





# GOOD LIFE

PHYSICAL NARRATIVES AND SPATIAL IMAGINATIONS

—

The 53rd October Salon

—

The former building of the Geodetic Institute  
Belgrade · Karađorđeva 48

September 22 — November 4, 2012

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**GOOD LIFE**

**O L I E**



# BRANISLAV DIMITRIJEVIĆ + MIKA HANNULA

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## INTRODUCTION

**THIS YEAR'S OCTOBER SALON** is located at the building of the Geodesic Institute, built in 1905-1907 as Belgrade Shareholders Society, one of the most beautiful but also one of the most neglected monumental edifices in Belgrade. This inspiring location will not be treated here simply as a “gallery space”, it will not undergo any refurbishment to accommodate the exhibition, but rather it will be used as a space of *ad hoc* transformation where the works will be “implanted” in its present condition and in its existing historical narrative and architectural design.

Similarly, the publication for the October Salon follows the internal logic of a site-specific project. The publication is not a documentation of the project, and it is not an explanation of the exhibition, and no, it promotes no theory of gentrification. It is something else, and also, something more.

With this more, what we both try to provide and achieve is a collection of reflections and confrontations with the topic of Good Life — as in addressed through the changes and challenges of the last 20 and more years, and with some time travelling all the way down back to 1905 when the building was constructed. It is a collection of stories, essays and interviews that face dilemmas of our contemporary lives; the mess we are at, and the hopes we try to hold on or to re-generate.

And yes, Belgrade is where it is at. This is where it begins, and this is where it returns — while using the specific building the city as a trampoline, as a catapult. Localized and particular, but not empty or closed up but actively connecting the dots between here and there, then and now. Connecting as an open-ended example the dots to wide variety of other particularities and localities. Most importantly, it claims to have no last sell by date, no last possible usage date of expiration.

Like with the book, with the exhibition is taking place with and within the site, confronting and caressing the unique condition of its conditions. The site will be an active participant, not a static structure in the process. This year's October Salon is a result of the collaboration between two curators known for their previous joint projects (such as the exhibition *Situated Self—Confused, Compassionate, Conflictual*, in Belgrade and Helsinki in 2005). Joining them for the production of the book are Svebor Midžić, editor, and Andrej Dolinka, visuals.

Most of the artworks will be executed *in situ*, yet not aiming at spectacularisation or commodification of the space, but rather at providing a situated and motivated visual and conceptual commentary on its physical, perceptual and narrative properties vis-à-vis the context of the current social, political and economic crisis. It is a crisis that we are confronted in all parts of the world, and through all areas of our everyday experiences. It is not only a crisis in political, economical and social spheres, but it is also a crisis of social imagination. A crisis of confidence, of where and how to address the issues of social hope and good good life. Not as a cynical enterprise but as a way of feeling for, both laughing at and laughing with.

The project is primarily concerned with the production of site-specific works (both works of art and reflective writings), their participation in shared physical and cognitive experiences, and in understanding the medium of the exhibition not as “demonstrational” but as a mobilized spatial construction for active perception, imagination and knowledge. It will not be a laboratory, not an experimental platform, not a hybrid vehicle of creative economy. It will be a sensual and sensitive narration in and through a space; an exhibition that invites us all to stay with — and to get closer.

Every exhibition, both its physical and discursive realities, is first and foremost a specific form of exchange within a specific framework and specific social conditions. The intention of this show is to seek for modes of translation and transformation of the *space* (both physical and social), as pre-given and static, into the *place* as provisional and transitional. The openness of this exchange allows circumventing the mere instrumentalization or commodification of the artwork, but also the one-dimensionality of an in advance defined and decided social (or political) objective, consensus, or destination of an artistic act.

The exhibition and the publication promote a practice-based exploration of the space and its context, a process not determined by theoretical and methodological premeditation. It will argue for a position in a narrow and fragile slot where contemporary art is neither drawing upon the myth of artistic autonomy (with the commodification of art as its final outcome), nor upon the art’s instrumentality in expressing and promoting pre-determined political and theoretical discourses. In place of the sanctification of autonomy and the spectacularisation of politics, the exhibition offers space to the simultaneity of the physical and the discursive, as a space of instability and risk, where spatial and social imagination take shape, and only by doing so it may carry its political signification.

This refutes the notion which has it that the political in art is a mode in which art takes on the self-righteous task of representing the social structures, social groups, their conflicts or identities. On the contrary, art is political because of the very distance it develops in relation to such functions, because of its subjective and heterological commitment to the given site and situation, because of the way it maps this site and inhabits this situation, and finally because of the way it agitates and articulates them in the process of *becoming*.

The relationship between the *spatial* and the *social imagination*, the possibility of transforming the space into a place, but also a reflexive narration into an active physical presence is here of central interest. The architectural setting of the Geodetic Institute building, and

the narratives making up its history, are the starting points for reflections on social visions, promises and delusions, typical primarily of the local “version” of the attempt at, gradual progress in and eventual standstill on the path of the social modernisation.

The age of modernity was characterised by the capability of forging a vision of the future, which nowadays tends to be dismissed from the relativistic position of scepticism and irony. However, the basic promise of modernity, which essentially boils down to “a good life for everyone”, remained an irreducible place of bringing together individual desires and social imagination in the process of continual circulation. This circulation is manifested as a trajectory where the personal imagination (wishes, wants, needs, dreams, fears and obsessions), collective imagination (myth, utopia, commonplaces) and fiction (cultural and artistic constructs and representations), are assigned equal importance. In order for this circulation to make itself visible it is not enough just to conceive a piece of art, or an exhibition, as representational and demonstrational, but also as a field for singular spatial experiences having specific transformative potentials.

Along with the book as a collection of reflective writings, a second printed matter is available. It is a map, nothing more, nothing less. It functions as a setting that contextualizes the becoming and the emergency of the exhibition and will work as a practical guide, distributed in order to acquaint the visitors with the works themselves, supplied with the map of the space that would contain the inventory of displayed works and details about the artists. It will be an accessible tool for thinking with, walking with and arguing with and against the exhibition.

An exhibition and a publication that is there to ask and to activate us to think, and to think, and to be with – caressing and confronting that possibility in an impossibility of moving towards this: GOOD LIFE. Being-in-the-world, feeling with and feeling for, and yes, acting in a committed and long-term way from with and within. It is an aim that, in the end does this: It is a set of intertwined acts as in the matrix of a social hope that, to use a completely another set of vocabulary, is no longer asking how we could be more and more happy, successful and great. Instead, it is asking: how could we be and become a little less lonely. ►

*August 2012*



MIKA HANNULA

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# 20 YEARS AND RUNNING – SOCIAL IMAGINATION AND ITS BELGRADE-BASED SWIMMING LESSONS

**GOOD LIFE.**

To repeat: Good Life.

What is it? Where to get it? Who shares it, who shapes it and which of us stare at it?

Chances, challenges, possibilities and horrible dead-ends.

Good Life.

★★★★★

Good life is spent looking for good life.

This is what was written a long time ago. Since then, since about 2,400 years ago, this message has been rehearsed and told – again and again.

The source of this is: Aristotle.

Some say it makes no sense. And this is because it refers to itself, it's a closed-up entity that we call a tautology.

But those who say this are not listening. And they are not feeling, not feeling with. Not with the roots where we all come from and struggle with, and not with the routes that we take from and with them.

There is no direct destination. There is a process, and not that much progress.

Good life is spent searching for a localized, particular and situated good life.

It is an on-going process. A process that sings: All I want for my birthday is another birthday. It is a search that is not meaningful and comprehensible if it does not anchor itself to the day-to-day structures where it is taking place and shaping its space. It is committed, and it is embedded. And it is angry. Pissed off, and tired. But still, still going on.

The search. The search goes on. Lights on, lights off, does not matter. The search for good, good life goes on.

★★★★★

This type of search is constantly asking: where are we coming from, where are we now and where are we trying to move?

The Germans, the Germans, the Germans. They gave it the following concept: *Wirkungsgeschichtliche Bewusstseins*.

A lovely concept, right.

In Finnish, it is called *vaikutushistori-allinen tietoisuus*.

And in English, go google it,  
gogogogogo.

It is to ask: what, where, how, why  
and when. And: how come?

And when singing, singing songs of  
freedom and love, it is to ask: Who sings, and  
whose freedom? And what about love? In  
love, in love, in love, in ... Technicolor love.

This concept is here to help us. Oh,  
yes, it is. We need it when facing facts and  
numbers. Simple numbers, weird stories.  
Connected and connotated.

Here and there, now and then.

Numbers: 1992–2012. When counted,  
we get 20. Oh, yes, we do. It could be 19,  
or 18, or 21, and 22. Numbers. This is what  
in contemporary weather reports they call  
the felt-for temperature. We get a figure for  
the measured temperature, and we get an  
estimation on what it actually feels in the  
streets — with the wind, the shades and the  
shakes.

Felt-for. Lived with. Being-in-the-  
world. Experienced.

Are you experienced?

This is a good, good question.

What did you experience when mov-  
ing along these years from 1992 to 2012?

Now, don't be shy. Tell me all about it  
— tell it like it is. Go on, gogogogogogogo. I  
am listening. Oh, yes, I am.

There is nothing stopping us now.  
Nonononono.

★★★★★

20 years and running. And many who  
write, talk, walk and while doing what they  
are doing when doing it, they try to keep a  
brave face and hide their tears. Many who

want to understand and keep coming short.  
What is happening, and why, oh, why.

Tears of a clown, tears of a clown.

We can call it using many names and  
labels. The times that we face and the times  
that take us for a ride — up high, and down,  
down, down below.

20 years and running. Changes that  
we might recognize but changes that we are  
still slowly coming to terms with. What are  
the consequences of all this?

We ask, and we ask again.

The art, the art of almost. Almost.

These times that gain, or at least try  
to gain, confidence with concepts such as  
post-democracy, late capitalism, late mo-  
dernity, post-social, post-autonomy subject  
and well, why not, post-history.

And we know, we know it in the deep-  
est parts of our hearts that the post-man, the  
post-man, he or she, or even transgendered,  
he/she/it will always ring twice. Always.

And we know another thing, too. That  
heart, that heart of yours and mine. It is on  
the left-hand side and it is always red. Al-  
ways left, always red.

Us and them. Together. Us and them.

Emotional hooligans.

But, well, 20 years and running. Some  
said and some wrote more. About the Mos-  
cow Winter and the Arab Spring. Or the  
European Union and its confusingly con-  
tinuous crises, remember that, nah?

Some so-called examples for and from  
the wide world of so-called intellectual  
writing.

Tariq Ramadan, *The Arab Awakening,  
Islam and the New Middle East*, Allen  
Lane, 2012.

Andreas Wirsching, *Der Preis der Freiheit, Geschichte Europas in Unserer Zeit*, C.H. Beck, 2012.

While the former tries to tackle the immediate chances of last 24 months, the latter adopts the 20 years' perspective. While the former prints out the texts that he had published in his online, on-time, all-round blog, the latter goes through the recent history of post-Berlin Wall with the help of reports, rappers and newspapers.

Both individuals are clearly established heavyweights on their own turf and in their own turtlenecks. Both fine men with elegant manners and a civilized pose. And both men with a need to express an opinion fast and furiously.

But, well, they both try and fail. Unfortunately or not, both books fail to add much more than any of us who have lived through these last 20 years or the last 24 months have experienced, read and discussed.

The facts of life, part 77: for a deeper sense of interpretation, we need a distance. And we don't have it yet.

Or: we almost have it.

But the numbers remain — in light: 20 years and running.

Another set of examples. This is then the so called creative writing bunch. They publish stories, novels and essays. This is the site and situation, which towards the end of the 80's was called *The Empire Writes Back*. We have Salman Rushdie as the front figure, we had this and that figure of newly conceptualized creative economy, a movie director like Hanif Kureishi, for example. We had people who told us from a partially Third World perspective what was

going on it the so-called First World. They were both-and, here and there, talking to us about this both-and, here and there.

And now, now we have the phenomena of Ostblock darling of de jour. Let me repeat this in italics: *Ostblock darling of de jour*.

The list is long and it's getting longer. A list of writers who both sell and get attention. Writers who were born somewhere else than where they now write and publish. They were born in the old Soviet bloc, the ex-Yugoslavia and the backyards of Europe. And now they write back. Back to back.

Writers such as Téa Obrecht (from Belgrade), Gary Shteyngart (from Moscow), Alexander Hemon (from Sarajevo), Anilda Ibrahimi (from Tirana) and so on and on.

20 years and running. Experiences that are lived — and lived through.

Now: why is it that these writers tend to have much more to say about the chances and challenges of the last 20 years than the so-called intellectuals from the inside of the so-called West?

Why, oh, why?

Lived experience. Told, and shared. Taken, not for granted, not instrumentalized, not commoditized, but taken seriously — and shared.

20 years and writing back.

★★★★★

20 years, plus and minus, mas & menos. Mer eller mindre. Vähän sinne päin. Jawohl.

Are we too close, as in not enough far, not enough distance between then and now?

Perhaps, perhaps, perhaps we are on the edge, on the verge of it.

Because, because, because this is what histories of the past and present tell us. They give us hints of the years that are needed to gain that necessary distance — in order to get closer and stay closer to the events and their self-critical and reflective interpretation.

History tells us how, for example, in Israel, the way to deal with the early 1980's events of wars and occupying foreign territory has only begun in the last 10 years, more or less. We got the books and the movies. *Waltz with Bashir* by Ari Folman, or in a book format, *To the End of the Land*, by David Grossman.

Just to mention 2 products of culture — to start off and with.

This, then, are people who were there and then came back. One way or another. And then for years and years did not want to talk about it — not that much. But now they do. They talk about their experiences, frustrations and fears. Sadness and scaredness. There is no theory, this is everyday life. This are people who hurt and got hurt. Now and then.

Hold on? What I am saying? Nothing more and nothing less than that there are now interpretations of dramatic events that needed those plus or minus 20 years to come back and rebound to the surface. Not as truths to be told, not as real-life documentaries but as stories to be told — and to be shared.

Let's take another example. A real cruel one. What went on in a place called Dritte Reich in 1933-1945, it took over 20 years in a place called Bundesrepublik Deutschland with its capitol in Bonn to relate to and to deal with. Slowly, so slowly.

The first large-scale trials of Nazi war criminals did not start until 1963 in Frankfurt. Today, well, today, we have the stories of the people who were in the minority, in opposition through those brutal years of 1933-1945, and how they were treated as poison after the end of the war. They were not treated as heroes, nonononono.

But: the ironies of history. The first ever person to be sentenced due to his activities in Dritte Reich, he managed to bring it all to himself by himself. It was not that people did not know or recognize that such and such person who continued to work as a lawyer, a judge, a policeman or a doctor, was not known to have been active in the same job in the 1933-1945 period. The thing was that this was basically accepted and, well, tolerated. At the same time, a growing number, of people thought this to be, well, way too much.

The problem was that it was really almost impossible to convince the judges to allow these cases into the system. And here comes the funky act of the head of the police in the city of Ulm. There were people there who made noises. Noises to the effect that the current head of the police in the mid-1950's had been one of the main local murderers during 1933-1945. The system did not want to listen to these noises. They just wanted to go along happily with the so called Wirtschaftswunder. But this policeman did listen. He got angry and initiated a lawsuit against these noises and the accusations. Once inside, the noises became impossible to ignore.

And, well, the rest is history. We know that the first conviction was only made possible because the policeman accused



the protesters of sullyng his lovely name and reputation. Thus, a critical reflection about the past, that very *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, got started because it got in by default, by the amazing arrogance of the po-li-ce-man — the former head of the Ulm central police station, now a convicted Nazi criminal.

If you want to read more about this, do not go the g-way. Read this:

Helmut König, *Die Zukunft der Vergangenheit, Der Nationalsozialismus im politische Bewusstsein der Bundesrepublik*, Fischer verlag 2003

But, yes: 20 years and running, for sure.

Social imagination and its seriously shrewd lessons for learning how to swim. In Belgrade, in Bonn, and in Buenos Aires. The last part was where they did fetch that certain tiny little figure back — not home, but to Jerusalem. It was, so to speak, another Adolf on the road.

But what about the first B-town, Belgrade? In times like these, when both the president and the prime minister in the country called Serbia are people who were part of the machine of the 1990's, who are responsible for the troubles then and now. Wars growing upon wars, chauvinism and nationalism. Plain stupid arrogance. Unlimited.

Should we, could we, must we ask for a helping hand from Tomislav Nikolić and Ivica Dačić (and many, many more or less well-known names of historical credibility — care to add any names to the list?) in the acts of creative thinking and social imagination? Why? Well, they seem to be doing so extremely well in their art of interpretation that — perhaps,

perhaps, perhaps — we ought to learn from and with them.

They were, and they are, able to do the thing: to change, with and within social imagination, water to wine and back again.

It has a name, oh yes it has: Lifelong Learning.

Naa, naa, naa. Now, try to imagine that. And, well, if you fail, try again. And again.

It is, again, a change and a challenge, and it moves us. No guarantees for the better whatsoever, nonononono, but, well, it does move us. Upside down and round and round.

