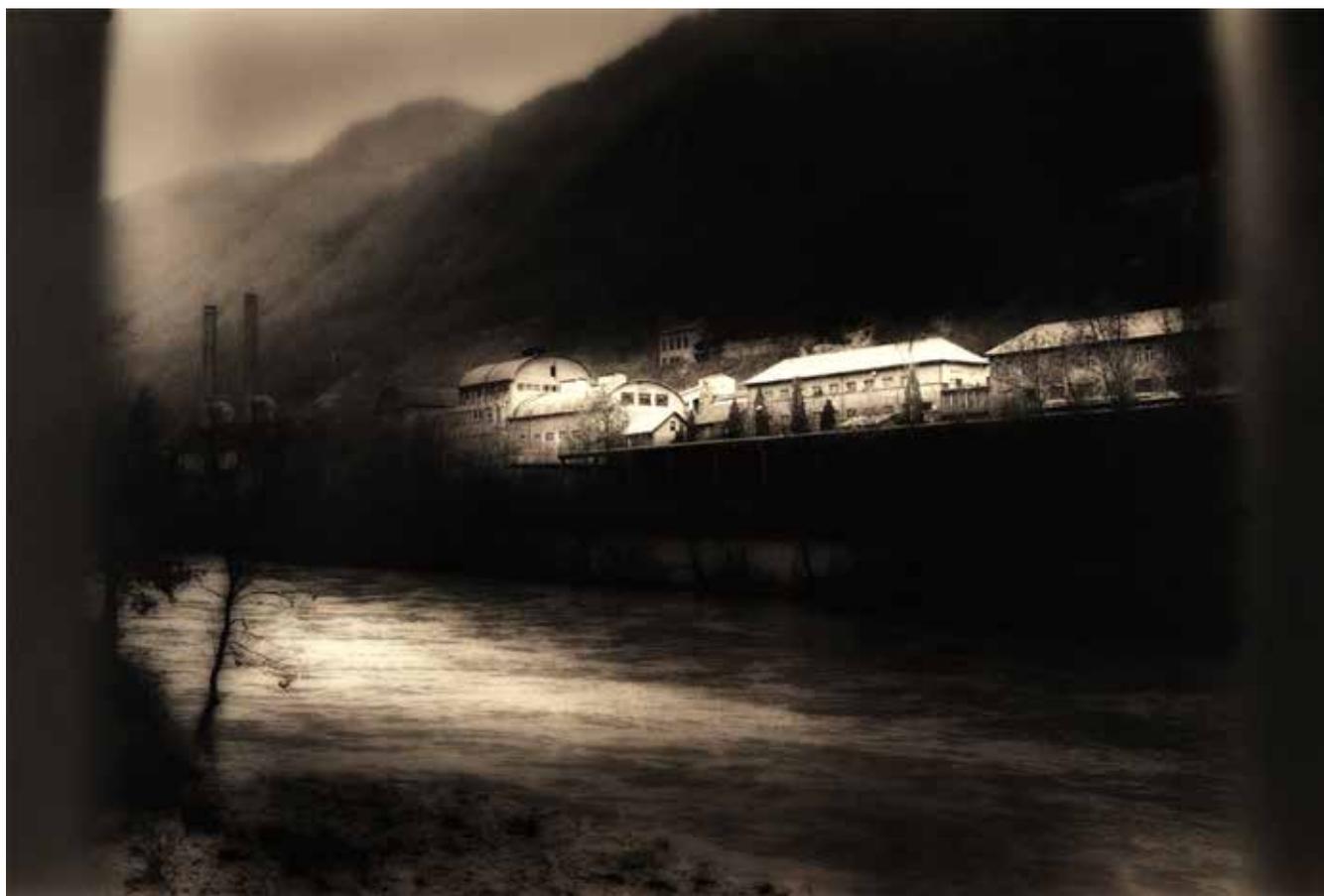
Since the early 1990s Antonio Živkovič has continued to build upon his specific body of work whose focus is the detailed and deliberate documenting of slowly vanishing era of local history. Devoted to the mostly abandoned and devastated industrial architecture, he commemorates the not so distant past when heavy industry was the driving force of local economy. Živkovič comes from Trbovlje, which was for over a century one of the most important industrial towns in the area, his personal connection to the place thus contains a critical though melancholic reflection of postindustrial economic transition which coincided with the collapse of the socialist system and brought the complete change of overall values in society. The Reflection of a Memory series deals with the artist's personal relation to his hometown and with his own memories reflected in the broader socio-political context. It is the intimate topography of the town's urban structures marked by a number of reminiscences from the past.

Antonio Živkovič, born 1962 in Novo mesto, is a freelance photographer an artist who lives and works in Ljubljana.





ANTONIO ŽIVKOVIČ
from the *Reflection of a Memory* series, 2001



Sotto l'Alto Patronato del Presidente
della Repubblica
*High Patronage of the President of the
Italian Republic*



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AFTERMATH

Changing Cultural Landscape

Pordenone Arte Contemporanea
Spazi Espositivi Via Bertossi
27 ottobre 2012 – 20 gennaio 2013
27 October 2012 – 20 January 2013

Promosso da / *Promoted by*



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