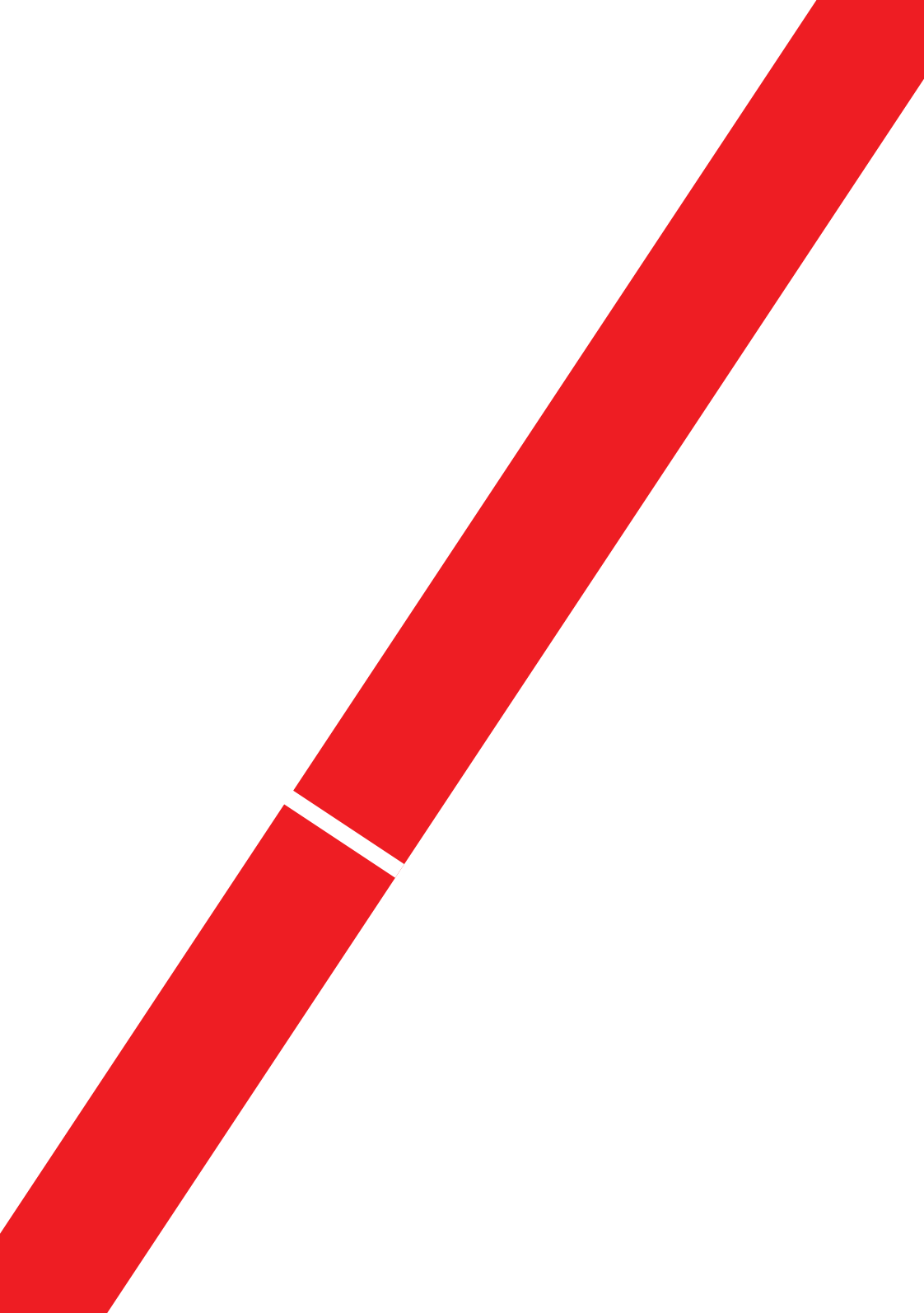




**in between states**





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*Many people have worked hard to lend significant support to the realisation of the In Between States project, which was developed in the spring of 2018.*

*Firstly I should acknowledge the support of the Scottish Funding Council's Overseas Development Award, administered as part of the Global Challenges Research Fund, which has supported project work in North Macedonia in the last two years. I would particularly like to thank colleagues in RGU's research office for their help and support with this; in particular Professor Paul Hagan, Emma Gillibrand, and Lynne Brien. I have also enjoyed significant support from friends and colleagues on the staff at Gray's School of Art.*

*I would like to thank Nuno Sacramento, Director of Peacock Visual Arts in Aberdeen, for kindly hosting the exhibition at the WorM as part of the annual programme; to Joe Coleman for his work in installing the show at the WorM; and Sally Moir and Hilary Nicoll from Look Again. The artists have kindly granted permission to reproduce their work in this catalogue. Copyright remains with them.*

*Alongside Nuno, Holly Yeoman has been integral in the delivery of this project. In Skopje, my old colleagues and friends, Bojan Ivanov, Denis Saraginovski, Slobodanka Stevceska, Igor Toshevski, all played an important part in bringing the exhibitions to fruition.*

*Finally, as always, I must thank Maja Zećo, for many things, beyond her striking design of this catalogue.*

*JB  
Aberdeen  
3 May 2019*

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# Curating In Between States

*"The old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear."* (Antonio Gramsci, Prison Notebooks)

Curating contemporary art in differing contexts, in this case between Scotland and North Macedonia, involves necessarily acts of translation. It is not up to the curator to speak for the artist, but rather to create the best possible conditions for the artists' work to be understood and to form the basis for a richer dialogue between art, audience and shifting context. Living through a time of slow systemic collapse, curating at the end of the fossil fuel era without knowing what will come after it, is to present art in a time rife with morbid symptoms.