This is what they said. Right now, right here. This is what I hear. In Belgrade. How the smell of the 90's is returning. I hear it, but I don't get it. I can't get it. I was not there.

But a hell of a lot of people I respect were. And I listen. To and with them.

★★★★★

Ch ch ch ch ch changes.

Turn and face the change, ch ch ch ch changes.

Not so surprisingly, it is a song. A song by David Bowie. It came out in the early 1970's. To be precise: it was released as a single in January 1972, but it had already appeared on the album *Hunky Dory*, published in the previous year.

A song that contains this line, I believe: you can't change time, but time will change you.

And now, we read, oh, yes, we do. In 2012, we over-educated and under-paid so-called cultural workers read that someone

somewhere says that Bowie had a relationship in those changing times of the 1970's with Mick Jagger. And what kind of a relationship — like, you know, they were really making it. Like, you know, together.

Oh, wow.

All I wonder is this: Did Keith get permission to watch? I know, oh, yes, I do, I know he was watching them — watching them at it. But did he ask for permission to be the eye of the tiger?

Watching me, watching you — and the distance, the distance keeps getting shorter and shorter.

I guess. Because, well, I was not there, either.

★★★★★

Distance and nearness. Nearness and distance.

Zygmunt Bauman published a book called *Modernity and the Holocaust*. It came out in 1989. The book has a dedication that reads like this: To Janina, and all the others who survived to tell the truth.

Janina is his wife. Janina lived and survived the Warsaw Ghetto. She wrote a book about it. A book that is sad, so sad, and beautiful, so beautiful. It is difficult to believe it can be so convincingly both — sad and beautiful, but it is.

Bauman claims that immorality is only possible through distance. This means, when turned the other way round, that morality requires, morality exists only with proximity, with nearness.

For Bauman, the darker side of modern life was created with these elements, these elements that made the horror of the

crime of the Holocaust possible. It was a system that aimed at isolating, neutralizing and marginalizing. It was a system build upon the technologies of industrialization, science, transport logistics, bureaucracy and, well, the desire to make these work together as economically and furiously as possible.

A machine that killed, that Vernichtete, industrially eliminated over 6 million people. Holocaust as a product of modernity. Just another Detroit, so to speak.

Bauman writes. And I believe him. He says: Proximity of the other, whatever that other is, both inside and outside ourselves, this nearness is what makes us, as humans, responsible subjects. Without it, killing fields.

It is, it certainly is. It is as simple as that. And dangerous.

★★★★★

I am not drowning, I am just waving. Having fun. Oh, for sure.

I am swimming — taking these lessons very seriously. Lessons in how to swim in and through the deep murky waters of the last 20 years and running of social imagination. But: Social imagination of what, and how? What is expected, anticipated, wanted and respected at a certain time and in a certain place by society. Both feared and wished for. No theories, but stories told and shared. Experienced. Day to day and all night long, all night long.

Again, do not go the g-way. Read, and then read some more. And think, think with.

For example with these:

Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, Duke University Press 2004  
 Mika Hannula, *Politics, Identity and Public Space, Critical Reflections in and through the Practices of Contemporary Art*, Expodium 2009  
 Marko Živković, *Serbian Dreambook – National Imaginary in the Time of Milošević*, Indiana University Press 2011

Social imagination and the histories it creates and generates — both connected and confused. Made, shaped, forgotten and perhaps even forgiven. Some say and some believe. Stories told and passed on — walked past and taken home with.

Now, how was it, did we vote for amnesty or amnesia?

Dial for denial, dial for denial.

Dates like these. It was, oh, yes, it was, until 1978 it was still necessary for a woman, to be able to work outside the house, to ask permission from her father or her husband. This was not in Kabul, not in Mexico City. This was in Bonn, and in Frankfurt and in Stuttgart. Oh, yes, it was.

Here's another case: in America, oh yes, it was until that same year of 1978 very much ok and accepted that you could sack a person because she had gotten pregnant.

Later on, it was only after 1993 that women had the right to take time off to give birth.

Can you hear it? Ch ch ch ch ....

This was then, and now?

Are we failing, or ailing? Celebrating the success? The sweet smell of success?

Oh, my, my, my.

Can you help me? Can you come and swim with me?

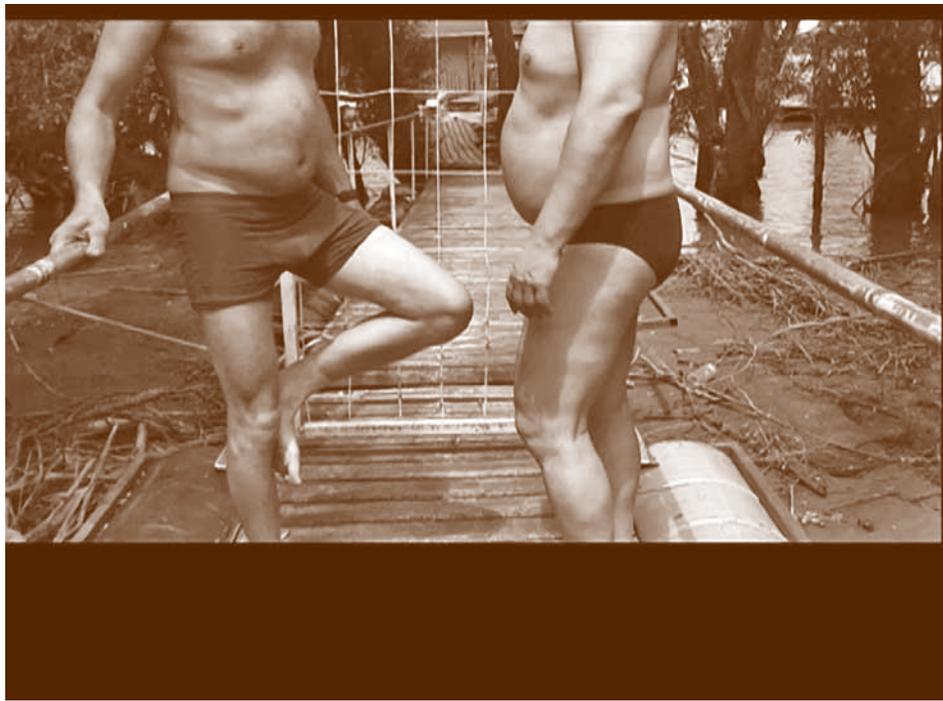
These currents and these tortuous maelstroms. They scare me. I need you. To swim and to sink and to rebound back. I need you.

I need you running with me. 20 years and just about to begin.

Swim, swam, swum, said the language guide. Now, then and back again. Somehow I believe that I believe that.

And the swimming lessons? The swimming lessons with the localized and particular acts of social imagination? They do, they do, they do continue. ►







“Welcome everybody! Join our bull riding performance!  
Have fun and beat the bull, for free!”

[During the opening ceremony of the Good Life  
exhibition, every visitor will have the opportunity  
to ride a mechanical bull, placed in front of  
the Geozavod Building, Belgrade.]

**BRANISLAV DIMITRIJEVIĆ**

# ABSOLUTE CORRUPTION!?

*Those who deny contingency should be subjected to torture  
until they confess that they could just as well not have been tortured.*  
(Ibn Sīnā)

**IN A PHOTOMONTAGE MADE BY THE ARTIST SAMUIL STOYANOV**, a bronze sculpture of a dangerous-looking bull looms over the former building of the Geodetic Institute in Belgrade, or if we wanted to put that in an obscene fashion — the bull has almost mounted the aforementioned building. The bull in question comes from New York’s Wall Street: it is *Charging Bull*, a sculpture made by the Sicilian artist Arturo Di Modica, which was placed in that world-famous street in 1989, and two more versions of it have since been placed in Shanghai and Amsterdam. The sculpture is mostly interpreted as a monument to aggressive financial optimism and economic prosperity. Anyway, the phrase *bull market* is used to refer to the situation when investors have heightened expectations that their investments will yield a profit, which is a moment that supposedly announces economic recovery. The Wall Street bull is energetic, tense, ready for action, and in Dianne Durante’s guide to public sculptures in New York it is described as expressing aggressive and pugnacious power in motion, as well as unpredictability — “it would not be an exaggeration to say that the theme of this sculpture is the energy, power and unpredictability of the stock exchange market”.

The manner in which this sculpture was mounted also indicates that this monument — is a monument to the phase in the development of capitalism (starting around the early 1980’s) which we refer to as the neo-liberal order. In fact, Di Modica mounted the sculpture, without having obtained permission to do so from the city authorities, one December night during the course of New York’s Yuletide frenzy, tucking it under a gigantic Christmas tree as his Christmas present to New Yorkers. Having placed it there, he offered the sculpture for sale, since it soon became one of the city’s favourite landmarks and a tourist attraction. Di Modica thus acted both *outside* the system and *amidst* the system: outside the state-capitalist system, wherein there existed the notion of social and urban planning, and amidst the reigning neo-liberal model, wherein the institutionalised understanding of the public and public space became obsolete, whereas individual entrepreneurship and

creative initiative came to the fore. In any case, the sculpture was not removed from its location, since people became so fond of it that it turned into an object of obscene admiration: the bull's imposing testicles, as was to be expected, became the focus of the viewers' attention, becoming highly polished on account of being touched so often.

Di Modica took a very resolute stance concerning the "abuse" of his work. When Walmart used the bull in its promotional campaign, Di Modica sued the company. The defendant was precisely the company which represents an extreme symbol of the most vulgar and unscrupulous aspects of "energetic" capitalism, where the CEO's salary is around nine hundred times higher than the average salary of its employees, and the wealth of the owner's family is estimated to amount to around 90 billion dollars, which is the sum total of the amount owned by 40% of the poorest inhabitants of the USA, some 120 million of them. On the other hand, for the sake of balance and neutrality, Di Modica also sued the Random House publishing company for including a photo of the bull on the cover of a book on the collapse of the banking and stock exchange system, dealing with the Lehman Brothers bankruptcy scandal. In this way, Di Modica invoked the autonomy of art, its specific but open status, also pointing out the fact that today the artist is a businessman just like any other, who, on account of his work, does not want to take sides within the framework of a public debate.

It is not unexpected, then, that this bull has appeared above the building of Belgrade's Geodetic Institute. For, this building originally was the first Serbian stock exchange, supposed to accommodate business operations that, until then, had been conducted at the nearby "Bosna" restaurant using a piece of chalk and a blackboard. It was built during the first decade of the 20th century as the Belgrade Cooperative, and its greatest investor was the Chairman of its Managing Board, one of the best known and richest Serbian entrepreneurs, Luka Čelović Trebinjac. It was built in a district known as Savamala (abbreviated from Sava Mahala [a word of Turkish origin referring to a neighbourhood or quarter]), which, at the time, was intended to become the trading and financial centre of the capital of independent Serbia, located within a quarter wherein the railway station had been built, the so-called "Bara Venecija [Venice pond]" had been drained, and from where river trade was conducted, first of all with Austria-Hungary, which was the main importer of Serbian goods, 90% of which was accounted for by pork, sold mainly based on live weight. However, as soon as the building was finished in 1907, the Customs War with Austria-Hungary ensued, followed by the Balkan Wars, and finally, the First World War. The building was used in the 1920's, but at the time a new Yugoslav Stock Exchange building was being built (today housing the Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade's Studentski trg [Students' Square]), and Luka Čelović bequeathed this building to the state as his foundation. Based on a decree issued by King Aleksandar in the 1930's, its purpose was radically changed and it became the Geodetic Institute, which primarily dealt with research into Serbia's ore reserves; as was to be expected, there were a lot of interested parties both in Serbia and abroad.

This practice continued after World War Two, and the Geodetic Institute became a very important state institution which, owing to Yugoslavia's foreign policy at the time, undertook large-scale business operations in Africa and Asia. During the course of the 1970's, following the passing of the Law on Associated Labour, the Institute was divided into work organisations (WO) and basic organisations of associated labour (BOAL), but what increasingly came to the fore at the time were deteriorating internal relations amongst the staff. Conflicts among the employees and their managers, mutual accusations, even indications of various corruptive practices, culminated during the transition of the 1990's and 2000's, when there was increasingly frequent talk about the abuse of the premises, thefts, the misuse and unlawful renting of the premises, various parties, masquerade balls, recording video spots of folk music... The Geodetic Institute vacated the premises in 2009, leaving them in a ruinous condition. Up to now, only the ground floor of the building has been renovated, and is now occupied by the state Judicial Academy.

In Belgrade, this building is often referred to as the most beautiful one in the city. Many who have not had the opportunity to enter it remember this building as the setting of the action in a number of movies that have been made using it, beginning with Aleksandar Petrović's movie adaptation of Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*, dating from 1973, and also in one of the most original movies made in the 1980's, Slobodan Pešić's *The Harms Case*. Some episodes of the TV series *The Written Off* were filmed there, as well as several international coproduction movies. This venue is often mentioned in the context of a number of scandals and is the object of contradictory memories and urban legends – for example, there is a story of two receptionists who, during the 1990's, dug at night in the basement trying to find the secretly buried treasure of Luka Čelović. At the bottom of the magnificent central staircase there were two marble sculptures, one of which got broken when a drunken participant of a party slid down the bannister. Today, instead of that sculpture there is a Styrofoam replica of it, cleverly made by Italian scenographers to serve as part of the set for the last movie filmed there in 2009.

And so on and so forth.

So, what are we dealing with here? First of all, we would say, with history – both as a set of facts and as a set of fictitious constructs.

But do we, by organising an exhibition here, actually take part in the unexplained and unexplored corruption connected with this building, after all? Or do we, on the contrary, naively celebrate its beauty and advocate its renovation? Do we admire the entrepreneurship of Luka Čelović, who managed to build it despite the peasant-inclined lack of understanding of the Serbian state in its refusal to support the development of the capital city, or do we merely think of him as a man of wealth, a tycoon who completed only two grades of primary school? Are we fascinated by the post-World War Two activities of the Geodetic Institute from the socialist period, or are we bitterly angered by the negligence manifested at the time? Do we, in organising this exhibition, promote the “gentrification” of this part of the city, or do we look upon this building as a luxurious object turned into

a ruin as a result of negligence and crisis? Do we speak of gentrification when a deteriorated production facility or a warehouse used for storing goods are turned, by means of a cultural event, into hyped-up venues for sales galleries, fashion boutiques, fusion restaurants and shops selling fragrant soaps, or in the case when a magnificent building — which, in itself, is a symbol of an attempt at gentrifying this quarter in the early 20th century — now becomes a place for artistic reflection? Do we interpret the bull looming over it, the way it is depicted by Stoyanov in his work, as an ironic joke, or as optimistic belief in the resurrection of its original purpose, namely, being a symbol of a modern and prosperous capitalist state, one that treasures private initiative? But did Di Modica’s bull, as a symbol of capitalism, become an object of hatred during the “Occupy Wall Street” campaign (for the police fenced it off and protected it), or was it a symbol we can play with, as was the case with a poster inviting people to join protest rallies, wherein a graceful ballerina balances upon the bull’s back? Finally, do we, in naming the exhibition Гуд Лажф, make an ironic comment on the evident lack of anything in the way of a good life here and now, or do we naively fall into the trap of nostalgically invoking some better times from the era of modernity? Or what?

In the case of Di Modica’s bull, we have, on the one hand, the unequivocal interpretation of what this sculpture means and represents, and on the other hand, we have the artist’s refusal to allow it to be further circulated, to be “manipulated” for some other discourses and purposes. In the case of Stoyanov’s montage, we can still not say anything with certainty. The bull looming over the Geodetic Institute is perhaps a harbinger of a new era, in which the energetic power of capitalism will rectify all the hardships and turn this building into a symbol of new prosperity. Or maybe it is a critique of capitalism and its voraciousness that pulverises everything in its path, but increasingly devours itself as well? For, the fate of this building is uncertain as well. Is it going to be renovated or is it going to deteriorate irreparably? Who is going to move into it? Will all the abuses connected to this venue be revealed, or will they be swept under the carpet, for too many people are involved in all of that anyway? Should millions be invested in renovating this building, which would be tantamount to that “terrible act” of gentrification, or should its deterioration be allowed to run its course, which would manifest and prove the collapse of the capitalist system?

One or the other, or something else altogether; neither one nor the other, or anything else, for that matter; or is it both one and the other, including something else altogether?

And so, taking this roundabout route, we arrive at an important distinction between two important notions. Both terms sound rather ugly in Serbian as loan words, but at the risk of breaking our tongue, we speak of *ambivalence* and *ambiguity*. In one text the anthropologist Marc Augé interprets this difference very inspirationally. Ambivalence, thus, presupposes a parallel existence of mutually opposed but equally pertinent views. Ambivalence points to a multitude of angles of vision (“a good husband can be a bad father, or the other way round”), opening up space for imagination. On the other hand, ambiguity

is used in cases when a judgement of someone or something is neither right nor wrong, and presupposes the existence of some third element irreducible to either of the first two elements. Through its double negation (he is neither good nor bad, but probably something else that cannot be determined as yet), ambiguity, to Augé, may contain, at best, the expectation that the lack of clarity will be overcome, but more often, at worst, it indicates sinking into a kind of senselessness and self-denial.

