



personal spaces

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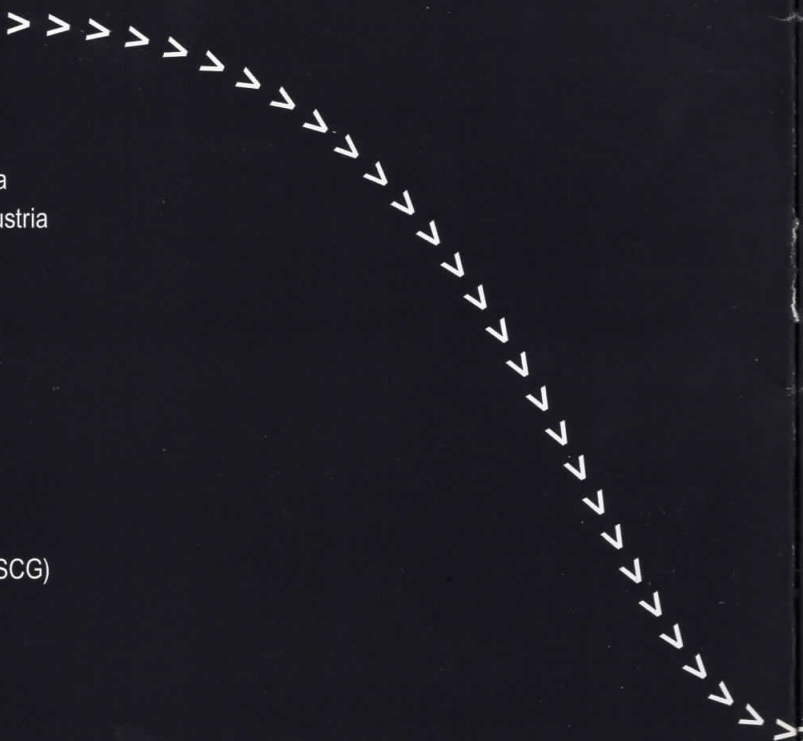
Pavelhaus Laafeld / Pavlova hiša Potrna
Bad Radkersburg / Gornja Radgona, Austria

ARTISTS

Lara Almarcegui (E/NL)
Filip Đorđević (SCG)
Laura Horelli (SF)
Rober Jankuloski (MK)
Danijela Mladenović and Gordana Ilić (SCG)
Dejan Spasović (MK)
Igor Toševski (MK)
Jun Yang (A)

CURATOR

Oliver Musović (MK)





There are two slightly different understandings of the notion "personal space".

One, more dominant refers to the spatial concepts like "home", implying certain ownership, exclusivity and closeness of the architectural space, in opposition to the notion of "public space" which is open and accessible.

The other concept of "personal space" comes from Psychology, and implies that the individual react to physical closeness/remoteness of others in certain determined way. People surround themselves with a "bubble" of personal space that they claim as their own, and they tend to become stressed when other people invade their "bubble." Our personal space protects us from too much arousal and helps us feel comfortable when we communicate with other people. What distance is appropriate for a particular situation, although it is somewhat a matter of personal preference, depends largely on the culturally established norms, which vary considerably from culture to culture, and in Western culture it tends to be larger. Generally, people feel uncomfortably when the distance is too large (cold) or too small (intrusive).

The works presented at this exhibition investigate both concepts and various uses of the personal space.

Oliver Musović



Lara Almarcegui (E/NL)

Becoming an Allotment Gardener

slide projection, documentation of the action and the installation, 1999-2002



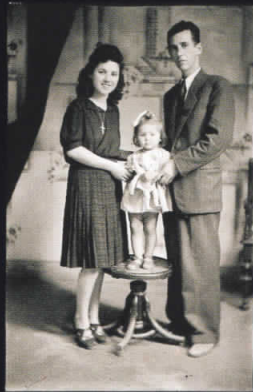
Filip Đorđević
Beggar's Eye
video, 30', 2003



Laura Horelli

Social Distances

8 color photographs on aluminum, DDI-prints, insulating Tape, 25x38cm / 25x48 cm, 1999