Holly Yeoman's essay in this catalogue details the ways in which she saw the territory of North Macedonia for the very first time, and tries to fit together the relationship between there and here in a geopolitical context. It is a unique circumstance to curate a show of artists from a country whose name has changed in the process of making the show, a very recent development in my own much longer relationship with the place. I first visited what was Macedonia in 2009 and the work that I have done there has been built on a long, slow process of participatory observation, discussion, critical writing and exhibition making in the ensuing ten years.



*"Antique" and Modern,  
Central Skopje, 2015*

Contemporary Macedonian art could probably not unfairly be described as contemporary Skopje art. Aside from the efforts of individuals such as Filip Jovanovski and Ivana Vaseva in Bitola and Shtip, the practice of Mile Nichevski in Gevgelija, the remnants of Yugoslav cultural infrastructure in smaller cities such as Kičevo, Kruševo and Prilep, the contemporary art scene is mainly focused on the capital, in terms of artists, audiences, institutions, and whatever vestigial art market may be left after twenty-five years of independence.

What was “FYROM”, brought into existence after the collapse of Yugoslavia, was a state of permanent in-between-ness, a diplomatic sleight of hand that lasted much longer than anyone expected. In its first twenty five years, this fledgling state was trapped between an atrophying Yugoslav past and a confusing, hostile, corrupted present; between legitimate desires to progress into full membership of bodies such as the EU and NATO, but being blocked from doing so owing to Greek objections to the use of “Macedonia”; dealing in consequence with a painful isolation and chronic difficulty in travelling. This marked a dizzying contraction of opportunity, the fading of a world where a Yugoslav passport granted trouble free entry to most states on either side of the ideological divide; between the infrastructure of socialism and the emergence of a corrupted gangster capitalism; between attempts to build a sense of self, and attempts to have that sense of self denied; an uncertain place between periphery and semi-periphery, between the global South, and the razor-wire fences surrounding the EU club.



*Plastid Makedonija, Skopje, December 2018. Photo: Holly Yeoman*

The updated name on the map- North Macedonia- is facing an uncertain and contested future in which a politically maturing and more aware citizenry, having lived through the great upheaval attendant on the end of the Gruevski decade, are now becoming accustomed to the consequences of the recent major decision to move towards a firmly Euro-Atlanticist path of integration.

The Welsh Marxist historian Gwyn Alf Williams spoke of this process of continuous re-invention in relationship to his home country, as follows:

*"Wales is a process. Wales is an artefact which the Welsh produce, The Welsh make and remake Wales day by day, year by year, generation by generation, if they want to."*



If North Macedonia's artists and cultural workers may see recent events in part as opening up a possibility for improved working conditions locally and greater opportunities and visibility internationally, debates in Scotland are markedly less optimistic at the present uncertain moment. There is a feeling that, whatever the outcome of the Brexit process, continual cheese-paring in cultural budgets, during austerity, and the relentless instrumentalisation of much of the remaining funds to business and economic agendas, means that the Scottish cultural ecology, which has delivered way beyond what might have been expected since 1990, is at a moment of fundamental re-gearing.

There is no sign that the underlying principle since the mid-2000s of "doing more with less" will go away; cultural institutions, be they part of the nationally funded portfolio or not, face unprecedented financial pressures; whilst the quality and range of the work that can be seen in Scottish galleries in any given year remains as compelling as ever, there is anxiety that this line can be held for too much longer. It seems likely that this will lead to a series of profound questions for institutions, artists and cultural workers in the decade ahead; why are we doing this, for whom, and what are the consequences?

To be active in contemporary art, be it in Scotland, North Macedonia, or elsewhere, is to be in a permanent state of liminality, of in-between-ness. Gregory Sholette, writing in *Delirium and Resistance* (2017), develops a definition of "bare art"; in other words, a contemporary art world that has been thoroughly subordinated to the interests of capital. Sholette describes the position of the artist in the contemporary art world as follows:

*"Culture's internal aesthetic character is now manifest as so many flagrant, unconcealed and utterly ordinary attributes, so many data points, so that the desire by 1960s artists to transform their elite social position into that of a 'cultural worker' has finally been fulfilled. Today artists are simply another worker, no more no less. We might best describe this...as simply bare art."*

Contemporary artists therefore find themselves in the position, as with every other worker in every sector of the economy, of nomadism; of having to travel to take every opportunity that can be grasped, wherever that might be, whether or not there is a fee, trying to follow and build a recognisable career. The fact is that, for young artists, attempts to keep a career going is almost always now a parallel or secondary occupation to properly remunerated job(s); in both territories, the welfare state that previous generations of artists could turn to in lean financial times, exists today only in skeletal form.

It may seem a little dramatic to state this in these terms, but exhibitions now, involving younger artists, the large army of reserve labour emerging from the art academies and schools, take place against a growing general awareness of systemic collapse. In the narrow parameters of contemporary art, there is presently a perfect storm of precarity, climate change anxiety, economic uncertainty, shortening attention spans and a marked fall in audiences for art in the last two or three years. It is liminality, the anxious state of in-between-ness, that is the common thread between artist's careers, regardless of the country they happen to be developing in.