To Augé, the fictions of our time (those reproduced primarily in the popular and media imaginarium) are connected more to the notion of ambiguity than to the notion of ambivalence; they are vague and indistinct rather than ambiguous, “they are neither lies nor imaginary creations”. “That is precisely why they are threatening: they are not sufficiently distinct from the truth and reality, but strive to suppress them and to take over their role.” Let us add that the domination of ambiguity is a characteristic symptom of our time: many value categories within its framework are ignored, for they turn out to be outdated, useless, complicated and nothing but relative. It is almost impossible to speak of something as good or bad, that people can be honest or dishonest, smart or stupid, progressive or regressive, that they are improving or deteriorating... These divisions no longer seem to be a part of the truth about reality, but fortunately they still exist in fiction:

*Does character develop over time? In novels, of course it does: otherwise there wouldn't be much of a story. But in life? I sometimes wonder. Our attitudes and opinions change, we develop new habits and eccentricities; but that's something different, more like decoration. (Julian Barnes, *The Sense of an Ending*)*

And all that really increasingly resembles the end. First of all, the end of social imagination. Today, mankind, for the most part, lives immersed in *imaginariums*, be it consumerist, political or cultural ones. These imaginariums border our world just like the sky-depicting sets from the movie *The Truman Show*. But on the other hand, our imagination does not really work well. And just when we think that we have become aware, that we are no longer naive, we cannot imagine the future as anything but a catastrophe, inevitable ruin, the strike of a comet or the eruption of a super volcano, or, in any case, something unfolding in accordance with some existing mediaeval or Mayan scenario. But our attitude towards this imaginary downfall is increasingly eccentric, we are increasingly becoming a part of that political décor wherein everyone advocates reportedly just and righteous views, only no one really cares about them any longer. Everyone, from tabloid papers to activist artists — uncovers fresh conspiracies and scandals, manifold cases of injustice multiply into an unmanageable multitude of data, righteous and moralising positions are assumed, but this is done without any self-questioning. Do we have any roles of our own in all that, and do we manage to establish any positions of our own that we shall adhere to — are we ready to speak from such positions, or shall we always cover ourselves by the characteristically wise, non-naïve statement that “It is difficult to develop one's own attitude”?

And yet, even though we do not develop our own attitudes, we produce them *ad hoc* in the form of some disembodied but very aggressive phantoms, or else assume the position of a righteous distance, satisfied with our immediate social *décor* and the image we thus produce for ourselves. Since it is with difficulty that we develop our own attitude, in our seemingly turbulent critical effort we retain anonymity: we participate in the production of a discourse, but not in a social field that has physical coordinates. Not only do we lack confidence in one another and belief in the possibility of there still existing something called *society*, but we also lack confidence in ourselves and in what we say. For, as everything else, this is also relative, and it is something that is no longer defended through its own physical existence. We are all nearing the end of our prayer, the way King Claudius did so in *Hamlet*:

*My words fly up, my thoughts remain below:  
Words without thoughts never to heaven go.*

Our crisis is primarily political and economic, but it is also, as Tony Judt would put it, the result of a *discursive handicap*: we actually no longer know how to speak of our own discontent, let alone of the ways of overcoming it. For, to us, today everything is absolutely terrible and scandalous, everyone around us steals and cheats, everyone is engaged in shady activities and cover-ups, everyone is corrupt and everything is suspect. And thus, what is actually happening is something entirely different from that which is the reason for the existence of critical awareness in the first place: instead of creating and opening up antagonisms, instead of the dynamics of informed conflicts of different views that are ascertainable, we have a smoky discursive space that conceals antagonisms. Ambiguous critical thought (we know that the truth is not to be found in one or the other, perhaps not even in something else altogether, but in something unfathomable that is actually of no interest to us because it is much too complicated anyway) in place of an antagonism that it thinks it creates actually produces another consensus. And this is so precisely because ambiguous critical thought, in its continuous unveiling of the terrible and the scandalous, actually contends that rejection of politics is actually our most correct political option. And so comes to pass that which is the most convenient thing to happen from the perspective of those who, out of their own private interests, naturally enough, continue to be engaged in politics. The moment when critical social thought abandons the sphere of politics, politics truly becomes nothing more than a private activity, wherein the only question is how much something *costs*, and no longer how much something *is worth*. Ambiguous thought knows of no public interest, for this thought is the product of an order wherein politics has been privatised, those who remain in its service are, at best, only badly paid and depression-prone administrative workers. What we get, hence, as Judt would put it, is an eviscerated state, where civic engagement in running public affairs has been removed as well: “If active and concerned citizens deprive themselves of the right to deal with politics, they actually give society over to its most mediocre and venal civil servants.”

Finally, if the sphere of politics has been smeared with poo to such an extent that no honest person would wish to smell the stench of that *cloaca maxima*, this also presupposes that social criticism has provided for itself some pure, highly moral, almost sublime, sphere of speech and action. On the other hand, this sphere is, alas, a mere simulation of public space. In it, there is no physical contact, there is only endless exchange of information. And just to remind ourselves, public interest is neither the interest of the majority nor the interest of the minority, and it is not a matter of popular consensus either; public interest is a matter of contestation of propositions, their public circulation and responsibility to the possibilities of one's own social application.

We shall all readily agree that the differences between the rich and the poor are increasing, and that will inevitably lead to something in the future, but we still do not know what. There is a frightening collusion between those who are supposed to protect public interests and those who merely safeguard their own private interests. Corruption is omnipresent and the only difference there is has to do with the number of zeroes after the first digit. Everybody is responsible for this, except, of course, for those who think that they are not so naïve to admit that to themselves. But, to quote Tony Judt again: "Those who claim that the *system* has collapsed, those who see mysterious manoeuvring behind every political gaffe, can teach us little about it." Anti-capitalist criticism has become another light form, a discursive commodity that is prevented by its best-by date from making distinctions and making judgements. This criticism has been voluntarily deprived of its own position, and it does not know any longer just precisely what it advocates, and what kind of vision is actually being advocated. For, even when it does advocate something, then the criticism itself is inexorably condemned to being a mere naïve discourse invoking those categories that none other than the neo-liberal order has removed from the social sphere and public vocabulary. For example, *confidence*. (The word has come to refer only to confidence in a particular bank and banker, and since that confidence melted away a long time ago, the very notion has been sacrificed as missing the point and outdated.)

It is naïve enough to even speak about such contradictions, and it would certainly be superfluous if powerful self-ambiguity were not the dominant feature of Serbian political thought, that is to say, if a current and universal discursive defeat did not seamlessly sink into Serbian political circumstances and political heritage. We do not refer here merely to political parties, state organs and institutions, all those things that constitute the main target of every criticism anyway, but to a *political constant* that defines the public discourse in Serbian society without any changes, thereby limiting the public sphere. We refer to that constant that determines something that should define our political-national identity, the constant that, as the *national-cultural imaginarium*, obstructs any form of transformative social imagination. At the beginning of the 21st century, as was the case towards the end of the 19th century and onward, we speak of there existing a resistance to modernisation in Serbia, and even to any idea of changing the socially static and pre-modern imaginarium. In the words of the historian Dubravka Stojanović:

*How could we explain the key problem, that resistance to modernisation almost always received the support of the majority, and eventually proved successful when it came to slowing down the modernisation of Serbia? The success and longevity of that policy were the consequence of a special ideology that is essentially anti-modern, anti-individualist, anti-urban and anti-European, which is simultaneously egalitarian and collectivist. That ideology constitutes an amalgam of egalitarian social ideals and nationalism, and is simultaneously left-wing and right-wing... Within its framework, social equality is understood as the basis of national compactness, as the guardian of the nation, so that any social change could bring the nation into question.*

This ideology, both left- and right-wing, both national and egalitarian, remains the reigning one in Serbia regardless of various, more or less, violent political coups, breakdowns and changes. It is probably the reason why there have been so many violent overthrows of the powers-that-be, political assassinations, and permanent social nervous breakdowns in Serbia — because the ideological constant never changes, regardless of such dramatic events. The constant is a hotbed of ambiguity, of the shady and vague variety, and essentially self-denying. It marks a futile attempt at creating a society without antagonisms (a society that will accept to huddle in its entirety under the plum-tree of the Serbian national myth), a society that never changes, actually a society that, precisely for that reason, will always be caught by surprise by those antagonisms that cannot be articulated otherwise but as violent acts. Since the ideal image of non-conflictual Serbian *sabornost* does not envisage social antagonisms, there exists no discourse within which one could speak of them, except for the one stating that all those antagonisms are nothing but a negative influence of some outside factor, therefore, something vague, indefinite and self-denying again.

What we call critical awareness in Serbia is also under the influence of this ideological constant. In a great number of characteristic cases, it ensures a seamless blending of right-wing nationalism and left-wing anti-globalism, Chetniks and vegans, priests and trade-union bosses. However, this is not merely a local political metastasis, but one of the possible consequences of an entirely obvious process and the understandable need to overcome the *status quo* somehow: any clear-cut ideological affiliation becomes impossible today, after all that we have been through, for each ideology is historically tainted to such an extent that we rather opt for: *I'd rather not*. And when it comes to that *I'd rather not*, we can establish a structural difference and claim that we can utter that *I'd rather not* from at least two positions — from the ambiguous and the ambivalent one. We can get help in this from another (fictitious) Wall Street figure, the scrivener Bartleby from Herman Melville's story "Bartleby the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street". Bartleby could be a hero of our era, a proven alter-globalist and white ballot paper, one who, through his passive *almost-refusal*, opts for non-participation, who adds to the rigid distinction between ability and inability the specific *ability not to*. Bartleby's "I would prefer not to" might, at first glance, fit in with the ambiguous, left/right-wing, elitist egalitarian, self-righteous

and always relative necessity of maintaining a distance and non-participation. But as Agamben reminds us, it is not a matter of necessity here but of *contingency*, not of what you must do but of what you can do — for, will ends the ambiguity of potency. Bartleby’s formula reads: “Under what conditions can something be confirmed and (that is, simultaneously) not be confirmed, be true no more than be untrue?” One of the answers could be — under the conditions of fiction, that is, art and its ambivalence.

The building of the Geodetic Institute and its history could be a case study for various forms of research, including artistic research. But what we proceed from here is not outrage over the fact that someone has stolen a chandelier from this building, damaged the stucco wall coating or made an illegal profit by renting out this venue for a “Eyes Wide Shut Party”. Those are criminal offences, and they leave little room for ambivalence or ambiguity. What is of greater interest to us is how society is mirrored in this building, its history and its uncertain future. And how an artistic form or practice supplements, creates and enters into relationships with the fictions of these premises. For, we cannot understand this space as anything else but fictitious, and thus as a sphere of possible imagination, as a space for propositions that cannot change the world, but can refuse, precisely through their own ambivalence, to participate in the ambiguous multitude where there are no differences, where there are no situated subjects, where no one knows anything, no one hears or sees, and everybody speaks as if they knew everything. Ambivalence does not mean infinite reservation and postponement of meaning, but awareness that notions are constantly in motion, that there is no universal justice, and fortunately, no final solution either. And yet, though it might sound perverse to some, we claim that this is a political exhibition. But it is a political exhibition that in no way invokes political views prepared in advance or the ambiguous magma of a sceptical, cynical or disappointed mind that sees no differences. Our politics is of the naïve variety.

How, then, is it possible at all to think the *procedures* of that art whose *coming into being* is not connected with the existing corruption of consciousness, but which is very much and first of all conscious of the corruption of art itself? Which, through its practice, through the fact of its own self-invention and self-definition (autonomous as much as heteronomous), affirms the issue of the awkwardness of its purpose or role in society? In the absence of a definition, let us make use of the three characteristics singled out by Mika Hannula in a text of his dealing with the relationship between art and the public sphere, and generally with the politics of art. This art, then, is characterised by the following: 1) “it is not primarily a product striving primarily for profit”; 2) “it does not yearn for a consensus”, and 3) “it connects opposing views and values, and creates a situation of intellectual and emotional joy”. When “both the public sphere and art are definitely chock-full of all kinds of communication and materials, from sounds and slogans to moving pictures, the question which arises is: what is *extra-value*, what is the difference that contemporary art can make and thus contribute something?” If this value resides in forms of participation, then it is a kind of participation which is no mere empty gesture of invitation to take

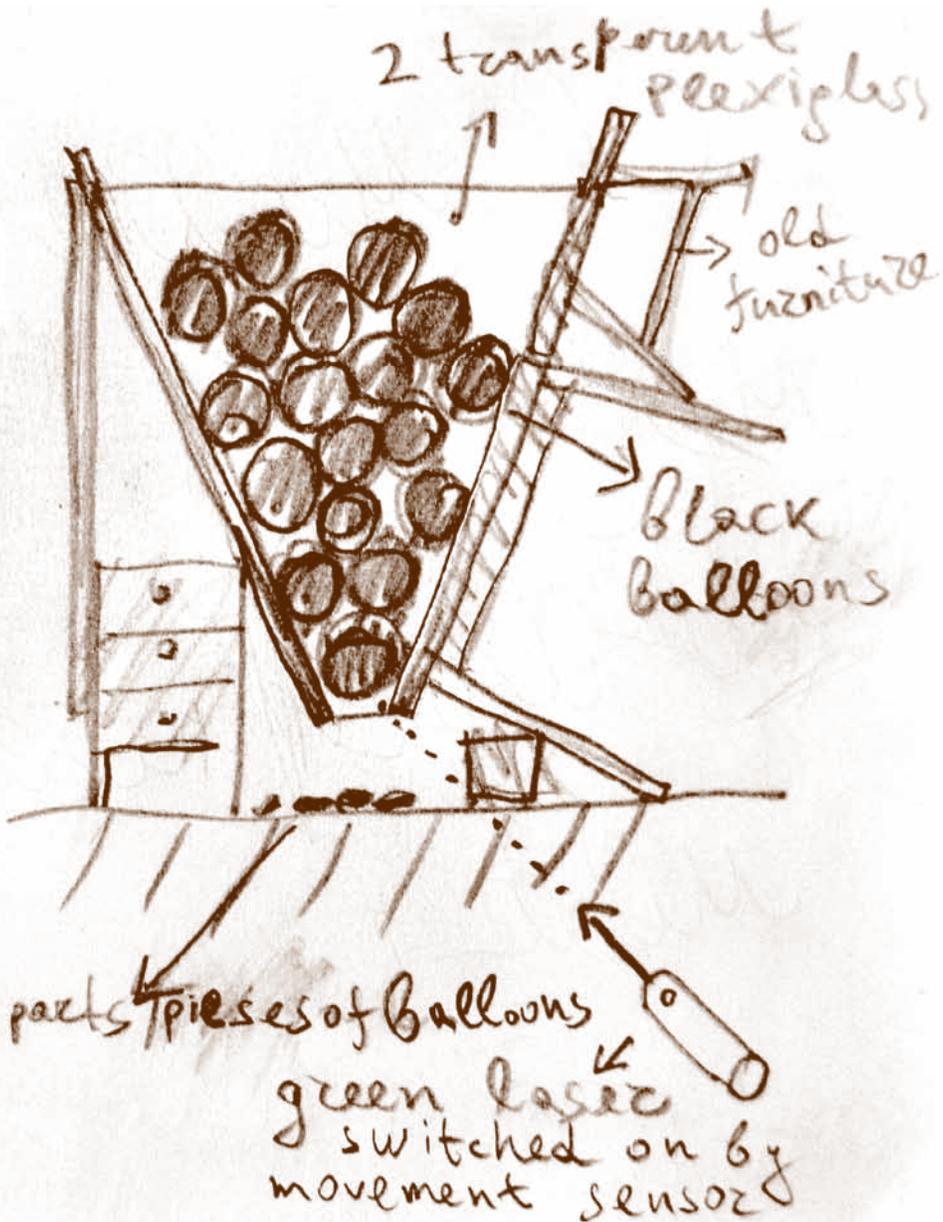
part in the artist's orchestration, but "participation in the production of meaning within the politicised public sphere in a manner that is closest to us". What it is about, then, is work in "local" terms, a method that is not only "alternative" in the sense of its "critical attitude towards some hegemony, but "alternative" as a materialisation and a way of communicating in the existing imaginarium. And which, let us add, retains the possibility of a misunderstanding, and which is a *construction of the experience of the possible as such*.