Rober Jankuloski

Preserving the Memories

series of black and white photos (selection), dimensions various, 2000



Danijela Mladenović / Gordana Ilić

Sisters' Love

Black and white photos, 30 x 40 cm, 2003



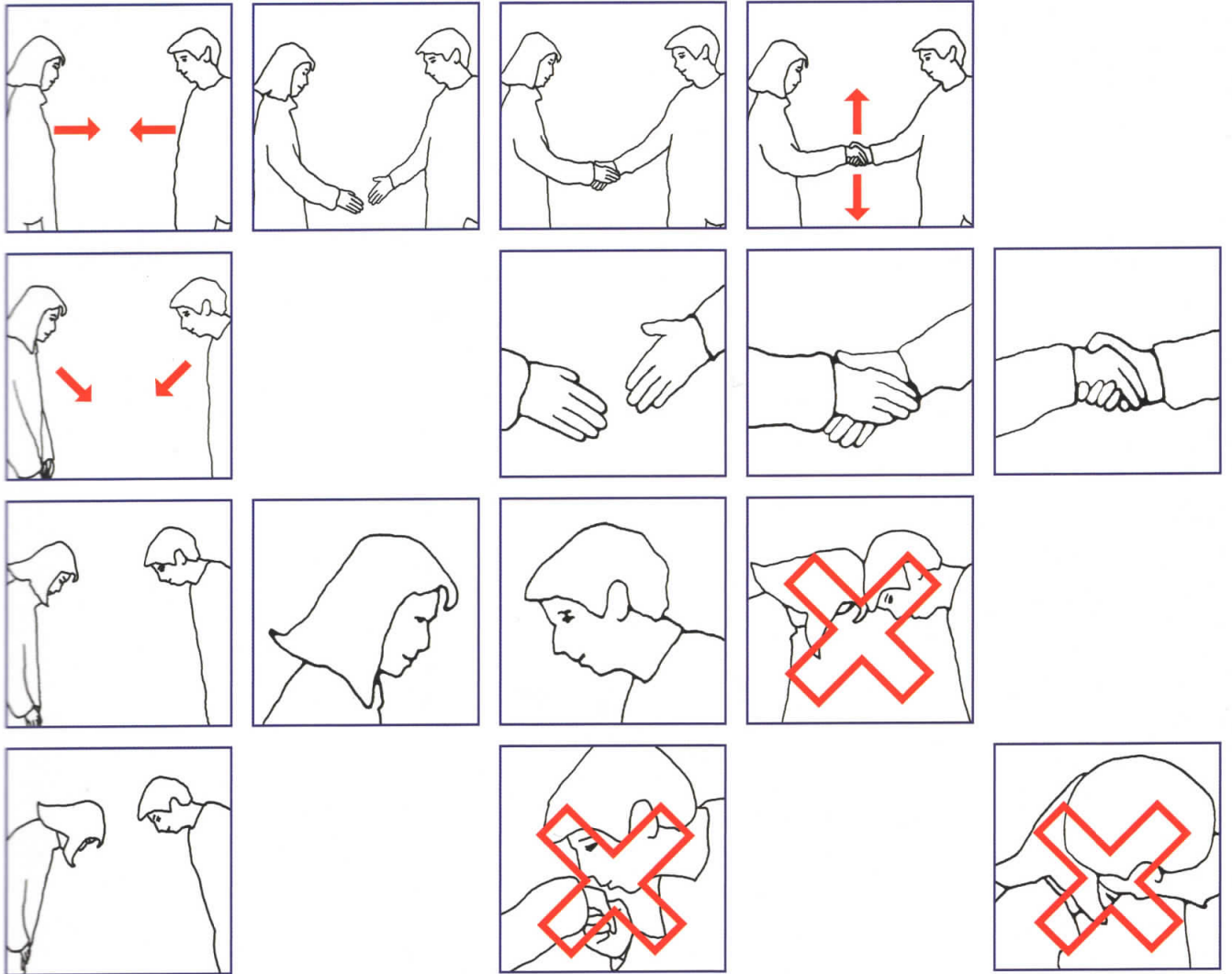
Dejan Spasović
hugging is the way of the heart
performance, 2005



Igor Toševski

Territories

documentation from a public action, 2004



Jun Yang

from...

15 Plexiglas panels, safety instruction cards, 1998/99

personalization of reality

*The thing is that reality is used as long as it does not allow
you to see the day. Imagining means allowing the imaginary
to erode a piece of reality ...*

J.P. Sartre

In modern, chaotic, and unstable time that we live in today, trends of global thinking and “*new democracies*” emphasize the idea of general and collective. This often leads to uniformity – almost in all aspects of life – towards the tendency of reduction of human freedoms and rights, replacing them with illusions about possibilities of choice.

On the other hand, this almost aggressive generalization of the world provokes the need to create something of one’s own, something strictly personal – a well protected space for solitude, contemplation and creative work. When regarding “*personal*” space, people usually think of home as an intimate habitat, marked by individuality and habits of those living in it. It is implied that this should be a space totally distanced from, and hermetic in relation to, all easily accessible public surroundings.