Ivana Sidzimovska, *Liminal States*, 2018 (detail). Photo: Bazho Gagovski  
Multi-Channel sound / video installation.

This is an exhibition in between two cities; Aberdeen and Skopje. In Aberdeen, three artists from North Macedonia present work in Scotland for the first time. Ivana Sidzimovska, now based in Berlin, shows perhaps the most politically engaged of the three works, a two channel video installation which takes its name from British Prime Minister May's notorious *Brexit Means Brexit* platitude.

The artist has engaged with citizens both in the South East of England and in North Macedonia to discuss the issue, using beautiful filmic imagery gathered from her interviews and travels. Whilst this work directly addresses the issue of "In Between States" in political terms, the segments from North Macedonia also perhaps serve as a gentle reminder that Brexit is something that consumes no one but ourselves here in the UK; that elsewhere in Europe, it is viewed with responses ranging from exasperation to *schadenfreude*.

Ana Lazarevska's work chooses to address the idea of liminality in very intimate terms. Her installation *Bodies of Water*, in a darkened space, is a piece which demands that the audience pay attention not only to the mechanics of her piece but also to one another, through that most elemental of sounds; the heartbeat. It is a corrective to instagram-story art, or to zombie formalism; we are obliged to slow down, to listen, to absorb in the darkened moment; a refusal of the glib glance and the half understood, quickly forgotten explanation.





Ana Jovanovska,  
*When You Think About Painting, Do You Think Something Like This?* 2018



Ana Lazarevska, *Bodies of Water*, 2018

In a similar way, Ana Jovanovska's work encourages the audience to engage and to respond with the imagery she has provided. Having graduated in printmaking, Jovanovska's developing career has developed a strong relation element through conversation and responses through drawing and her presentation here continues these themes. The idea of relational aesthetics, the constant deferment of finish in the artwork and its continual re-definition by the responses of the audience, adds a further vivid thread to the Aberdeen show.

At the end of the summer, two young Scottish artists, also represented in this catalogue, will visit Skopje to make an exhibition there, to conclude the *In Between States* project by presenting their work in a new context and working with local spaces and curators. Izzy Thomson, who graduated from the painting programme at Gray's School of Art in 2017, is an artist with a rich poetic imagination, whose painting has focused on real and imagined wildernesses; a mediation between the imaginary and the everyday. Scotland and North Macedonia have both large areas of wilderness (Mavrovo National Park and the spectacular jagged rock formations around the city of Prilep in the south of the country are amongst the most remarkable and biologically diverse areas of wilderness left in Europe).

Jack Handscombe, meanwhile, is a sculptor whose vision is rooted in materiality and the juxtaposition between the natural world and architecture. Graduating in sculpture from Edinburgh College of Art in 2018, Jack handles material and references from both high and popular culture in an interesting and engaging way. As with the exhibitors in Aberdeen, both Scottish artists have been asked to think of new work for the iteration of *In Between States* in Skopje.



This exhibition not only provides a valuable new experience for the people involved but, in keeping with all artistic exchanges, really has challenged previous understandings of the territories involved. It seems likely that the next decade will be one of endemic liminality, with all the uncertainties, anxieties and ever shifting critical debate that will result.

As the old system gives way, the new art that emerges- art made after capitalism- is likely to set aside notions of the entrepreneurial, the acquisitional, the individual, and move towards the common and the social; of the artist as worker playing a role in the communities they are rooted in, according to the demands and needs of the people they live alongside. It is in this possible future that longstanding collaborations between the cultural ecologies of two very different cities will, in time, acquire a rich and layered patina.

## Jon Blackwood

*Jon Blackwood is a reader in contemporary art and leads research at Gray's School of Art, Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen. As a curator he is interested in cultural ecologies, contemporary art and politics, and has a longstanding interest in the art of the former Yugoslavia. He divides his time between Aberdeen, Sarajevo and Skopje and is currently working on exhibition and research projects in all three cities.*



Izzy Thomson, *After Words*, Oil on Canvas, 2018



# Ana Jovanovska

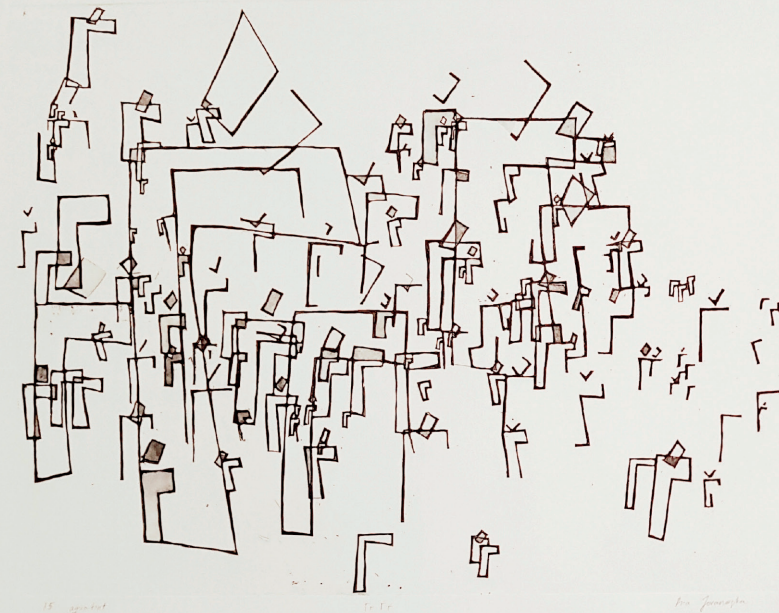
<https://www.facebook.com/artofanajovanovska/>

<https://www.instagram.com/anajovanovska/>

Ana Jovanovska received her M.A. in Printmaking from the Faculty of Fine Arts – University Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Skopje, Macedonia (2016). Upon receiving a scholarship she spent time studying abroad attending École supérieure d'arts & médias de Caen/Cherbourg in France (2013-2014).