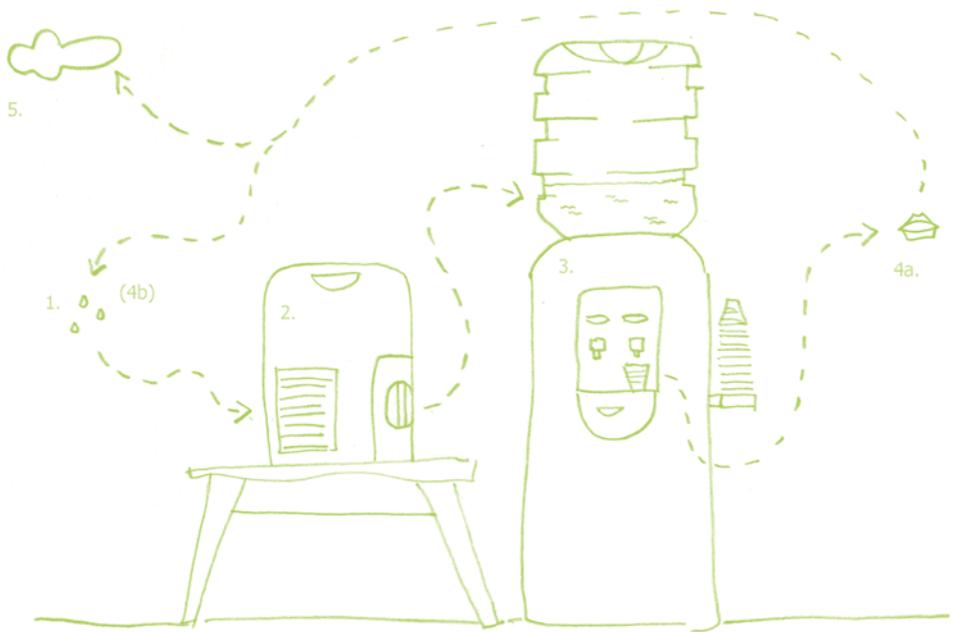
Each and every exhibition is, first and foremost, a specific form of exchange within the framework of a specific environment or ambience. The intention of this exhibition is precisely to try to establish distinctions and relations between *space* as a static constant (both physical and social space) and *place* as something temporary and changeable. The openness of this exchange makes it possible to avoid both the commodification of artistic work and the one-dimensionality of some pre-defined social (or political) goal, consensus, that is, destination of artistic method. This exhibition, just like this book, therefore, strives to open space without premeditation, which might imply opting for one of the two positions that dominate the understanding of contemporary art. One of them is a relapse into invoking the myth about artistic autonomy (which has commodification as its end result), whereas the other is a relapse into invoking the instrumentality of art in expressing a predetermined political discourse. Instead of autonomy, on the one hand, and "politicising", on the other, the exhibition offers a place of simultaneity of the physical and the discursive, as a place of instability and risk, wherein a potential is opened for a synergy of physical and social imagination.

The architectural space of the Geodetic Institute, as well as the narratives that make up its history, are the starting points for reflecting a number of social processes, their promises and fallacies, processes which characterised, first of all, the local "case" of attempt at, progress and hiatus in social modernisation. The modern epoch has been characterised, more than anything, by the ability to have a vision of the future, towards which today's era assumes a position of scepticism and irony. However, the basic promise of modernity, which, to put it simply, boils down to — a good life for all, has remained an irreducible locus of connection between individual wishes and social imagination in a process of continual circulation. This circulation is manifested as a circle wherein personal imagination (wish, dream, fear), collective imagination (myth, utopia, commonplace ideas) and fiction, that is, cultural and artistic constructs and images, occupy a place on an equal footing. To show this circulation, it is not enough to treat art or this exhibition as presentational and demonstrative. The actual "medium" of exhibition has been brought into question today through the development of communication and information technologies and networks, so that an exhibition, if it is solely a place of "presenting" visual material or exchange of information, becomes superfluous. What an exhibition as a medium can still offer is the "physicality" of its own space, the specific character of spatial experience that can have a transformational potential. And it does not give up on advocating the idea of a good life. However laughable or pathetic that may sound.

Referring to the time when utopian formations of modernity were in circulation, one philosopher of our era draws the conclusion that “there is no such thing as a possible society, but only the existing society”. Also, we cannot understand the need for new forms of social imagination as delivering political and moral lessons, or blindly serving some of the righteous destinations and models which that imagination is supposed to resurrect. The political side of this exhibition does not deal with pre-defined political horizons (although it does inherit and respect some of them), but tries to point to *politicism as a process of subjectivisation*, wherein the political subject “extracts” him/herself from the dominant categories of identification and classification, but is prepared to publicly participate in the social sphere within the framework of those propositions and circumstances that he/she experiences as imposed and wrongly positioned, but which are real. In order to achieve this, it is not enough to assume the self-sufficient and self-satisfied position of the righteousness of repetitive advocacy of just goals and ideal solutions, for it limits its horizon of imagination, whether it wants to do so or not, through its ambiguous origin and self-isolation. It seems important, therefore, to recognise in art those processes of its self-transformation which, having positioned themselves miles away from the myth about the apolitical autonomy of its vocation, are now also leaving behind the paralysing tam-tam debates along the lines of *what-are-we-to-do-when-no-one-wants-to-do-anything*, and taking us, very, very slowly, into the heterology of common insights, feelings and experiences. But they are also posing the following unpleasant question to us: what else can we do, or what do we want to do with those things that cannot be quantified or tweeted?

**BOOKS QUOTED HERE OR READ DURING THE WRITING OF THIS TEXT:** Giorgio Agamben, *Bartleby ili o kontingenciji* [*Bartleby or on Contingency*], Meandarmedia, Zagreb, 2009 • Marc Augé, *Varljivi kraj stoleća* [*Fictions about the End of the Century*], XX vek, Belgrade, 2003 • Julian Barnes, *Ovo liči na kraj* [*The Sense of an Ending*], Geopoetika, Belgrade, 2012 • Umberto Eco, Stephen Jay Gould, Jean-Claude Carrière, Jean Delumeau, *Conversations About the End of Time*, Penguin books, London, 2000 • Mika Hannula, *Politics, Identity and Public Space – Critical reflections in and through the practices of contemporary art*, Expothesis, Utrecht, 2009 • Tony Judt, *Ill Fares the Land*, Penguin Books, London, 2010 • Dubravka Stojanović, *Kaldra i asfalt – Urbanizacija i evropeizacija Beograda 1890–1914* [*Cobblestones and Asphalt – The Urbanisation and Europeanisation of Belgrade 1890–1914*], Udruženje za društvenu istoriju, Belgrade, 2008 • Marko Živković, *Serbian Dreambook – National Imaginary in the Time of Milošević*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2011





**LEGEND:**

1. Moisture in the room
2. Electric Moisture Absorber
3. Office water Machine
- 4a. People drink the absorbed water
- 4b. Chairs to sit, drink and breathe
5. People “take” the absorbed water outside (in their bodies) and continue sharing it.



SVEBOR MIDŽIĆ

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# STONES THAT SPEAK — ON THE OCCASION OF AN ART EXHIBITION IN THE GEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE BUILDING, WHICH ACTUALLY USED TO BE A STOCK EXCHANGE BUILDING

*In those ancient times, stones in the earth's bosom and the planets in their heavenly heights cared about the fate of men, as opposed to today, when everyone, be it in the skies or under the ground, has become indifferent to the fate of the sons of man, so that no voice speaks to men from there, let alone listens to them. All those newly discovered planets no longer have any roles in horoscopes, and there is a multitude of new stones, measured and weighed, their specific weight and density established, but they no longer proclaim anything to us and are of no use to us. Their time for speaking to men has run out.*  
Nikolai Leskov, Alexandrite<sup>1</sup>

[1]

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Quoted from *Estetički ogle-  
di* [Essays on Aesthetics],  
Walter Benjamin, p. 166,  
translated by: Truda  
Stamać, Školska knjiga,  
Zagreb, 1986.

**GEOLOGY IS A SCIENCE OF THE PHYSICAL NARRATIVE.** In other words, as opposed to Hegel, who claimed that only stone is innocent, geology holds the belief, if we allow ourselves an anthropomorphisation of a human discipline almost in the manner of the era of antiquity, that each stone is, if not a perpetrator of something or

other, then at least a silent witness not very favourably disposed towards a researcher. A geologist, a scientist, would then actually be someone using diverse methods, of which not the last or the least important one would be a creative visualisation of a particular landscape through time, in order to get stone to speak out.

Seemingly, a geologist and an artist share a narrative space there. Through the long history of art, the artist has been the one to whom, among other things, a landscape, surroundings, spoke something, or the one who, reportedly, possesses the gift of being able to get inanimate objects to speak to others.

In his travel fiction *The Songlines*, the British writer Bruce Chatwin describes how the songs of the Australian Aborigines were an inseparable part of their physical surroundings. It was these songs that actually gave objects and locations voices, formed narratives around them and enabled people, in the manner of some antediluvian GPS system, to move through their physical surroundings more easily and safely.

*In theory, at least, the whole of Australia could be read as a musical score. There was hardly a rock or creek in the country that could not or had not been sung. One should perhaps visualise the Songlines as a spaghetti of Iliads and Odysseys, writhing this way and that, in which every “episode” was readable in terms of geography.<sup>2</sup>*

Naturally, what we are dealing with here are very distant ancestors of what we call art today. Devoid of authorship and the attendant commodification of art, communal and religious in an equal measure, they were primarily utilitarian when it came to creating a cognitive map of the space surrounding the singer. To reiterate, then, this is a very distant ancestor of what we call art today. Just as other primates, that is, distant cousins of men, are to be found in natural science reservations, so these practices, having survived to this day, are under the supervision of anthropology and folkloristics, and right on the porous borderline with study of art.

However, as crime thrillers teach us (not to mention the psychoanalysis-informed *neo-noir*), we sometimes have to go to the beginning to see the place where we end. The past century of art has offered numerous examples along these lines that correspond to these “primitive” practices: from urban psychogeography to situationist flaneurism.

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*The Songlines*, Bruce Chatwin, p. 13, Penguin Books, London, 1987.

[3]

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*After Finitude: Essays on the Necessity of Finitude*, Quentin Meillassoux, p. 24, Continuum Press, 2008.

Let us get back to geology and leave art aside for the moment. Or to put it more precisely, let us place geology next to art. We have seen that in the case of both there is an intent to recognise and impart the meaning of objects around us. However, it is obvious that there exists a fundamental difference between the two.

If we cast even a cursory glance at the dates which geology (this is, of course, an abbreviation for “the community of scientists dealing with geology”) recognises as the most important ones for the formation of the object of their research, that will cause our heads to spin. Actually, as a science, geology directs its gaze towards very distant past, which precedes not only the advent of man, but also the emergence of life as we know it.

To use the term forwarded by the French philosopher Quentin Meillassoux, geology as a science deals almost solely with what he calls *ancestrality* (ancestralité). To him, ancestrality would be a designation for the time that preceded the emergence of conscience.

*Let us consider what an ancestral event is to a physicist... It would commence with the following observation: in the case of events preceding the emergence of life on planet Earth, such as its creation (the era of the accumulation of matter that led to the formation of our planet), it is meaningless to say “It was warm then”, or to observe that the light was “blinding”, or to make any other subjective judgement. Since we know that there could have been no observers there to experience the creation of our planet, and that even if anyone had been there, he could not have survived such extreme heat, everything that can be said about such an event is what our “measurements”, that is, our mathematical data, allow us to claim: for example, that it is a process that began some 4.56 billion years ago, which is not momentary but lasted millions of years (or to put it more precisely, for tens of millions of years), and that this process occupied a certain space that varied with the passing of time. In accordance with this, we should insist that it is meaningless to claim that those qualities which are noticeable when a living being is present — such as colour (and not simply frequency), heat (and not temperature), smell (and not a chemical reaction), etc. — that is, that those secondary qualities were present at the moment the planet was being created.<sup>3</sup>*

To us, not just a royal but probably the only path to ancestry (unless a time machine is designed), is through what Meillassoux calls the *arch-fossil* (arche-fossile), which is “not only those materials that point to traces of life in the past, the usual meaning of the word *fossil*, but also those that point to the existence of an ancestral reality or event preceding life on earth.”

When God addresses Job, saying:

*Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding (Job 38.4),*

Job should produce a stone, an arch-fossil, in the manner of a geologist, and say: “Actually, I wasn’t there at the time, but owing to this object, I know that this event happened, and since I am sentient, I can think of that event.”

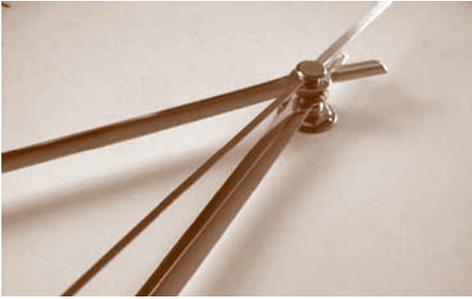
It is possible for us to think of an object having existed before us, Meillassoux asserts, because the discursive practice of mathematics enables us to establish the primary characteristics of an object. The primary characteristics of an object, then, are those that we can mathematise.

For example, the precious stone called alexandrite, which is usually found in the Ural mountains in Russia, is emerald green in daylight, but becomes blood red under artificial light. Its physical properties that influence absorption can be expressed mathematically. Colour, and its change, exists only in relation to an observer. This is even rather banal, for a change of colour necessitates the presence of artificial light.

Therefore, the realm of geology is a realm of primary characteristics (thing-in-itself) expressed in the only possible way (as Quentin Meillassoux proves) through their mathematisation. The object of geology is a world without awareness and observation, and that is how that science becomes the skill of thinking of the world before thought existed. If stones do speak during those processes, there is no one to listen to them, and we can only express the story about those events, paradoxically enough, if we exclude ourselves as narrators and “reduce” it to a sequence of numbers approximating that event.

On the other hand, the world of art is actually a world of secondary characteristics (things as they are to us). It is a world of those characteristics that are within the framework of our relationship







with the object, and are hence not part of our consciousness, which is inseparable from our corporeality, nor are they part of anything inherent to the object itself. Therefore, secondary characteristics actually constitute our relationship with an object. In other words, art, or at least a part of it, taking into account that this necessarily constitutes reductionism, is a narrativisation of our relationship with objects and with the space that they occupy.

What this is all about is as follows: the existence of ancestry and the possibility of our thinking about it is actually at the heart of the aporia of what Meillassoux calls *correlationism*. Correlationism would actually be the entire philosophy after Kant, which claims that we can only have access to the relations between thought and objects, but never to one without the other.

What Meillassoux wants to see in his speculative turnabout is the anthropocentrism of correlationism replacing a system wherein reality, which can be known, is in the centre, and a human being is merely one of the elements in the network. Also, within this system there would be no division into the level of nature and the level of artificiality (culture), but only one level, reality, wherein human culture and nature enjoy the same ontological status.

Thus, for this philosophy, this constitutes a kind of an all-or-nothing game. The point where one plays *va banque*: the existence of ancestry and arch-fossils is the key aporia that enables us to re-examine our attitude towards the absolute, that is, towards the truth of the fundamental metaphysical issues.

According to this view, geology (and not just geology) is here to make us honest, and mathematics would constitute the index of that honesty (faithfulness to the idea of the primary characteristics of an object). The result of this would also be that art does not care much for this kind of honesty.

But let us now turn to history, which, just like art, lives on relations, in order to see what the consequences of this are for us. And not just any history or history as an abstract category, but the concrete case of Yugoslav past.

Today's mirror of Serbian culture cracks every time when it tries to reflect its object. In the manner of a horror movie, the image in the mirror actually does not correspond to what one wants to see.

The image of the Serbian culture of today (in an extensive sense of the term) is actually mediated by the Yugoslav experience. We can say that those who wish to ponder the object of Serbian

culture are faced with the fact that there is identity between that object and the subject that we may call Yugoslav.

Quite simply, our entire experience of culture is mediated by this subject. This situation is now already reminiscent of a case of possession. Serbian liberal and civic intelligentsia wishes to think of Serbian culture in its basic, pure, national and statehood-affirming form, but each time it turns out that the entire cognitive apparatus with which we are able to ponder that object is actually Yugoslav and socialist in character.

How, then, is one to ponder that elusive object of Serbian culture in itself, how to discover its basic characteristics, when our thinking is Yugoslav in character? How does one sneak upon the object in spite of Hegel?

In other words, how is one to ponder ancestry before the Yugoslav subject that has enabled us to form a modern apparatus with which to ponder the contemporary world? The actual attack upon the Yugoslav socialist subject has proved unsuccessful, ending up as tragic or comic, as was the case when the lyrics of the song *Through Woods and Across Mountains* [associated with the Partisan movement during WWII, translator's note] were changed during the visit of the then President of Russia Dmitri Medvedev on the occasion of V Day, when the word "Partisan" was omitted.

And so, if it cannot be done like that, then how?

Why, it is quite simple: through a kind of historical geology whose task would be to find the arch-fossils that precede Yugoslav socialism and reveal its inconsistencies, also helping to break up the Yugo-centric model of pondering reality that still has the Yugoslav subject in its centre, in order to offer an even model wherein it would be merely one of the objects possessing the same rank.