A somewhat different understanding of “intimate space” can be found in psychological interpretations that refer to the meaning of every individual’s space – the (in)visible aura that one emits in direct relation and communication with others. Depending on one’s temperament, situation, or collocutor, this space either opens up or closes in. When defining relations, key roles are played by cultural milieu, level of education, and social status – according to which, one can make a clear distinction between the “manners” of the West and those characteristic in the East. The risk of being too close or too distant in initial communication can be decisive in development of further relations between two individuals/groups.

This exhibition deals with the broad topic of everyday communication, and various definitions of the term “*personal*”. It represents authors of different artistic sensibilities and creative poetics, more widely showing the diversity of their approach and gives new possibilities to think about the theme which is present today. Every author, no matter how specific, examines questions of alienation and things that modern life imposes upon us – the distance and intentional (self)isolation. All of them accentuate diversity and offer possible “*solutions*”. What is making them unique are relations towards the true codes of the past, which seen from today’s distance, may seem as time when communication was more open and close.

The slide projection of **Lara Almarcegui** documents process of change in a private/public place - the allotment garden. In conditions of modern urbanization, densely populated and precisely planned cities, the allotment gardens became a specific nucleus, a special “*mental place*” that can be made individual – by

giving personal touch to the small fenced parcels. Through precise concept each separate section is a reflection of the owner, and this art project is a result of a three year experiment – development of her own allotment garden in Rotterdam.

Filip Đorđević, in the role of a beggar, approaches people on the street asking for money. With a hidden camera he records people's reaction, just like Walker Evans' "secret" photographs of passengers in subway of New York. Some give him money without thinking, others start a conversation, while some who try to ignore him, avoid even looking at him, not knowing they are being part of a testimony about the artist's action. This simple concept has the aim to document everyday street situations that can be seen in any urban milieu, but in this case it is realized directly from the point of view of the actor – the beggar himself. The role and significance of the act, combination of film frames – parallel presentation of a direct footage from material shoot by a second party – create dramatic and very dynamic impression.

With series of photographs **Laura Horelli** illustrates different types of social distances based on the Edward T. Hall's study *Hidden Dimensions*, in which he is doing a research about the subtle behavioral differences in everyday communication in the Western world. Analyzing different levels of communication, Hall comes to a conclusion that there are several types of distances – habitual norms in behavior – based on the nature of relations: intimate (0 to 45 cm), when people express intense feelings; personal (0,45 to 1,30 m), when talking and communicating with close family members; social (1,30 to 3,75 m), common in communication with friends; public (more than 3,75 m), in formal situations.

Robert Jankulovski explores the intimacy of the photo studio of Zafir Ošavkov, photographer who worked in Bitola (Macedonia) at the beginning of the last century. *"Looking at a photograph, in my mind I inevitably include the thought of that very moment, no matter how quick it was, when an object was caught without movement in front of the eyes. I transfer the immobility of today's photographs to the past moment of shooting, and this stopping is one pose"*¹

Authentic shoots of family portraits or children alone, made in romantic manner, with details and set decoration that simulates middle-class ambience – through the artist's intervention became "cropped" - reframed compositions. Focusing only on the body of the model, and thus intentionally avoiding the face with its personal qualities, emphasizing the aura of hidden, the author achieves a very "private interpretation" and creates photographs with universal meaning marked by a certain era. The personality, social status, and origin of the model have intentionally been excluded. One can see that all of the photographs have similar ambience, and almost always contain the same scenery, especially one repeating

1 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Paris, 1980

detail – small round stool– which in this new presentation is elevated to the level of a museum item. The display is conceived as a sort of parallel view. Composing original photographs with “clippings”, and setting them in two friezes, “old” in comparison with “new”, the artist creates two parallel stories that depersonalize the intimacy of one specific setting.

Danijela Mladenović and **Gordana Ilić** are promoting their friendship, an almost sisterly relation, by reconstructing a photograph from 1966. Although this is an image of a hospital room with two women – a patient and a nurse – this photo is quite opposite to the usual cold and sterile hospital atmosphere. Their poses are frontal - one stands behind the bed, the other is lying down, both looking directly at the observer. *“In a normal rhetoric of making a portrait, looking into the camera is a solemn act, means openness, disclosure of the subject’s essence. That is why the frontal position is the right one for ceremonial pictures.”*² The “nurse” is, almost protectively leaning with her arms on the rest of the bed, revealing with this gesture affection and closeness that exceeds the impersonal, almost depressive atmosphere of the hospital room and typical relations between patients and hospital staff.