Ana had 10 independent and more than 100 group exhibitions in Macedonia and abroad in countries such as: Serbia, Montenegro, Greece, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Romania, Czech Republic, Poland, Russia, Italy, France, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, USA and so on.

She currently works as an artist.



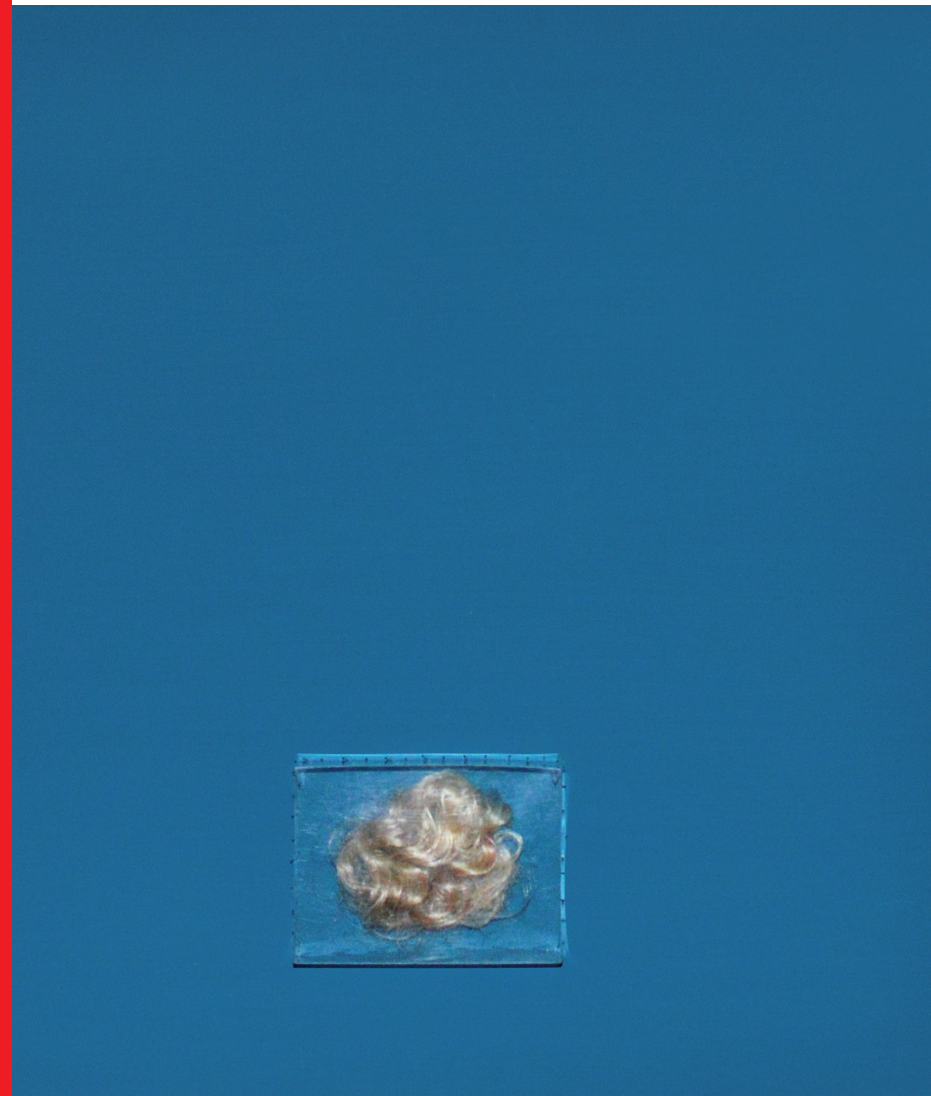
Ana Jovanovska, *Littera Abstracta*, 2018

## Important Mentions and Recognitions:

- Most Successful Graphic Work - Award Dragutin Avramovski-Gute, Macedonia (2013)
- Highest Achievement During Studies Award from the Faculty of Fine Arts, University Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Macedonia (2014)
- XI and XII Biennial of Young Artists, Museum of Contemporary Art, Macedonia (2015 and 2018)
- Grand Prix at the VIII Youth Spring Salon, Multimedia Center National Gallery of Macedonia (2015)
- Printmaking Laureate from III Kazan International Printmaking Biennial, Kazan, Tatarstan (2015)
- Selected for the Imago Mundi collection (2016)
- Nomination for Young Artist of the Year Award Denes, Macedonia (2016)
- Published the zine *Along the Traces for Private Print*, Skopje, Macedonia (2017)
- Scholarship for Summer School as School from Center for Contemporary Art, Prishtina, Kosovo (2018)
- Zine Laureate from Zine Vitrine by DobraVaga Gallery, Ljubljana, Slovenia (2018)
- Award for the work *Mirrors* by In Situ Art Fair - Skopje, Macedonia (2018)
- So To Speak Journal Art Finalist, Virginia, USA (2019)
- 48 Stunden Neukölln Art Festival, Berlin, Germany (2019)



Ana Jovanovska, Skopje, *You and I*, mixed media installation, 2018



Ana Jovanovska, *Plastic*, mixed media collaged canvas





Ana Jovanovska, Mirrors project, Kumanovo, 2018/19

# Ana Lazarevska

Exploring the ways of communication between people in a specific sociocultural environment, the artwork entitled “Bodies of Water” suggests a new possible way of communication. “Bodies of Water” as interactive installation is adapted for this exhibition at the WorM in Aberdeen.