Thus Zoran Đinđić, probably the most articulate critic of Yugoslavia as a process (that is, a relationship), used a mineralogical metaphor when discussing this topic that seems very felicitous to us:

*Oswald Spengler used the mineralogical term of pseudomorphosis to designate the discrepancy between "content" and "form" in some phenomena of our cultural history. In mineralogy, this term is used to designate the occurrence of a mineral in the form of a crystal that is characteristic of another, previous mineral. After the old crystals have grown so much that only "the pure crystal form as an empty structure of the crystal" remains, new minerals, which their*

*inner growth also drives towards crystallisation, do not have their crystal form, but spontaneously fill the existing empty structure, pile up inside it and adapt themselves to it.*

*Is not Yugoslavia the result of such a pseudomorphosis? Did it not, as a state creation, only place an empty form at our disposal, into which its growing, uncontrolled content poured (as “national trends”), which would have gladly created its own form had it only been able to do so; however, due to a specific set of political-historical circumstances, it was forced to adapt? <sup>4</sup>*

These relationships are clear enough, then: the primary content (the one that was given and is historically correct) is the one that is seemingly given over to form. This act of conforming cannot last, and our task is to empirically establish this “real content” and to draw a moral from it that could guide our further actions. And the moral is clear enough:

*It is evident why Yugoslavia cannot become a nation state in the real sense of the term.*

In other words, Yugoslavia cannot be a rational political community (which is why to Đinđić the code word is national) because it is imprisoned within an upside-down manner of thinking, one which mistakes cause (a wish to have a nation state) for consequence (Yugoslavia). Yugoslavia emerges there as a mistake in the process of reasoning, which exists only as our relationship with the object that has always been merely the nation state. The form is Yugoslav because it is actually just our relationship with the object, while the content, in fact, the truth, is that of the nation state.

For example, the history of the Belgrade Commune building, which later became the seat of the Geological Institute of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and then of the Institute for Geological and Geophysical research of the People’s Republic of Serbia, may be an arch-fossil that proves this thesis. Before the Geological Institute of Yugoslavia, the building housed the Belgrade Commune as a natural formation of the aggregation of capital.

In place of metaphysics, we get an aggregation of the basic content that tends towards its natural form in a nation state, without any need for an artificial intervention that mixes up causes and consequences.

[4]

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*Jugoslavija kao nedovršena država [Yugoslavia as an Unfinished State], Zoran Đinđić, pp. 6–11, Književna zajednica Novog Sada, Novi Sad, 1988.*

We have seen that mathematics has a privileged position in Meillassoux's thesis. We may say that the empirical exactness of the mathematical model has a role when it comes to attempts at discovering pre-socialist ancestry.

Naturally, this interpretation places us in the position of naturalisation of the economy. Which, yet again, brings us back to mathematics as a possibility of presenting the basic characteristics of an object.

As Engels observes in a letter to Mehring, bourgeoisie, bearing in mind only the finality of the capitalist manner of production, sees the "shift" from mercantilists towards physiocrats as a discovery of facts, or correct thinking in the final analysis, and not as part of broader social dynamics. Therefore, the bourgeoisie sees it as an act of discovering a natural law that has always been there and only needed to be discovered, it required a stroke of genius to stumble across it, and not as one of the mechanisms of social change in a relationship with the means and conditions of production.

Let us now go back to the artist as someone who narrativises space, thus socialising it, and who can perhaps withstand both historicisation and mathematisation. The artist as someone who, to paraphrase Benjamin's text on Baudelaire, classifies the public on the basis of social strata as easily as the geologist recognises layers in stone.

Let us look at a detail from Gleb Ouspensky's story "He Has Not Been Resurrected", which touches upon our example – the history of the development of capitalist entrepreneurship in Serbia.

*...After this war, I only consider them to be real heroes (émigré revolutionaries)... The fact that they did not join that filthy undertaking, the way I did, is an incomparable feat in itself... Can you imagine, I have killed a man... Why – pray, tell?*

*You have killed? Who?*

*I killed a Turk.*

*So what? Why, you were a volunteer, a soldier, and one has to kill in a war...*

*Why?*

*Because of Serbia, I mean, that's why you killed him.*

*Dolbezhnikov looked at me silently, without blinking.*

*Because of Serbia? – he asked.*

*I believe so!*

*No, it wasn't because of Serbia.*

*Not because of Serbia? Why, then?*

*Because of p-o-r-k!  
How's that?  
That's right, sir, because of pork...*

*I said that I didn't understand him, and Dolbezhnikov started to expound on his view of the Serbian war at some length. At the time, Serbian merchants needed to get rid of the sort of trading contracts that Turkey, then in control of Serbia, concluded with the neighbouring countries; those contracts were formulated in such a way that they made it impossible for Serbian capitalists to increase their capital, they could not own factories, large industrial plants or deal with skin processing... They could trade in raw materials, which subsequently returned to Serbia in the form of finished products, costing three times as much. And so now, Dolbezhnikov said, Serbian merchants would like to earn their right to bigger profits with arms, if need be, that is, to sell a pig, which is now sold merely as raw material, and consequently very cheaply, as a processed product and at a higher price. They want to earn this right with arms, for in the course of peaceful negotiations some concessions are necessary, such as giving foreigners the right to own land, which would immediately make it possible for foreign capital to enter Serbia, and then the domestic capitalists wouldn't be able to hold their own.*

*When, at long last, he finally finished expounding his view of that war, he asked me:  
It's because of pork, wouldn't you say?*

*Indeed, as it turned out, it did seem that the whole thing came about because of pork...<sup>5</sup>*

Actually, what was true about Ouspensky's account of it was not a proto-Marxist form of understanding historical relations, but the form assumed by the connection between killing and processed pork products. The name of that connection is *ideology*.

Its existence is not a consequence of some kind of "false consciousness" (or our confusion when we mistake the secondary characteristics of an object for its primary characteristics) that is dispelled by objective facts, but arises out of class antagonisms. Mathematics, in its role of an agent of naturalisation of the economy, does not help us here at all. True, the characteristics of a pig as a

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Quoted from *Lenjin o kulturi i umetnosti* [*Lenin on Culture and Art*], V. I. Lenjin, edited by Dragiša Živković, pp. 114–115, Kultura, Belgrade, 1957.

commodity can be mathematised, but as such, they actually tell us nothing about the social antagonisms that lie behind them. In order to understand those social antagonisms, we would have to distance ourselves from the pig and go back to Serbia, that is, the patriotic narrative (solidarity, brotherhood, emancipation...), which requires of those interrelated by it to kill a Turk.

Therefore, by sacrificing the Yugoslav subject in the name of political and historical reality whose cognition, reportedly, was blocked by this subject, we did not gain any true and unmediated access to the object of the political community (which, as we have seen, is actually a *nation state*), we were inadvertently treated to a return of some other, older forms of mediation. By sacrificing the process-relations in an attempt to get to the essence of the political community, we became the hostages of some older dogmatic forms.

That sacrifice also had another consequence. The focusing on the past meant a kind of ban on thinking about the future except as a replica of the past. In other words, what is behind us is actually identical to what is ahead of us. The moment when Yugoslav socialism existed was actually an incident in the course of which a dangerous illusion of the object of future history was in force.

The time ahead of us is a homogeneous whole that waits to be inhabited by eternal objects from the past, over which looms the nation state as a hyper-object stretching across both sides of the present. It appears that this long shadow of eternal revision is an eclipse that hides both the future and the past from our view, turning history into a brief episode.

However, the artistic method, that intertwined set of spaghetti stories, can offer us a different future and past. Let us go back to Leskov and stones.

In his story, the Alexandrite protagonist is actually a stone. The lowest form of created things, but one which is here given the prophetic power of insight into human history. That stone is positioned between the narrator and the stonemason Wenzel:

*All of a sudden he grabbed me by the hand where the ring with the alexandrite stone was, which, as is well known, glitters red in artificial light, and shouted: "Look, here it is, the prophetic Russian stone...! Oh, the cunning Siberian! It was always as green as hope, and only at dusk would it be covered with blood. It had been like that since the beginning of the world, but it had been hidden for*

*long in the ground, and only allowed itself to be discovered on the day Czar Alexander reached maturity, when a great magician came to Siberia to find it...* “What is that nonsense you are saying”, I interrupted him, “that stone was discovered by no magician but by a scientist by the name of Nordenskiöld! “Magician! — I tell you — magician!”, the stonemason cried in a strong voice. “Just take a look and see what this stone is like! There is a green morning and a bloody evening inside it... That is destiny, the destiny of the noble Czar Alexander!” Having uttered those words, he turned towards the wall, rested his head on his elbows... and started weeping.<sup>6</sup>

[6]

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Quoted from *Estetički ogledi*, Walter Benjamin, p. 166, translated by: Truda Stamač, Školska knjiga, Zagreb, 1986.

What is it that we have here? In the first place, it seems to be a conflict between the naïve view of the world of the stonemason and the rational understanding of it, exemplified by the position taken by the narrator.

However, we can say that there exists a third position as well. It is actually intuitive and recognises the truth in our very attitude towards the object. That third position is the one that is related to both the object and history. It is materialistic (in the Marxist sense) precisely because it has nothing to do with matter as understood by natural sciences.

Perhaps that is actually the position of the artist. The possibility of recognising singular, individual objects or making them part of some social narrative. The attitude of the artist towards the object is, then, actually his attitude towards not only physical reality, but also towards himself and towards sociability to the extent that it is contained inside him. Therefore, the artist is the one who stands between the universality of scientific truth and the material existence of the object and the singularity of his own experience of the object, only in a social context.

Hence the artist is not someone who merely narrates his own life or presents some hard and fast truths; instead, he makes it possible for us to translate them from the universal towards the singular and from absolute law towards a historical case. And that enables us to find the truth of the nation state in a pig and the pledge of a revolution in a stone.

That also means that artistic objects, always located in the present, through their relationship with the past, even if for a moment, can open ever so slightly the small door through which the future passes, the future which is not only the past revisited but also brings some glad tidings. ►





**GOOD LIFE**

**GO D I E**



MIRJANA DJURDJEVIĆ

# OATS AND GAMES (AN ADDITIONAL CHAPTER TO A NOVEL)

**IT'S NOT OVER WHEN IT'S OVER**, but when chance says it's over. And maybe not even then. Namely, years after the Researcher had shed light on the sad fate of Miroslav's Gospel, written it down and bound within the covers of a book entitled "Keepers of the Sacrament", under a pseudonym,<sup>1</sup> naturally, he was a serious scientist, after all, the chance-trickster hit him on the nose. Quite literally — on the nose.

A bet had taken him to the ruins of *The Belgrade Commune*, at no. 48, Karađorđeva Street. A friend of his, an architect, claimed that it was the first building in Belgrade for whose construction reinforced concrete had been used back in 1905. The Researcher knew of two even older buildings of that kind — "The Grand Hotel" in Kralja Petra Street, dating from 1900, and one apartment building in Kosančićev venac Street, dating from 1902. Afterwards, for the sake of consoling, or finishing off his opponent, he came up with the hypothesis that the spiral staircase in the counter hall of *The Belgrade Commune* building was made following Eiffel's patent — he had seen an almost identical one at the top of the *Santa Justa* elevator in Lisbon, completed at the time when construction work in Karađorđeva Street was just starting. "Impossible!", exclaimed the architect, who regularly accused the Researcher that his head was nothing short of an information rubbish bin, and then a bet ensued. They would photograph the staircase, compare it to the Lisbon blueprints...

We shall never find out the outcome of the bet, in view of the fact that the two of them never reached the counter hall. If the truth must be told, however, the accusation concerning the garbage bin on the Researcher's shoulders was pretty much accurate.

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Mirjana Đurđević,  
*Čuvari svetinje*  
[*Keepers of the Sacrament*],  
Agora, 2007. Hell's bells!  
(Researcher's note)

He refills that garbage bin rather often rummaging through all kinds of real garbage, which is why he could not resist the temptation to go through the contents of a roll-top desk whose entrails were spilling out, which they came across in the first office of *The Belgrade Commune* building that they entered at random. Incautiously, he pulled out a little wooden drawer protruding lopsidedly from the chaotic heap of stuff piled into the desk — “The installation of the Italian film crew”, the architect, whose additional business was finding suitable venues for foreign film crews, said shrugging his shoulders — only to have everything that had been piled into it fall on him. Including, among other things, a black filing folder covered with a thick layer of ancient-looking dust, which hit him on the nose. A label stuck onto it, which had been white a long time before, contained a single word, written in ink, in calligraphic handwriting:

### *Cupboard*

Cupboard?! Is sounded sufficiently idiotic for the Researcher to immediately forget about his linen trousers, clean as of that morning, sit down on the floor, which the Italian film crew had not bothered to sweep, and open the filing folder. Whereupon newspaper clippings fell out of it, each and every one of them dealing with the rashomoniad surrounding the temporary disappearance of Miroslav’s Gospel, from the night of the May 1903 coup d’état until it was spectacularly discovered in King Petar’s cases during the glorious retreat of the Serbian Government to Albania in 1915! The Researcher was, of course, familiar with the Gospel-related media uproar that regularly occurred between 1904 and 1911 each time when politicians found themselves lacking ammunition for bickering with rival political parties. The Researcher, of course, knew about all that, having once analysed the available transcripts of certain newspaper articles, but as for the originals... Next to each text, a note was written in inky pencil, indicating the source: *Pravda, Štampa, Tribuna, Večernje novosti, Opozicija...* [titles of Serbian newspapers from the period, *translator’s note*], the lot, as well as the dates of publication. The same pencil, and very likely the same hand, had filled a notebook, whose covers were black like the those of the filing folder it had been hidden in, with densely written text. Some kind of diary? If so, whose diary?

“Fucking cupboard”,<sup>2</sup> the Researcher swore, and then started looking round to see if the Italian film crew had by any chance left a plastic bag behind which he could use to stuff the newly found treasure into and smuggle it past the receptionist.

13th September 1902

*As early as the first day at the building site, I met Master Luka.<sup>3</sup> He came up to me and asked me if I was from Herzegovina, to which I replied that there were strapping fellows in our part of the country, on Mt Rudnik, too. We were of exactly the same height. “Right, right”, he grumbled and patted me on the shoulder, and then gazed at my hands with interest, so I did as my Tutor had instructed me, which was to stick to the truth as closely as possible. I explained to him that I had recently started attending the High School, that my family in the village were poor, so that I had to support myself, and that this was my first day at work. “The trowel’s not for you”, this giant of a man laughed, “we’ll find something more suitable for a student. How would you like to be my gardener?” I wanted to reply that I was a student of botany, but I bit my tongue in time, for I could barely distinguish stubble from marigold, he would see through me in no time at all; I thanked him profusely and accepted his offer, reasoning that it would be easier for me to revise goniometry in the solitude of a garden than amidst the hubbub of a building site. He told me to report to the foreman the next morning and went away. In the evening, I dropped in at the “Two Italians” for a glass of brandy and cabbage stew, the Tutor didn’t show up while I was there. Tonight — the cosine theorem.*

14th September 1902

*Master Luka awaited me early in the morning when I reported to the foreman, and he took me to the “garden” himself. Woe is me, Milan, what have you done? My Tutor will just kill me, so I’ll need no support from the Service for my studies. For, it’s not just that I won’t be seeing Master Luka in the “garden”, I won’t see anyone whatsoever. I don’t know what I had been imagining, presumably a small local garden in-between Javorska, Crnogorska and Kraljevića*

[2]

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The content of the diary shows that the swearword accidentally turned out to be quite appropriate, that is, that the diary most likely belonged to Milan Stevanović — nicknamed *Cupboard*, a strapping lad who became the main analyst of the *Royal Intelligence Service* between the Great Wars, one of the best students, be it publicly, at the High School, or secretly, at the *Service*, of Professor Mihailo Petrović Alas. (Researcher’s note)

[3]

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From the text that follows, it is obvious that the diarist refers to the Savamala [part of Belgrade near the Sava river, *translator’s note*] merchant Luka Čelović Trebinjac (1854–1929), at that time (1902) the Chairman of the Managing Board of *The Belgrade Commune* for three years already and its greatest shareholder. (Researcher’s note)

*Marka Streets, Master Luka's new house is being built on the corner at no. 1, Kraljevića Marka Street, in any case, he took me down Karadordeva Street, it was a couple of minutes' walk, to that huge field opposite St Nicholas Square and told me he wanted to have a garden made there, as best I could. He looked with an expression of commiseration at the shovel and rake I had taken with me from the building site, and added that paper and pencil would be rather more useful to me. I felt like a complete ass.*

*I spent the morning walking across the field, trying to measure it and establish a sense of proportion. It was to no avail, everything turned out lopsided. In the afternoon, I chased away some children playing there, whose shouting prevented me from thinking straight. I dropped in at the "Kičevo" for a glass of brandy and a plate of beans, my Tutor was nowhere to be seen, it was as if the Service had let me down the drain. The cosine theorem again, I'm all confused.*

*18th September 1902*

*The other day, on my way to work, at the Great Staircase building site I accidentally saw Miss Jelisaveta Načić,<sup>4</sup> an architect from the Municipal Hall, and decided to apply to her for help. I told her about my problems, which she listened to with interest, at least that's the impression I got, and then she started pulling my leg. "My young colleague, proceed from the figure of the circle." What was she on about, woe betide her? "The circle is an ideal geometric figure, and the same goes for a garden. You can place an entire merry-go-round in its centre without disturbing its harmony..." I played dumb for a while yet, since she looked very pretty when she was joking, and eventually asked her what she would advise me to plant inside that circle instead of a merry-go-round. She laughed, her laughter somehow seeming to originate from her lungs, and said, "Why, you could plant bananas!";<sup>5</sup> raised her skirt above her ankles and glided up her staircase, towards her workers, carrying her designs under her arm.*