The performance artist **Dejan Spasović**, who in several projects examined people’s reactions to an unexpected action, made a performance of hugging. In some cultures this is the normal way of greeting, although it mostly implies closeness. The artist acted unannounced, and the aim was to achieve closeness with strangers so as to accentuate the need for sincere and open behavior and expressing friendly feelings. However, such unexpected gesture usually provokes surprise and certain suspicion, which is an indirect result of the subconscious human need to keep its intimate space.

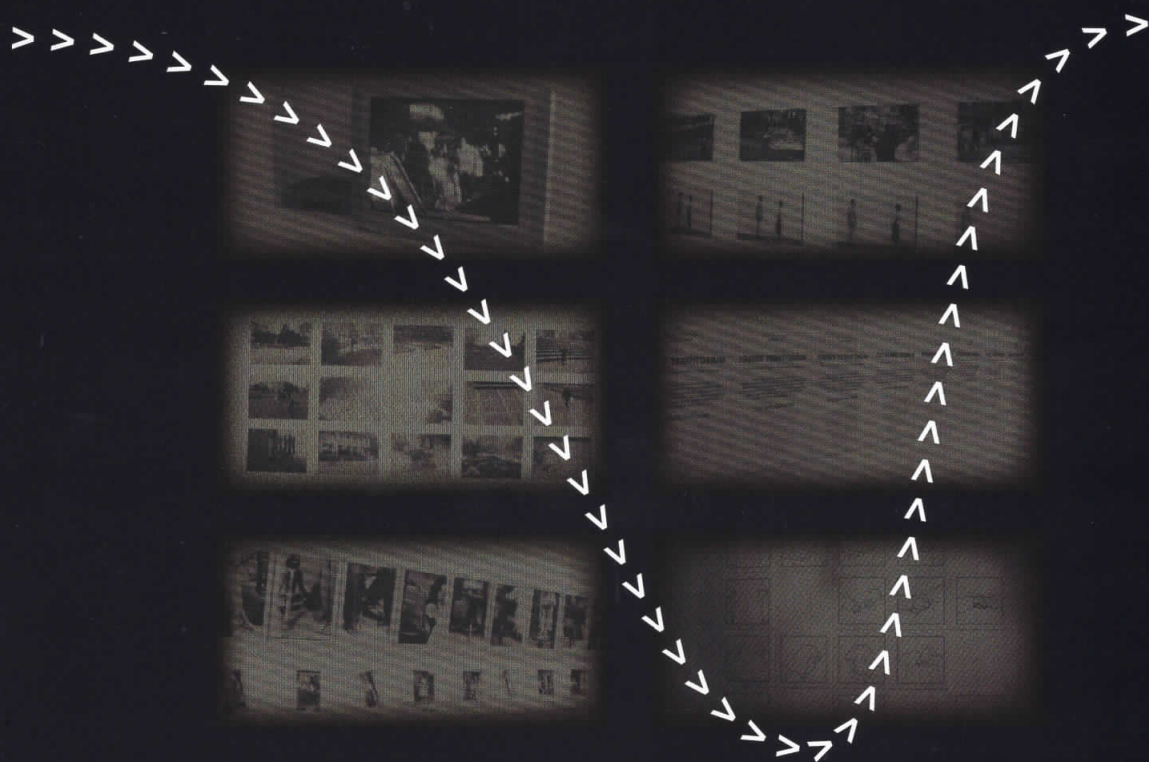
Igor Toševski claims free territories through spontaneous, performance like reactions, bringing them down to a special act. With minimalist expression, the artist draws a line on the ground that sets boundaries and temporary margins in space, like *“a quiet and reduced haiku whisper”* announcing free territories. But, by this gesture the *“life”* of the territory is not ended - as long as the margins are visible, they proclaim absolute freedom of speech and action, in which *“every word, act, or thought become autonomous conceptual acts”*. The author chooses open public places, pedestrian zones, parts of the city environment, and transforms them into particular, additionally *“free”* locations. By establishing new, specific kind of borders on the Balkans author plays a game based on mapping and creating *“personal territories”*, not with the aim to separate, but to invite all those in need for free expression.

2 Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, 1973

Jun Yang presents a series of large plates, showing pictograms that resemble the airplane safety instructions. They convey somewhat ironic commentaries on cultural differences. The author considers that it is possible to guess "from the face or gestures which country one comes from". "Safety-Cards", like "safety instructions" on how to behave in airplane during emergencies, are transformed into coded rules that reveal both, allowed and prohibited gestures in greeting. Applying cultural norms into the international language of traveling uplifts the seemingly banal everyday gestures into codes of a more meaningful vocabulary that can be easily understood everywhere.

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