The installation consists of a device that records the sound of two hearts, with two stethoscopes, and at the same time projects the sound from both hearts into two pairs of headphones. The public is provoked into observing the artwork, and interacts with it in pairs, in experiencing the sound of the hearts in real time.

What they hear is the natural rhythm of the heartbeat merged with the slight sound of breathing. In this way, a deep intimate experience emerges, challenging the audience to step into the intimacy of the other, of the unknown, unpredictable, experience of silence and the biological rhythm of the heart. This artwork aims to explore the in-betweenness of two opposites \ tangible forces \ bodies in space. It does so by beginning from physical appearance and limitations, their (non) compatibility, their own borders, sensibilities and the tension that is provoked in between them due to this unusual communication.

My exploration in this artwork comes from a personal research deep into the intimate self, but also from an observation of the forms of global communication in the social context and recent changes brought to bear, with the emergence of social media. Motivated from the growth of alienation and the lack of physical presence, I underline the need for collaboration, sharing and compassion as strong values that can influence and shape the present moment into a better future.



Ana Lazarevska, *Bodies of Water*, 2018/19 (expanded view overleaf)









Ana Lazarevska, *Identity, Performative & Photographic project*, 2014

# Ivana Sidzimovska

<http://www.ivanasidzimovska.com>

Ivana Sidzimovska (b.1982) is a visual artist, urban space researcher and author. Her artistic practice and research involves transdisciplinary work on the intersection between arts, architecture and urban sociology. She is often concerned with subjective narrations and experiences of the urban, that critically reflect upon ideas on identities, representations, collective memories and imaginations. Exploiting different media, Sidzimovska creates public space interventions and audio/visual installations for exhibition spaces. Her in-situ works often put the viewer/listener in an immersive situation, thus offering another performative experience and understanding of the urban.

The video essay “Brexit means Brexit” revolves around the complex process of the UK’s secession from the European Union, an occurrence closely related to many political concerns in Europe, e.g. the rise of populist and right-wing parties, the erection of new borders and walls, the denied entry for asylum seekers, etc. The video work adopts subjective perspectives of those directly concerned with and affected by this political instance. Focusing on the aspect of mobility, in terms of the so-called “somewheres and anywheres”, the video essay overlays heterogeneous narrations of individuals, who embed a global and mobile identity, and individuals, whose identity is strongly rooted in the local. Showcasing different angles, the video essay allows for various interpretations of Brexit instead of proposing one fixed narrative.

Sidzimovska holds a BA in Painting and Art Pedagogy (Faculty of Fine Arts Skopje, 2006), MA in Space Strategies (Art School Berlin-Weißensee, 2011) and is currently completing PhD studies in Arts and Design (Bauhaus University Weimar, 2019). Her recent exhibitions include the two-channel installation “Liminal States” (o.T. Projektraum Berlin, 2018) and the audio guided walk “Re-counting Skopje”, presented as part of the “DENES Award for Young Visual Artist” (MKC Gallery Skopje, 2018). Further information on her work can be found at: [www.ivanasidzimovska.com](http://www.ivanasidzimovska.com).





*Ivana Sidžimovska, Liminal States (detail), 2018*  
Photo: Bazho Gagovski





*Ivana Sidzimovska, Brexit Means Brexit, 2019  
Photo: Bazha Gagovski*



# Dark webs and Bruised terrains

When invited to participate in the In-Between States exchange, I jumped at the opportunity to visit a country and arts ecology I knew nothing about, blurting out what I thought its name to be “Macedonia”. Aware that my understanding of the socio-political turmoil and ethno-diversity of the Balkans was limited - a hazy jig-saw puzzle comprised of sepia-tinged memories of BBC News from growing up in the 90s, occasional historical documentaries and the odd artwork and film – I gave little consideration to the “Former Yugoslav Republic of...” attached to its name. From my “millennial” viewpoint, of what often feels like the protected bubble of the UK West, it feels a separate and slippery part of history - mythical, over. My experience of Skopje and meeting its artists changed this. Learning of the recent political scandals and the everyday life of contemporary Macedonians interrupted my skewed, and in recent years Brexit-ised, echo-chamber. It also revealed and highlighted the intangible nature of global geo-politics and geo-strategies to the layperson.

Seven weeks after Jon Blackwood, Nuno Sacramento and I visited Skopje, its country’s name was officially changed to the Republic of North Macedonia. Attempting to get a grasp on the “termination” of the decades-long dispute over its nomenclature, which involved strained international relations, tussles and blocking, it is reminiscent of the UK’s current saga of Brexit. In attempting to



*Blagaja Mickovski-Bajo Cathedral of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Skopje. Completed 1977*

piece together the history and reasoning of this through articles, news and social media only to find myself at a loss, it is again evocative of the (now) years' scouring Brexit related articles with little enlightenment. Political parties and membership organisations are depicted as abstract grouped-protagonists negotiating or perhaps gambling a "mass" fate of identity, belonging and nationalism, confirming ideologies of isolation or unity.