*In any case, with the help of a stake and a piece of rope, which I used to draw big circles, I was just about to complete marking the Big Circle with lime when Master Luka showed up. I tried to explain to him the bit about harmony, but he just waved his hand and told me to come to his place in the afternoon because he wanted to give me a couple of his suits, as we were the same size. "A High School*

[4]

—  
Jelisaveta Načić (1878-1955), the first woman architect in Serbia. She designed the primary school building next to the Orthodox Cathedral, the Church of Aleksandar Nevski, the Pavilion for Tuberculosis-related Diseases, numerous apartment buildings, as well as the Small Staircase in Pariska Street, at the entrance to Kalemegdan Park, and the Great Staircase connecting the Sava dock with Kosančićev venac Street. (Researcher's note)

[5]

—  
This statement made by Jelisaveta Načić was in all likelihood an ironic allusion to the solution that the engineer-gardener Charles Leroux came up with: around the same time he had bananas planted in the flower beds in Terazije Square, to the great amusement of the local expert public. However, if one bears in mind that the "garden" wherein the young Milan Stevanović-Cupboard began his career as a spy is known today under the name "Pussy Park", it is possible that Miss Načić possessed visionary qualities apart from the strictly architectural ones. (Researcher's note)

*student must be dressed like a gentleman, not like a gardener”, he said half jocularly half seriously. I acquiesced, what else could I do, I mean, it was part of my job description.*

*I was surprised to see that his current flat, a little way up Kraljevića Marka Street, was furnished almost as modestly as my student quarters, presumably he wasn’t buying anything because he was preparing to furnish his new house as befitted a merchant of his wealth and reputation. And the suits that he gave me, even though they were made of a good material, were of an old-fashioned cut and the trousers showed signs of wear, as if he didn’t care very much about the way he looked. I certainly won’t be wearing them, even though they fit me perfectly in the back and as far as the length of the sleeves and the trouser legs is concerned, but I my stomach won’t be as big as his for at least thirty more years, better still, it should never get that big. I imagine what Miss Načić would say if she saw me... She is a few years older than me, but I suppose I could pass myself off as being of her age on account of my size. But then, what would such a fine young lady find in an ordinary student and “gardener”, and I dare not even dream of telling her about my engagement with the Service.*

*I let my imagination run free and succumb to romanticism too much, and I have yet to swat up on cyclometric functions. Finally saw my Tutor tonight at the “Black Horse”, told me he was satisfied with my oral report and that I was to keep up the good work.*

There follow numerous entries, on the basis of which one can conclude the following:

- That Master Luka Čelović soon realised Cupboard was no good as a gardener and hired a professional instead of him but, having a soft spot for students, especially those who were good at doing figures, kept the young man in his employ.
- That, during the course of the ensuing months, Cupboard, then nominally employed with *The Insurance and Loan Association of the Belgrade Commune*, actually worked as a personal secretary of sorts to Master Luka Čelović, which made it possible for him to get a detailed picture of the man’s business deals outside the *Commune*, mainly to do with profitably supplying the Army with oats and bread for municipal guards, and also to meet his personal friends.
- That Master Luka, on account of his poor education — two years of primary school, as he personally admitted — and ignorance of

etiquette, was not exactly cordially received in Belgrade's higher circles, but he cared little about that, spending his free time with Dr Milorad Gođevac, the municipal physician, Vasa Jovanović, Žika Rafailović, Nikola Spasić and Ljuba Kovačević organising Chetnik raids in Old Serbia!?!?!?

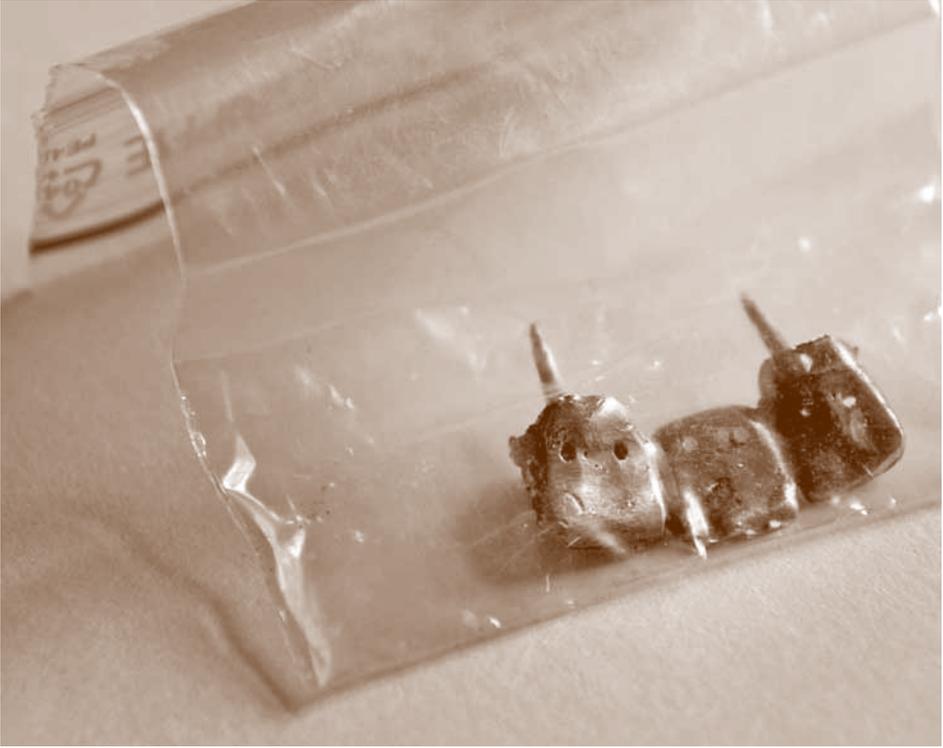
- That the *Royal Intelligence Service* took a special interest in these activities, which necessitated a lot of extra effort on the part of the young agent Cupboard, who, while studying and working for the *Commune*, could barely find the time for intelligence-related activities. The way things were now, it was his "Tutor", obviously his controller and connection to the *Service*, who increasingly often waited in vain in Savamala and city restaurants, following a pre-arranged cycle of the "Two Italians", "Kičevo", "Tailed Star", "Hide-and-Seek", "Dardanelles", "New Age", "Tekija", "Šiško", "White Cat", "Young Arab"...

- That Cupboard often thought about Miss Jelisaveta Načić, the architect, but only managed to see her once more, from afar, in Terazije, while she oversaw the overlaying of the roadway with wooden cobblestones, however, he could not think of a good enough reason to approach her.

12th February 1903

*The day before yesterday we moved into the new house at no. 1 Kraljevića Marka Street. I got a small flat in the attic to myself, which I won't be paying for, whereas Master Luka is all alone on the ground floor, still without even a dog to call his own, let alone any servants or kin. He brought over all the furniture from the old house, namely: 3 sofas, 1 lace and two silk curtains, 2 Axminster carpets, 1 dinner table, foldable, and 6 chairs, 2 chiffoniers, one big one small, 2 beds, one brass one iron, with straw mattresses, 1 wool blanket of the ordinary kind, 1 wooden suitcase and 1 small writing desk — all of which was brought over by hand down the street in half an hour. From Mr Nikola Spasić, he received a gift of two Chinese vases on account of moving into a new house, and now they sit in the empty anteroom, where there is not even a decent coat hanger to be found, looking very much out of place.*

*The housewarming party was held tonight, with the entire Managing Board of the Chetnik Organisation attending. Archpriest*



*Novica Lazarević took the opportunity to swear in members of the new company in an empty flat upstairs before they set off for some field action. As far as I can see, the flats in this building won't be for rent, presumably Master Luka has decided to turn this place into clandestine Chetnik barracks or a recruiting centre, in view of the fact that earlier today I paid the bill for ten straw mattresses. The food and drinks on offer were meagre, ordered and brought over from the nearby Paranos Road-house, so that, as soon as they started singing "Hey, Trumpeter from the Swelling Drina River",<sup>6</sup> which can go on forever and I usually get a headache even during the first verse, I sneaked away to the "Engine Driver" for a plate of lamb intestines in piquant sauce and a glass of brandy to calm my nerves. My Tutor awaited me at the "Two Parrots" but I didn't feel like slogging such a great distance in this cold weather. I'll tell him that I was detained by the housewarming party.*

*Master Luka has got it into his head that he can sing, and he allegedly likes music, he donates very generously to the "Obilić" singing group, and whenever I suggest to him to go and listen to Professor Mika Petrović and his magic fiddle, he just waves his hand — he doesn't want to have anything to do with such drunkards and wastrels. The Professor is founding a new orchestra and has invited me to a rehearsal. I'll go, and The Belgrade Commune and the Royal Intelligence Service can both get stuffed.*

*The company downstairs are still singing away very loudly, their throats dry, and I have yet to swat up on Leibnitz.*

### 17th February 1903

*I said to my Tutor that I felt like jumping out of my skin when I had to entertain Master Luka whenever those Chetniks of his were away. We spent the entire afternoon yesterday in my office at the Commune, competing at calculating interest rates in our heads. I would take out a policy at random, name some future year, then he would calculate the premium and I would time it. And then the other way round. And on top of everything else, I was beaten at arithmetic by a man who had never heard of geometric progression in his life, nor would he ever hear of it; when he takes a pen in his hand in order to sign a document, you think he'll pierce the sheet of paper with it, and beads of sweat roll down his forehead out of nervousness.*

[6]

A patriotic choral composition dating from the 19th century, composed to the verses of Stevan Vladislav Kačanski, wherein Serbs, setting off from a gathering place in Belgrade's Vračar district, reach the Adriatic Sea and Constantinople, all for the purpose of liberation. The favourite song of Luka Čelović Trebinjac. (Researcher's note)

*My Tutor retorted that my job was precisely to do that, and that I was in no position to complain and mince about it. This conversation was conducted after three glasses of brandy at the “Golden Beluga”, so that I wasn’t quite sure whether I had exposed myself too much and whether the Tutor’s statement was a veiled threat. If so, what kind of threat? All the same, I’ll have to cut down on brandy, I lose track of what I’m talking about, and am unable to study afterwards.*

The earthly days of the young agent Milan Stevanović Cupboard unfolded uneventfully, if one disregards two exams that he passed ahead of time, until the historic night between May 28th and 29th 1903. He returned to his diary only a week after the Obrenović dynasty fell — through the window.

*6th June 1903*

*Setting aside all the excitement in the streets, I’ve been chasing my Tutor for days — making the rounds of the “Šumenković’s”, “Two Poplar-trees”, “Matchstick”, “Czech Crown”... in the end I thought I’d confused the code arrangement, but I hadn’t. It was as if he’d vanished into thin air, God forbid, together with the entire Service. And I have a possibly crucial piece of information which, I surmise, is in some way connected with the coup. On the morning of May 29th, there appeared a suspicious-looking man in the house, mute and up to no good, that much was obvious immediately. When I went down to ask Master Luka if he needed anything from the green market, he was already sitting at the table with the man, over brandy, coffee and Turkish delight. Luka didn’t introduce him to me, even though at first glance it seemed that he had been up to something the previous night, evidently lacking sleep and unkempt as he was, only I had no idea at the time what last night’s “business” involved. The stranger slept in an empty flat on a bare straw mattress and spent the days with Master Luka behind a closed door. What they did I had no way of knowing, they had food brought over from the Paranos Road-house, on one occasion, climbing up the stairs, I heard them singing Chetnik songs in mid-day. In the evenings, Dr Godevac and other Chetniks from the Board would come, but by then I’d usually be out of the house, chasing after my hapless Tutor, if, indeed, he was the hapless one in this interdynastic strife and not me. Even General Jovan*

*Atanacković, of whom they rumoured in the Small Green Market that he was close to the Black Hand conspirators, started showing up?! It seemed that Master Luka didn't need me any longer, he stopped seeking my company, thank God, at least I can study in peace. The only thing he asked me to do was to bring over from the Commune some solidly built cabinet with a lock, which he took over at the entrance to the flat, as I heard from the porter when I paid him.*

*26th June 1903*

*I'm toying with the idea of discreetly going up to Prof. Mika Petrović and telling him about my problems, he is my only remaining contact with the Service, which I wouldn't want to drag into this rashly, lest I should end up looking like an idiot.*

*30th June 1903*

*Met professor. He didn't laugh at me, on the contrary, he reminded me that we'd start playing "as soon as this royal ruckus outside subsided". My Tutor showed up the next evening. I told him about the stranger, but he didn't appear to be very interested in him. He looked rather more like a man bent on saving his skin than one caring very much about his homeland, which I hadn't noticed before.*

*28th July 1903*

*Last night my Tutor gave me an envelope for Master Luka!? Why, aren't we supposed to be spying on him and not to be corresponding with him? Woe betide my sinful intelligence agent's soul, I didn't hand it to him unopened, as I had been instructed, I opened it, having first exposed it to steam over a pot of water, and what did I see? A diplomatic passport in the name of Sava Milošević, and a decree on appointing him a scribe at the Consulate in Bitolj. If my guess had been correct, this scribe would prove to be about as literate as his patron, Master Luka. I sealed the envelope with glue and handed it over, he didn't let me into the flat.*

30th July 1903

*Archpriest Novica Lazarević swore in the “diplomat” in a very noisy fashion, in the flat downstairs, in the presence of the entire Board. They kept singing deep into the night. In the morning, Master Luka saw the “diplomat” off; they took a carriage to the train station, which was a luxury Luka didn’t allow himself otherwise, and at noon he showed up in my office “to play arithmetic”, as if noting out of the ordinary had been happening for the past two months. I almost swore at him. He beat me again.*

Over the course of the next two years, the cohabitation of Master Luka Čelović and his agent Cupboard seemed to function more sedately. The notes were less frequent, and one could only make out the following from them:

- *The Royal Intelligence Service* was increasingly less interested in Luka Čelović and his Chetnik-related activities, which, under the Karađorđević dynasty, almost became public knowledge, a state matter, and grew more interested in other major shareholders of the *Commune*.
- That Cupboard successfully graduated but the *Service* did not allow him to seek employment within his professional domain, either by promising him promotion or threatening him that he would be exposed to the public.
- That he fell in love with a certain Marica, whom he was preparing to propose to.
- That Prof. Mika Petrović Alas, alongside music, started teaching him cryptography, a skill for which the *Royal Intelligence Service* would remain indebted to Cupboard in the ensuing decades. In the domain of music his career was not so successful.

15th March 1905

*Started work on the new building of The Belgrade Commune, across the road at no. 48, Karađorđeva Street, all morning we laid the cornerstone, a crowd of people gathered, there were a lot of journalists and all of his Chetniks, albeit in their “civil” guise. Had a look at the blueprints, looks like a typical megalomaniacal edifice intended by Master Luka for showing to the public, while inside it he doesn’t have*

*a set of three identical plates. And when he said today, during the opening ceremony, that he intended to pull down the “Bosnia” hotel and have a new five-storey one built in its place that would do credit even to Paris, Vienna, Bristol... whatever made him think of Bristol,<sup>7</sup> of all places, I thought he was taking leave of his senses. Was he thinking of shifting the Small Green Market to a new location as well?*

17th June 1905

*While entering the house today, to have my lunch there, I immediately realised that something was wrong. Master Luka was singing “Hey, Trumpeter...” all alone at lunchtime!? His voice, which sounds like the growling of a bear at the best of times, was truly grating on the ear today. I knocked and went in without waiting to be invited to do so. He was sitting at the dinner table, a bottle of brandy in front of him, singing and crying. He handed me a telegram, murmuring: “It’ll be in all the papers tomorrow anyway.” It was from Skoplje, signed by someone called Janko, no surname, and it said that Voivoda [military commander, translator’s note] Lazar Kujundžić and Voivoda Savatije had been caught by the Turks and burned alive in Orahovac. He got up, embraced the office cabinet that had been standing in the middle of the room where he received guests for two years already, and told me to leave him alone. This, I believe, must have something to do with that “diplomat” sent to Bitolj, Savatije — Sava, was it not while he was staying here that this cabinet was brought into the house?*

*Tonight, my Tutor would neither confirm nor deny that Sava Milošević and Voivoda Savatije<sup>8</sup> were one and the same person.*

Over the next two years, the diary entries mainly follow the building of the magnificent edifice that was *The Belgrade Commune* building, involving regret over the fact that the architect Jelisaveta Načić was not engaged to design it. Consolation came in the form of getting married to Marica and settling down in a house in Lomina Street — owing to a loan taken from *The Belgrade Commune*, of course. And then...