At times, it appears as if the negotiators feel as though they are awarded an absurd anonymity. The puppet-masters orchestrating geo-politics, protected by their groupings - "country", "party" or "body" - able to rear their, at times, sensationalist mouthpiece to punctuate angled and homogenised media-portrayals of what democracy looks like. Perhaps this is an allegory for neo-liberalism: de-regulation, dilution and distortion mixed together, trickling down from the superstructures of society into every crevice of operations in the everyday.

But what happens when over-simplification becomes gross distortion?<sup>1</sup> Attempted historic revisionism becomes a broken propagandist record spinning history into the present. The claiming and retelling of history and nationhood has always been prevalent in the plot of the dominant right in global politics, with parties, politicians and media igniting right-wing demographics. Presently we can see this evidenced in the deceitful and disastrously mishandled Brexit and in the defusing of Macedonia's information "bombs".

<sup>1</sup> Discuss: when does an over-simplification become a gross distortion? Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt attempts to explain Brexit to Japanese students - Tweet by Channel 4 Journalist Krishnan Guru-Murthy - Twitter - 15-04-2019 - <https://twitter.com/krishngm/status/1117742869895438336>

The "bombs" - wire-tapped conversations, targeting 20,000 Macedonians, including journalists, politicians and religious leaders - were engineered by the prime minister at the time, Nikola Gruevski, then leader of the nationalist VMRO-DPMNE and prime minister from 2006-16. Intercepted by intelligence officers and published by current prime minister Zoran Zaev of the Social Democrat Union, during nationwide protests in the summer of 2015, these conversations evidenced election fraud and abuse of the justice system, urban planning process and media control. This ultimately ended the rule of VMRO-DPMNE in 2017, after several months of tense stand-off between the political opponents. Subsequently Gruevski was indicted on charges of misusing public funds and sentenced to two years in prison, punishment which he evaded by fleeing to Hungary and being granted asylum by prime minister Viktor Orban, a close associate from his days in power.



*Astra Casino, Partizanska, Skopje. December 2018*





Skopje 2014 sculptures, December 2018

To an outsider, the marks of this have been left in the form of Gruevski's Skopje 2014 project - many labelling it as "urbicide"<sup>2</sup> - with 34 neo-baroque "chode"<sup>3</sup> monuments and 80 sculptures. Skopje 2014, the consequence of corruption, embezzlement and illegal urban planning, leaves one feeling as though you are in a set or a toy-town. The Skopje2014 project however appears to take it to extremes: a likely extreme when populist nationalist governments brandish creative control of history in order to choreograph an ideology in the present through "architecture" and "art". Bizarrely traversing and honouring a nostalgic time-warp and championing the acceleration of globalization.

Before coming into power, Zaev swore to revise Skopje2014 and stop further planned implementations. Once prime minister, Zaev established a government working group, including university professors of urbanism and history of art, art critics, political scientists, and the president of the Association of Architects of Macedonia. Their task was to resolve the projects legacy, with awareness that its elimination would cause conflict between those who identify with and those who refute the brutal-faux-romanticism of Gruevski's nationalism.

<sup>2</sup> THE (UN)CERTAIN FUTURE OF THE 'SKOPJE 2014' MEGALOMANIAC PROJECT by Bojan Blazevski, Kosovo 2.0 - 15-01-2019 - <https://kosovotwopointzero.com/en/the-uncertain-future-of-the-skopje-2014-megalomaniac-project/>

<sup>3</sup> Chode is slang for a penis wider than it is long. It can also refer to the perineum. The term is generally used for humour or as a mild insult. - Dictionary.com - <https://www.dictionary.com/e/slang/chode/>



As I consider the idea of friction occurring because of monuments based in historic fantasy, it is difficult to not draw parallels with the United States, especially as the media starts to whip up its frenzy in the run up to the 2020 new election, or re-election, of the President. Trump's chilling response to the 2017 Charlottesville tragedy has remained in the sensationalist ether, most recently resurfacing as centrist Democrat Joe Biden's ammunition in the start of his presidential campaign bid. The Charlottesville rally, or 'Unite the right' rally, was a response to the proposed removal of a statue of Robert E. Lee, the commander of the confederate states army. These removals followed in the wake of the Charleston Church shooting committed by a white-supremacist in 2015 in the hope of igniting a race war<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> 'Roof stated both during questioning and in written manifestos that he had hoped his shooting attack at the Mother Emanuel AME church, a historic black house of worship in a city with a long history of racial strife, would spark a race war. Instead, the most tangible change in the shooting's aftermath was the removal of the Confederate flag from the South Carolina statehouse.' - Dylann Roof found guilty in Charleston church shooting by Jamiles Lartey, Guardian - 15-12-16 - <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/dec/15/dylann-roof-convicted-charleston-shooting>

This massacre took place at one of the United States' oldest black churches and a site for community civil rights organisation, which prompted an outcry for the removal of confederate monuments, and the renaming of streets and parks currently honouring America's confederate figures who built their State and empires on the labour and persecution of African-American slaves. In the counter-protest, a woman lost her life and many were injured by a white-supremacist deliberately ramming his car into the crowd.

Trump's response was to condemn "both sides" and to share his sympathies on the prospective loss of the monument.

Rather than a condemnation of both sides however, this sympathising on the loss of the monument served as a condoning of the United States colonial history and the far-right factions' racist vitriol, terror and violence. Biden's announcement video, of course, provoked a revisionist history from Trump and his supporters on his response to the Charlottesville events: his words were supposedly taken out of "context", although the original transcript suggests otherwise<sup>5</sup>.

In all its data mining and analysis, the capacities of the internet seemingly offer no perspectives on truth. Leaders use the semantics of context and profusion to further protect their untouchable status. The media in some areas has exposed and

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<sup>5</sup> Trump tries to re-write his own history on Charlottesville and 'both sides' by Aaron Blake, The Washington Post - 26-04-2019 - [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/04/25/meet-trump-charlottesville-truthers/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.87de6d60d098](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/04/25/meet-trump-charlottesville-truthers/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.87de6d60d098)

denounced, and in others acknowledged yet withheld a biased allegiance to the collusion which is ultimately solidifying the advancement of post-truth politics and authoritarianism. The web between a country's political leadership, "dark money"<sup>6</sup>, influential people, political consultation firms' data brokerage and communication, the media and internet, has entangled us, confirming the current instability of democracy. We are living with the anti-climactic detonation of "disinformation"<sup>7</sup> bombs.

In the Brexit phenomena, a small and manipulated margin won the vote. The expectation, and now known collaborative and inviolable corruption, an inability to hold anyone to account and the moving of goal posts with no viable centre-left alternative has left many Remainers and regretful Leavers in an appalled inertia - conflicting emotions - a state of in-between.

Scotland's in-between state differs. It is defined by its devolved powers, able to pass laws on aspects which affect day to day life in Scotland, whilst UK-wide or international matters are reserved for Westminster. Scotland, as part of the UK is required to follow the majority ruling, leaving Scotland's votes in a no man's land, which sees it governed by a Conservative government

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<sup>6</sup> 'Dark Money refers to political spending meant to influence the decision of a voter, where the donor is not disclosed and the source of the money is unknown. Depending upon the circumstances, Dark Money can refer to funds spent by a political nonprofit or a super PAC.' - Dark Money Basics - Open Secrets.org - Centre for Responsive Politics - <https://www.opensecrets.org/dark-money/basics>

<sup>7</sup> Facebook's role in Brexit - and the threat of democracy by Carole Cadwalladr - TED2019 - 15-04-2019 - [https://www.ted.com/talks/carole\\_cadwalladr\\_facebook\\_s\\_role\\_in\\_brexit\\_and\\_the\\_threat\\_to\\_democracy?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/carole_cadwalladr_facebook_s_role_in_brexit_and_the_threat_to_democracy?language=en)

(in a confidence-and-supply arrangement with the right wing Democratic Unionist Party, who also happen to have bank-rolled pro-leave campaigns through "dark money" donations) and leaving the EU, both of which its majority did not vote for. This "stooshie"<sup>8</sup> is at the heart of the SNP mandate, in 2014 its bid for Scottish independence was met with a majority 'no' but left to simmer.

On the 24 April 2019<sup>9</sup>, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon re-situated Scotland's right to decide its future in the wake of Brexit. A measured response, she called for a Citizens Assembly to be established to gather consensus on the kind of Scotland people want and need to live in and how it can be achieved whilst also safeguarding a referendum's democratic legitimacy. Problematic and requiring problem solving, Scotland's state, whether individuals are for, against or undecided at the prospect of self-determinism bolsters an energy and sense of renewal in its socio-political landscape.

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<sup>8</sup> "Stooshie" - the Scottish informal for a row or fracas was included in the Scots words and phrases immortalized in Hansard (the edited verbatim report of proceedings of both the House of Commons and the House of Lords). - Sarah Mackie, YouTube - 26-03-2019 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pX14m7Yo8ao>.

<sup>9</sup> Following Nicola Sturgeon's speech on Wednesday, could Scotland really be heading for Indyref2? by Stephen Bush, NewStatesman - 25-04-2019 - <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/staggers/2019/04/following-nicola-sturgeon-s-speech-wednesday-could-scotland-really-be>





Looking across the River Vardar, Skopje.  
The building on the crest of the hill is the Museum of Contemporary Art, established in 1963.

Through Jon's work creating artistic bonds between Aberdeen/Scotland and Skopje/Republic of North Macedonia, it acknowledges the similarities and dissimilarities of these bruised terrains, making visible seemingly disconnected and hidden histories and aspirations. Re-positioning them more as cousinly parallels from differing perspectives influenced by specific socio-political experiences and current realities. *In Between States* offers the chance to survey the rights and privilege of producing and discussing art (and more widely social beliefs) without interference, against the complications of sustaining an arts practice in the lacking cultural infrastructures and economic difficulties of the Republic of North Macedonia and in Aberdeen, and peripheral places.

## Holly Yeoman

*Holly Yeoman is a freelance curator based between Glasgow, Dundee and Aberdeen. She was formerly curator of exhibitions at Summerhall, Edinburgh, before studying for an MLitt Curatorial Practice (Contemporary Art), Glasgow School of Art and University of Glasgow. Holly was on the selection panel for the In Between States project.*



# Jack Handscombe

<http://www.jackhandscombe.com>

My work draws parallels between natural and cultural processes of construction and adornment, placing humans in architectural lineage that started in nature. Rooted in a deep appreciation of the natural world, art, and architectural history, my work seeks to thread together ancient and contemporary culture through thought provoking and humorous associations that jumps between present and the past.