[7]

— Not only did he think of it, but the new hotel, built where the Paranos Road-house and the “Bosnia” hotel used to be, was named “Bristol”, a name that has remained to the present day. (Researcher’s note)

[8]

— Originally, it was Savatije Miličević, a paid assassin and hajduk [outlaw, translator’s note], who had acted as a reserve assassin on the night of the May coup, when King Aleksandar and Queen Draga were killed; he was at the Court at the time, but did not perform his task, at least not the regicide. Later on, he became Sava Milošević, a Serbian diplomat in Bitolj. Later still, he was Voivoda Savatije, a Chetnik Voivoda operating in the same area. Today, his name adorns a street in the vicinity of the Đeram green market. (Researcher’s note)

2nd August 1907 / I

The opening ceremony was magnificent. Toute Belgrade came, the radical part of it anyway, half the University, clergy, masons, led by Master Đura Vajfert, all dressed up except for Master Luka, who had only had his tailcoat steam-cleaned for this occasion and adorned himself with a tin medal dating back from Serbian-Turkish wars.

I had the honour, as a man he had the utmost confidence in, of being entrusted with the task of taking care of the keys to the safes. Those two Panzer safes, ordered from Berlin while the building was only in the foundation stage, had keys weighing about a kilo each, and I was not to part with them from then on. I complained of it jocularly, to which Master Luka responded by saying that, on account of my strength, I was the only one who could perform that duty. A while later, when the crowd had started thinning out, he took me aside and said that I was to come to his place after dark and bring the keys. I didn't like the idea of going out in the dark, what with Marica being pregnant and all, I didn't look forward to leaving her alone, but what can you do...

As it turned out, he wanted to take into one of the safes a small military case, which I was to guard as the pupils of my eyes, and he didn't want anyone to witness this. This morning, I was not at all surprised when, watching from the window of my new office, I saw they were taking the office cabinet that had been in his house for such a long time to the Commune across the Small Market Place... Today I'm working overtime!

2nd August 1907 / II

Voilà, Mother of God! Miroslav's Gospel<sup>9</sup> is in that case, I'd know it among a thousand Gospels, Prof. Mika has a reduced copy which is not entirely coloured, I've held it in my hands. This is the original! I won't mention this to my Tutor for the time being. I must talk to the Professor.

5th August 1907

Professor Mika Petrović demanded to see the book, and last night I smuggled him into the Commune. A litre of brandy for the night watchman. He confirmed that it was the original. Told me to keep quiet about it.

[9]

—  
Voilà indeed! That, finally, provides the crucial piece of evidence that Miroslav's Gospel was pilfered by the reserve assassin Savatije Miličević during the course of the coup, which was coyly hinted at in the banned issue of the "Domačica [Housewife]" periodical dating from the beginning of 1935 (cf. Mirjana Đurđević, *Čuvari svetinje*, Agora, 2007, pp.113-145). But the fact that it was taken from the Court to Savamala, first to the house of Master Luka Čelović, and then to a safe in *The Belgrade Commune* building is a thoroughly exclusive discovery! (Researcher's note)

6th April 1908

Yesterday's Večernje novosti [Evening News] published a "sensational piece of news", reportedly taken over from the Venetian newspaper Gazzeta di Venezia, that Miroslav's Gospel was currently to be found in the library of the Venetian State Archive, among the precious exhibits displayed in the Regina Margarita hall. It had been donated to the Archive by Miss Katarina, the daughter of the Romanian Ambassador to London, a relative of King Aleksandar Obrenović the Defenestrated. Hell's bells! I went to take a look at the book in the front Panzer safe, of which I am still the only one to have the keys, we keep securities in it (indeed!), not cash. No one had touched the case since last year, when I placed it in a corner of the topmost shelf.

Last night, at the "Cursed Jerina", I tried to discuss with my Tutor the article published in Večernje novosti, and the whole mystery surrounding it, the whole thing kept nagging at me, but he showed no interest in it whatsoever.

Professor Mika, hearing the same story during our morning cryptography class, only smiled secretly and told me to keep quiet about it. Well, I have kept quiet! As if I'd been blabbing about it in the meantime!? For the sake of exercise, he gave me the task of copying the article from Novosti and encoding it. Piece of cake.

Whether the cryptography lessons Cupboard received from Mika Petrović Alas were indeed "a piece of cake" remains unclear. Be that as it may, all the remaining diary entries, except for the dates, are coded, and the diary ends abruptly in the autumn of 1912?<sup>10</sup>

**To be continued?**<sup>11</sup> ►

[10]

The only thing the Researcher managed to piece together on the basis of the dates, if indeed he managed to do so, is that the entries constitute coded transcripts of newspaper articles, mainly dating from 1911, whose scattered remnants he had already held in his hands, and which represent standard journalistic attempts at obfuscation. According to Milan Stevanović Cupboard Junior, otherwise known as Mile the Wall Unit, who was not very difficult to establish contact with, his great-grandfather was employed at *The Belgrade Commune* until 1912, when he was drafted and sent off to the First Balkan War, from which he happily returned a few months later and got himself a job with *The Royal Intelligence Service*, where he remained as long as the Kingdom existed. The great-grandson, therefore, knew nothing about Cupboard the First's engagement with the Service through the "students' work commune", so we'll leave it at that. (Researcher's note)



[11]

—  
Who took Miroslav's Gospel out of the *Panzer* safe of the *Belgrade Commune* at no. 48 Karadorđeva Street in 1915 and slipped it into King Petar's cases on the way to Albania? Luka Ćelović himself, who, during World War One, accompanied the National Bank funds on the way to Thessaloniki, and from there to Marseilles by boat? Or was it someone else?  
(Researcher's note)







**VLADIMIR ARSENIJEVIĆ**

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# **TERROR IN THE LABYRINTH OF THE GEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE OR THREE EPISODES OF THE PICTORIAL NOVEL "THE EXCITING ADVENTURES OF THE PRIVATE DETECTIVE JOHN TAYLOR AND HIS FAITHFUL ASSISTANT WHITE ARROW" BY PETER FLEA**

**EPISODE #1**

**"SEARCH FOR DIAMOND STEALERS IN THE JUNGLES OF BORNEO"**

**COMICS-REVIEW #003-014, PUBLISHED FROM 3. 12. TO 5. 28., 1937, IN BELGRADE**

The hero of the first and only epic pictorial novel by the comic strip drawer Peter Flea is the handsome, rich American detective John Taylor, who dedicated all his life and a major part of the family wealth that he inherited to ceaseless struggle against scoundrels and evildoers, no matter where they came from, with the inevitable help of his servant and friend, an Indian called White Arrow.

In the first episode, entitled "Search for Diamond Stealers in the Jungles of Borneo", Taylor and White Arrow set out for, as the very title suggests, the dense, unexplored jungles of Borneo, where, as is well known, many monsters, mysteries and secrets lurk, in

order to save the abducted princess of the local Mashu-Mashu tribe from the claws of evil diamond stealers. This peace-loving tribe had lived for centuries undisturbed in its idyllic village at the foot of Mt Kinabalu. The tribe traditionally cultivated the enormous complex of mining tunnels and dug out the finest and largest diamonds in the world, which to them had a mainly aesthetic, and to a degree a religious, but in no way a commercial value. But then a group of white scoundrels, professional smugglers, bootleggers and hardened crocodile-hunters — Ambrosius, Bonifacius, Bartholomeus, Egidius and their fellow rascals of equally illustrious Dutch names — attracted by the many legends about this tribe's treasure, arrived in that heaven on earth intent on forcibly taking from them everything they had and on destroying their peaceful way of life, carefully cultivated from time immemorial. No such luck, however — soon afterwards the brave detective Taylor and his assistant White Arrow flew over after them in order to deal with those scoundrels, save the princess, return the stolen treasure and restore everything to its previous condition, which they did fairly easily and without any visible effort, but underwent a lot of very diverse, exciting adventures. Many bootleggers were killed righteously and mercilessly in the course of this undertaking, and the four leaders of the gang, the aforementioned Ambrosius, Bonifacius, Bartholomeus and Egidius were arrested, tied up and handed over to the basically well-meaning tribe of Mashu-Mashu, which was implacable when it came to revenge, however, and everyone was grateful for this, especially the old, wise tribal chief Tum-Ka-Jum.

Eventually, the private detective John Taylor and White Arrow were ready to go back, on board a two-winged aircraft, to their habitat on top of a skyscraper in New York's Manhattan, "a distant island very much different from Borneo", as the courteous and ever informative Taylor tried to explain to the liberated princess Hu-Hu as they parted. Naturally enough, she did not understand a word he said, but nevertheless she devoured him with her big black eyes with a mixture of love and awe, babbling all the while at length in her absurd and highly incomprehensible language. "The squaw's tongue flies faster than the wind", White Arrow muttered through his teeth at the very end of it, in the final frame of the comic, gazing darkly straight ahead at the moment when, their work done, the detective John Taylor and him were already among the clouds.



**PETAR BUHA**  
FROM WIKIPEDIA, A FREE ENCYCLOPAEDIA

**Petar Buha** (Belgrade, 8th May, 1916 – 31st December, 1941)

Also known under his artistic pseudonym Peter Flea. He was a Serbian comic strip author and illustrator from the so-called "Golden age of Yugoslav comics" (1935–1941).

From 1935 to 1937, he drew humorous comic strips about Mata and Bata for Belgrade's *Panorama* magazine, and in the period from the spring of 1937 to the spring of 1941, working under the pseudonym Peter Flea, he drew the comic strip series "The Exciting Adventures of the Private Detective John Taylor and His Faithful Assistant White Arrow", which was published in weekly instalments in *Comics-review* for all of four years, from issue no. 3 to the final, issue no. 215 of this periodical dedicated to comics.

He is considered to have been one of the most promising exponents of the so-called "Young Wave", or the second generation of Yugoslav comic strip drawers, whose further creative development was obstructed by the breaking out of World War Two.

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3. The final months of his life and his death

## **Biography**

Petar Buha was born in Belgrade in 1916 to Milutin and Zagorka Buha, who came to Serbia on the eve of the First World War from Bosnia and Herzegovina as refugees. He had a twin sister called Katarina. The first Belgrade years, during and after the war, in the short life of Petar Buha were marked by poverty, problems and grave diseases such as scarlatina, which he contracted as a small child in 1918, as a result of which he occasionally suffered from sore throat until the end of his life.

In 1920, his mother Zagorka left her husband Milutin — whose alcoholism was becoming progressively more serious — on her own initiative, and moved with her four-year-old twins to Veliki Bečkerek (called Zrenjanin today). Petar Buha grew up there with his mother and sister amidst a modest but relatively peaceful family atmosphere until the end of his secondary school education.

Having completed secondary school, he entered the Faculty of Law of Belgrade University, thus returning to the city he was born in, which he actually did not know at all and where he arrived in 1934 as a total stranger. He lived and worked in Belgrade over the next seven years until his death, and until the very end he looked at it with the eyes of a stranger.

Petar Buha took an interest in comics when he was very young, and his first attempts at expressing himself through comics date from this period. However, apart from three sheets of paper that contain drawings with inept copies of Disney's cartoon heroes, nothing else has been preserved from this period of Buha's creative production. But in the family house

in Bagljaš, which used to belong to Buha's mother Zagorka, in a case left in the cellar, his meticulously compiled, carefully watched over collection of several hundred comics-type publications from the entire former Yugoslavia, as well as Hungary, Germany, France, Great Britain, Sweden, Denmark and the United States, for the most part dating from the 1932–1934 period, has been preserved to the present day. This “collection of Buha's” — accidentally discovered as early as 2002 by Aleksandar Zograf, during the course of his visit to the former home of this author of comics — was only donated to the National Library in Belgrade in 2008, following a series of complications and formal legal obstacles; since then, this veritable treasure left over from Petar Buha, along with his equally valuable but sadly brief opus, has been properly catalogued and made available to all interested parties.

Having moved to Belgrade in 1934, intent on studying law, he discovered, just as he had expected, that studies of law could not satisfy his creative urges, so he started dedicating himself to drawing comics with increasing seriousness, at the expense of his university studies and future career as a lawyer, ambitiously planned for him by his mother Zagorka. Among the few students befriended by Buha was a certain Ratko Mitrović, a young man from Čačak, through whom Petar Buha came into contact with rebellious student youth, and after that also with the Communist and progressive workers' movement. However, he became a member of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia only in 1939, as did the future National Hero Mitrović, but his membership, as opposed to Mitrović's, was called into question on two occasions and was eventually annulled, so that he was remembered as one of the most passive and useless Party members ever.

But in 1935, all of the above was still a distant future for Petar Buha, who wanted most of all to dedicate himself to drawing comics and least of all to practise law. Working every day with determination, intent on attempting to create his own comic strip heroes and distinctive style in a variety of ways, meticulously establishing contacts with anyone who might be able to help him start publishing comics on a regular basis, Petar Buha achieved concrete results soon enough: at the beginning of his second semester of studies,

he received his first professional engagement. From early 1935, he started publishing his humorous comic strip series “The Adventures of Mata and Bata” on a regular basis in Belgrade's illustrated weekly magazine *Panorama*.

In March 1937, Petar Buha abruptly announced the end of his successful cooperation with *Panorama* and started publishing his epic pictorial novel with the longish title of “The Exciting Adventures of the Private Detective John Taylor and His Faithful Assistant White Arrow” under the pseudonym Peter Flea in Belgrade's newly established *Comics-review*. He suspended work on comic strips about Mata and Bata for good in May that same year. Over the next several years, he feverishly laboured away at his mammoth-sized work about





the adventures of the justice fighter John Taylor, which he loyally published in *Comics-review* until the spring of 1941, when, due to the bombing of Belgrade and the occupation of Yugoslavia, this undertaking of his, as many other things, was brought to a close — abruptly and for good.



## EPIISODE #6

### “AYUDAME Luchar CONTRA EL FALANGISMO”

COMICS-REVIEW #135–146, FROM 9. 22. TO 12. 8., 1939, BELGRADE

Presumably inspired by the end of the Spanish Civil War on 1st April 1939, the sixth episode of “The Exciting Adventures...” takes the detective John Taylor and White Arrow to Granada, the capital of Andalucia, which was in the throes of internecine slaughter. Mimi Morgan — who, from episode five onward, had a rather more prominent role in this pictorial novel than before, and was an active participant of Taylor’s adventurous journeys — received a message from Spain from her distant relative on her mother’s side (from whom Mimi inherited her hot Spanish blood and the black eyes of a born seductress and mistress); in it, the leader of the rebellious Andalucian Anarcho-syndicalists, Red Rocco, wrote in blood: “*Ayudame luchar contra el falangismo*”, asking of the world-renowned justice fighter detective John Taylor to help them in their unequal, heroic struggle against the evil Falangists. John Taylor, White Arrow and Mimi Morgan soon arrived at the scene of the terrible war by Taylor’s airplane. In front of the city of Granada, flying over the green hills of Andalucia, they ran into a squadron of Falangist airplanes, which showed up there as if knowing that they were coming. After a long, bitter struggle in the air, having finally managed to dispose of all the six enemy planes, they landed at an improvised airport, a clearing made in a forest near the city, where the rebel Anarcho-syndicalists waited for them.

Critics usually point out the great effort on Buha’s part to bring Granada to life, a city he had never been to, it is almost needless to say, but they also emphasise his unwillingness (Zupan), or even doubt his ability (Pančev) to deal more precisely with the complex dynamics of the Spanish Civil War. His simplified vision, however, serves its purpose, in the opinion of some, especially Zograf, who, in his excellent text on Petar Buha published in the *Vreme* [Time] weekly in 2010, stresses that it was precisely this technique of deliberately simplifying and reducing a very recent historical event to the level of a myth that “served Buha to tell a much more complex and universal story about the eternal struggle and deep intertwining of Good and Evil” (the *Vreme* weekly no. 996, 2. 4., 2010).

Having established contact with the rebel Anarcho-syndicalists of Andalucia, who wear armbands with the inscription ASA on their left arm, Taylor finally gets to meet Red Rocco (with a beret atop bushy, thick black hair, and a hard-looking face adorned with a thick moustache), who commands the armed forces of the ASA from the city’s ancient sew-

age system, whose depths contain the rebels' headquarters. Together with Rocco and his faithful fighters, Taylor, Morgan and White Arrow clash several times with the Falangists, who wear armbands with a large letter F on their right arm, and are led by Black Franco (bald, clean-shaven, with a black patch over his left eye), who rules the city from his headquarters situated high on a hill, inside the Alhambra fortress.

During the course of their second clash in the streets of the city, Mimi Morgan gets kidnapped by the evil Falangists and is taken to a stone fortress above the city. After great efforts, John Taylor and White Arrow, accompanied by three most loyal Anarcho-syndicalists, finally manage to break into the fortress and, wandering through the endless Alhambra, in one room they come across some unusual objects: a beret identical to the one Red Rocco wears, a black wig and a false black moustache. Confused, they take them along and soon arrive in the central room of the great castle, wherein Black Franco is about to have sexual intercourse with Mimi, who has been drugged. While the Anarcho-syndicalists and White Arrow effortlessly repel the onslaught of dozens of Falangist guardsmen, the enraged John Taylor prevents Black Franco from carrying out his despicable intent. Black Franco fights him bitterly and skilfully, and while exchanging blows, the two of them also exchange picturesque insults and threats ("You Falangist scoundrel, just you wait, I'll get you!", "Ha! I'll make a meat pie out of you, Mr Taylor!" etc.), and when John Taylor knocks Black Franco out with an uppercut, the latter's eye-patch falls off, and it turns out that he can see with both eyes. Sensing deceit, John Taylor ties Black Franco up and then puts the black wig and the beret on his head, and sticks the false moustache above his upper lip. Black Franco then comes to and raises his head. All of a sudden, it is Red Rocco leering at Taylor with his bloodied lips.