Growing up with a father who is a builder, I was exposed to the process of construction and developed an intimate relationship with making from a practical standpoint. From this background I went to study sculpture and art history at Edinburgh College of Art, and later, classical architectural practice and traditional building techniques such as Thatching, plastering, and stone. This technical understanding of the process of construction of the built world feeds into my artistic practice. As such, architecture and tools are recurrent themes, for these are intriguing subjects to me as they speak of the nature/culture divide by virtue of being the most ancient cyborg extensions to our fleshy body. Through my work I fixate upon the ways in which human actions and architectures parallel natural actions and architectures. In my sculpturally based practise I utilise both found and crafted objects, to illustrate these links that oscillate between human and natural spheres and across disparate time periods.



*Jack Handscombe, Illegal Sandcastles, 2018*





*Jack Handscombe, Shellmet,  
Cast and panel beaten aluminium on motorcycle helmet, 2018*



*Jack Handscombe, Return of S(c)ale Armour, Security tags on faux fur Jacket, 2018*





# Izzy Thomson

<http://www.izzythomson.co.uk>

I paint to understand the value of the wilderness.

I work from my own remembered experiences of the landscapes I have journeyed to, mostly around Scotland and the North. In the studio, I reconstruct the topographies of those places to tell again, the story of our wilder world. Similar to stage-sets, my paintings act as a device: an invitation into a 'tapsalteerie' world, where one finds characters who are impervious to their environment, who reside in precarious places or walk across wobbly bridges, high above unsettled seas.

Often painted with a crepuscular palette, they feel like scenes in which something is about to happen; like the moments just before daytime transitions into night-time. They have the language of a dream one has just awoken from and so present themselves as the perfect space for both being there and not being there; inhabitable spaces that you cannot visit in real life.

The physicality of the paint I use, areas of impasto or cut-out-and-stuck-on materials, disrupt the illusion so that an area which should be sitting back in the painting is protruding out into the viewer's space. The more formal elements of the painting's edges against the wall, become a place to peer from, like looking out to sea from the edge of a cliff. My paintings are a meeting place.

As well as their fairy-tale like allure, my works are rooted in reality. They are a felicitous way to bring two worlds together and to activate what is perhaps a misplaced familiarity and sensitivity to our natural, wilder world.



*Izzy Thomson, The Same Stuff. Oil on Board.*





*Izzy Thomson, The Tale of Two Jumpers. Oil on Board. 2017*

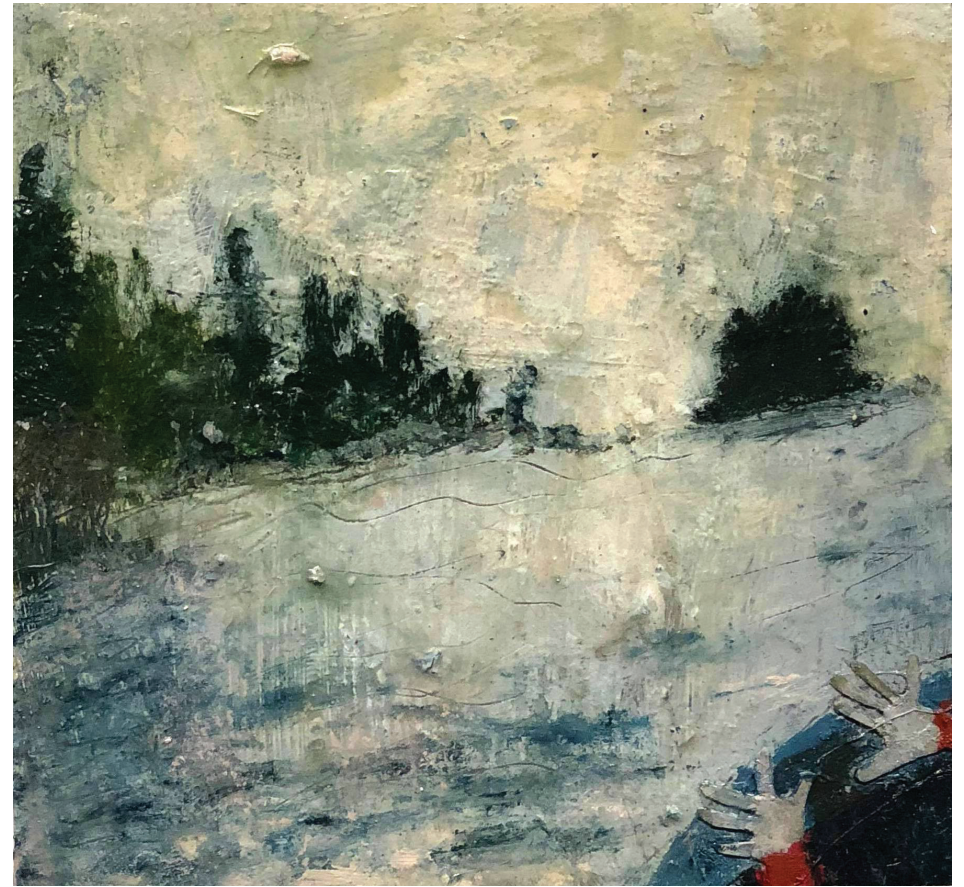


*Izzy Thomson, Ice Fishing. Oil on Canvas, 2017*





*Izzy Thomson, In Search of the Tufted Puffin, Oil on Canvas.*



*Izzy Thomson, The Same Stuff, Oil on Board.*

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