Realising that Red Rocco/Black Franco has been deceiving them all along, the Anarcho-syndicalists kill him cursing him profusely before John Taylor can stop them. Dying, he turns into a demon, whereupon he is destroyed by a blazing white flame, and at that moment all the Falangists are released from the hypnotic magic that their evil leader used on them for so long to keep them under control. The same thing, strangely enough, happens to Anarcho-syndicalists. The Falangists come down from the hill, the Anarcho-syndicalists come out of their underground shelter. Meeting in the streets of the city, men who were bitter enemies until yesterday embrace one another in tears, recognising their own brothers and sisters, parents, relatives and friends.

At the end of it all, watching a great carnival and the celebrations on account of the end of the terrible war fought in Andalucia, John Taylor and Mimi Morgan cannot resist embracing and kissing, long and passionately, now that all their troubles are behind them. White Arrow watches them with a bored expression on his face, but then his Spanish friends invite him to go with them and see a bullfight.

"The warrior may kill the bull", White Arrow explains to those pig-headed, unreasonable Spaniards in the final frame of the comic, sitting among them in the stands of the great arena in Granada, holding a fried chicken leg in his hand, "but the warrior will never defeat the bull."



## Comicography

### “The Adventures of Mata and Bata”

Panorama, January 1935 – May 1937

Even though today’s comics aficionados evaluate the work of Petar Buha practically solely based on his saga about the private detective John Taylor, during Buha’s lifetime the broader public knew him mainly as the author of the famous comic strips entitled “The Adventures of Mata and Bata”, which he started publishing in 1935 in Belgrade’s weekly illustrated magazine *Panorama*. It was Petar Buha’s first professional engagement, owing to the confidence that *Panorama*’s well-known graphic design editor Dr Ivan Pavlička had in the young author. This enterprising Belgrade Czech rejected all the more ambitious works that Buha offered to him and focused solely on the comic strip that Buha did not have a very high opinion of; indeed, he even regretted having brought it along. It was a humorous verse composition about two tramps and pranksters called Mata and Bata, who get in trouble when they try to steal a hot pie left to cool on the window sill of the Mayor’s house, which is guarded by a big dog. *Panorama*’s graphic design editor Pavlička, however, was enchanted by it, laughed heartily for a long time over this particular comic strip, and that settled the matter; from that time onward, Mata and Bata regularly appeared every Saturday on the last page of this magazine. A succession of their “adventures” in a city that resembled Belgrade in many respects, most of all its muddy alleys, the twisted fences of dilapidated-looking houses of the outskirts of the city and the moustachioed, dishevelled and stupid policemen whom Mata and Bata so often eluded in a very witty manner, easily won the hearts and minds of the magazine’s readers. And yet, despite the success of his comic strip among the broader public, on the basis of which his initial modest fee was even increased slightly, Petar Buha – as Pavlička himself pointed out in his autobiography *Through My Eyes* (Bigz, 1970, p. 112) – “drew those ‘humorous’ comic strips of his for two entire years, grumbling and very bored, the only reason being that this work brought him some income, which he needed very much, wondering all the time how such enforced work could bring a man any success whatsoever – let alone the kind of success that he had with it!”

### “The Exciting Adventures of the Private Detective John Taylor and His Faithful Assistant White Arrow”

Comics-review, March 1937 – April 1941

Even though the comic strip “The Adventures of Mata and Bata” was exceptionally successful among the magazine’s reading public, after two years Buha, disgusted with the continuous hard work he had to put into a comic that did not interest him in the least, had

almost run out of patience. It was then that he decided to invest whatever strength he had left into something that was much closer to his heart and much more in keeping with his advanced taste in comics: an adventure story, a pictorial novel, rather more voluminous and more dynamic visually than the uninspiring silliness of the Mata and Bata series, a veritable pictorial/textual saga of the kind created, for example, by his role models, the gods of comics such as Alex Raymond or Hal Foster.

And so it came to pass that he created the first sketches and notes of what was soon to evolve into an ambitiously planned comic series with the appropriately long title of “The Exciting Adventures of the Private Detective John Taylor and His Faithful Assistant White Arrow”.

In those early spring days of 1937, in his dank room in Belgrade’s Bulbuder district, Petar Buha created an entire world, only apparently similar to ours, where the main protagonists were the New York detective John Taylor, his assistant the Indian White Arrow and the Broadway starlet Mimi Morgan.

The detective John Taylor is a tall, strapping fellow. He is elegant and well educated. And rich, above all. He speaks a number of world languages. He smokes a pipe. He has slicked-back, black hair and soft blue eyes, which Mimi Morgan, a beauty from Broadway stages and his occasional consort, is hopelessly in love with. Mr Taylor, however, remains a confirmed bachelor. His favourite drink is bourbon on the rocks.

White Arrow, a red Indian from the Sioux tribe, despises alcohol. Even after so many years of living in a big city, he has not renounced his old habits: he still walks about naked, with just a piece of deer skin encircling his hips and two feathers stuck into his straight black hair, painted from head to toe in warriors’ colours, provoking enthusiasm and/or consternation wherever he appears. The detective John Taylor lives in a luxurious apartment on top of a skyscraper in the middle of Manhattan, whereas White Arrow’s wigwam is located on the flat roof above it. There is also John Taylor’s secret airport and a hangar with his private airplane, a two-winged machine in which our hero, accompanied by his faithful red-skinned friend, tirelessly flies across the globe fighting against scoundrels and evildoers, no matter where they come from.

Petar Buha published this great series of his (he planned to produce twelve episodes, of which he managed to complete a total of nine) in the newly established *Comics-review* from March 1937 until April 1941, at the rate of two episodes per year.

The beginning of the publication of this pictorial novel was announced pompously and vociferously by means of paid advertisements in *Politika* and *Vreme* as a comic that “has changed American youth” and “a work of incredible proportions, certainly the most grandiose and sensational pictorial adventure novel ever created”. The author is presented as “the globally famous New Yorker Peter Flea”, and his “masterpiece” is described using epithets such as “top-level”, “exceptionally interesting”, “an outstanding achievement”, and the readers are urged not to forget “to enquire at their newsagent’s, as of Friday, for issue no. 3 of their favourite *Comics-review*, which contains the beginning of the great series of comics

about the famous detective John Taylor and the Indian White Arrow in the episode entitled 'Search for Diamond Stealers in the Jungles of Borneo.'

The first episode, just like all the others that followed, was divided into twelve wholes consisting of two plates, each one with six strips of drawings. It was published in the middle pages of *Comics-review* from March to May 1937. Even though the reactions of the professional public (for which read: those of other comics drawers) to Buha's work were restrained, the story about the detective John Taylor immediately captivated the reading public. Over the next several years, Petar Buha would be entirely preoccupied with work on the comic series about this unusual private detective. Its outlook never changed in the slightest from the very beginning. Twelve episodes subdivided into twelve wholes consisting of two plates, each one with six strips of drawings, published following a stable rhythm of two episodes per year — that was the simple but also brilliant construction that young Petar Buha set himself as a task, which was supposed to take up six years of his life, written off according to plan. Hence we say nothing here about intimate details of Petar Buha's life, for there are no intimate details to speak of, actually.

It is interesting to note, however, that a more detailed analysis of his work reveals another interesting subdivision of this series into three distinct genre wholes comprising four episodes each.

Thus, in the first whole (episodes #1–4: "The Jungles of Borneo", "Black Behemoth", "The Ice of the Antarctica" and "The Ghosts of Vikings") the action always takes place in exotic locations where our heroes (Taylor and White Arrow, but not yet Morgan) meet members of most unusual and mysterious cultures, as well as various monsters, phantoms, dragons, and even the ghosts of Viking souls sunk long before.

In the second whole, however, comprising episodes #5–8 ("In Siberia and Japan", "*Ayudame luchar contra el falangismo*", "The Childhood of White Arrow" and "The Tragedy of a Prussian Officer"), the character of Mimi Morgan appears on a regular basis and participates in the action on an equal footing, and the horizon of the world in which John Taylor moves about with his associates becomes considerably darker, as struggle against mythical monsters or Pacific pirates and other small-scale evildoers gives way to struggle against various political monsters. In this section of the epic structure, Buha consistently deals with the issue of the purposefulness of fighting for freedom and doubts the possibility of there being any freedom at all.

Of the third and final whole, unfortunately, only episode #9, entitled "Terror in the Labyrinth of the Geological Institute" was published. The customary twelve episodes were published between 17th January (#204) and 4th April 1941 (#215). This cult issue of *Comics-review*, no. 215, the very last one, came out, just like every other issue before it, on a Friday. That Friday, 4th April 1941, was the last Friday of peacetime. Only two days later, on Sunday, the early morning German bombing of Belgrade marked the beginning of the German invasion of Yugoslavia.

Fortunately, at least the entire episode nine of Buha's unfinished series was completed in time!



**85 VILLU JAANISOO** *Fathers Son*, 3D video projection on recycled fluorescent tubes, 2010

It is an invidious task trying to even assume what that final, third whole was supposed to be like when completed, but it was certainly intended to complete Buha's great saga in a fitting manner. However, the episode "Terror in the Labyrinth of the Geological Institute" is the most unusual of all the adventures experienced by Buha's hero, and is unique in a number of ways. Through this story, highly unusual even for the phantasmagorical world of Peter Flea and his detective John Taylor, Buha, in the opinion of many, reacted to the beginning of World War Two, which was already ravaging Europe, in a spookily successful manner, at the same time anticipating the imminent occupation of Yugoslavia, and his own sad fate, awaiting him only half a year later in an occupied Belgrade.



### EPISODE #9

#### "TERROR IN THE LABYRINTH OF THE GEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE"

COMICS-REVIEW # 204-215, FROM 1. 17. TO 4. 4., 1941, BELGRADE

The ninth episode of "The Exciting Adventures" is the only one to take place in Belgrade, the capital of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the city Buha lived and created in during the last seven years of his short life. To put it more precisely, the major part of the story unfolds in the dark, mysterious labyrinths of the cellar of the magnificent edifice of the Geological Institute of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, formerly the Belgrade Commune, located in Belgrade's Savamala district. It was where the headquarters of the evil, but technologically superior invaders of Earth was located; they imprisoned the Earthmen they captured in the endless catacombs under the foundations of this palace, where they brutally murdered them, having subjected them to their mysterious cosmic experiments before their deaths.

It remains unclear why Buha chose Belgrade of all places as the location of this dark episode of "The Exciting Adventures"; it is equally unclear why the invaders from space chose this particular building as their headquarters, from which they ruled the world, but it has to be admitted that the way he depicted them — tall, pale, slim, with twelve fingers, narrow white faces, white eyes without any discernible pupils, pointed ears and long, straight hair — they fitted in exceptionally well within the sumptuous interior of the former Belgrade Commune building, now the so-called Geological Institute, which they additionally furnished with their own technically advanced contraptions such as robots that performed various functions instead of them, and some kind of device for quick transfer of information through space, which they used for audio-visual communication with their fellow countrymen who were at the other end of the known universe, and also to get all sorts of data via a TV screen connected by means of glass tubes to a typewriter. However, inside the dark labyrinth of the palace's cellar, its pale-faced rulers from deep space made an essentially different world for their earthly captives, a world that made one's blood freeze with terror.

This episode abounds in surprises and events which confound the readers' expectations to a greater extent than any of the preceding episodes. First of all, it is the only one which provides no explanation whatsoever as to how the detective John Taylor found himself in Belgrade, where the action takes place. But — there he is. And that is not all, this time he is all alone to boot. He is there without his faithful friend White Arrow or his faithful love Mimi Morgan, who do not even get a mention for the entire duration of the comic in question. Even though the year in which Earth undergoes an invasion from space is never mentioned either, the predominant impression is that the action of this episode takes place in some far-off future, which greatly contributes to the estrangement of the narrative.

While detective Taylor is performing some task or other, his two-winged airplane is watched over by technicians from the Anti-space Front (AF), a group of planetary rebels and revolutionaries, whose symbol is a crossed circle with stars, surrounded by the letters EARTHTOEARTHMEN. They have been plotting for a long time to destroy the headquarters of the evil invaders and get rid of aliens once and for all. However, in order to realise their plan, they need the help and support of the private detective John Taylor, naturally. And this is what it is all about.

John Taylor is to break into the labyrinthine cellar of the Geological Institute and free the famous Yugoslav physicist Dr Abramovič, whom the Anti-space Front needs to make a special weapon using atomic energy with which the special AF forces will try to destroy the aliens. Taylor swears to do this, especially on account of the fact that Dr Abramovič is an old acquaintance of his (episode #3, "The Ice of the Antarctica"). However, from a purely dramaturgical point of view, this is all for the purpose of getting Taylor into the labyrinth under the palace, so that he can experience the phantasmagorical terror reigning there.

This is the only episode among the nine episodes published wherein first the psychic health and then the very life of John Taylor are seriously threatened. The solitude surrounding him throughout this adventure is painful and powerfully presented. He stoically endures it, undergoing some of his greatest ordeals ever.

Determined to free old Dr Abramovič from the jaws of the aliens, Taylor breaks into the palace and the labyrinth under it rather more easily than he anticipated. The palace security, fortunately, is no serious obstacle to him; for that purpose, the invaders from space use some strapping, genetically modified, but fortunately enough, not very intelligent cosmic youngsters with three pairs of eyes, on the front, the back and the side of their heads, but these prove quite unequal to Taylor and his skills.

Sneaking through the clean metal corridors, Taylor first comes across a succession of cosmic laboratories. In one of them, robots disable him and drug him with an injection in the neck, following which space scientists in long silver togas and bird-like masks on their faces place him on an operating table and then pick through his entrails and his brain for a long time. Through his temples, they inject various substances directly into his brain, causing Taylor to lose consciousness entirely, erasing all of his memory and even his reason. After that, the evil aliens, having used him, throw him away like waste matter into

the dank, dark catacombs full of unfortunates like him, who crawl through the narrow corridors over one another like worms, serving as food to a big herd of huge polyps that the aliens keep as domestic animals and occasionally, for the sake of sport and entertainment, ride like horses.

In such a state, John Taylor is unable to defend himself. He is saved from certain death under the rapacious, greedy tentacles of a slimy monster by none other than Dr Abramovič. Having recognised his old friend, he drags him aside at the last moment while several other unfortunates beside him end up in the entrails of the horrible polyp screaming horribly. Then he drags Taylor with some effort to his shelter inside a niche in the wall which the monster's tentacles cannot reach. There he tries to get him to regain his senses, shakes him and calls him by his name. Taylor does regain consciousness on account of this, but not his memory or intelligence. He does not recognise Dr Abramovič, and has no idea where they are. But he is physically sufficiently recovered to be able to go on searching for some way out of this hell where they have found themselves. After a number of adventures, they come across a disused canal, down which they go all the way to the Sava river, following which, passing through a catacomb that leads deep under the river, they finally reach its western bank, where they remain for a long time lying and watching the night sky and a full moon above their heads.

In the epilogue of the ninth episode, while AF medics are trying to bring Taylor back to life, Dr Abramovič works feverishly in his laboratory trying to finish his powerful weapon that uses atomic energy. The news reaching them is bad — an entire colony of aliens arrive on the blue planet, and it is only a matter of days before they come there. Dr Abramovič, however, manages to complete his work on the highly destructive weapon, never seen before, and kamikaze special forces, trained in advance to use it, after a tearful farewell to their comrades in arms and with the anthem of planet Earth on their lips, embark on their final mission.

“The only thing that remains for us to do, my friend, is hope for the best”, Dr Abramovič says in the end, as if not quite believing his own words, to the private detective John Taylor, who, having been turned into a vegetable, can only move his chin up and down and stare dumbly straight ahead of him, lying in bed dressed in shabby hospital pyjamas.

The final frame of the ninth episode, entitled “Terror in the labyrinth of the Geological Institute”, which also constitutes the final frame of the pictorial novel “The Exciting Adventures of the Private Detective John Taylor and His Faithful Assistant White Arrow”, is a dark portrait of Belgrade, above the roofs of which, at that fateful moment before the final release from the evil invaders or mass death of the Earthmen, a giant spaceship full of space colonists hovers, so big that its shadow covers the entire city, throwing it into deep darkness.

## The last months of Buha's life and his death

Not very much is known about the last few months of Petar Buha's life, from the bombing of Belgrade on 6th April until his death in December 1941. It would be logical to assume that the next, tenth episode of "The Exciting Adventures" was already in the process of being created while Belgrade was bombed and Yugoslavia was being occupied, but we have no conclusive evidence of this. It is known that in the period immediately preceding the war Buha renewed contact and correspondence with his twin sister Katarina, then living in Nevesinje with her second husband, an artillery officer who would be captured during the April war and taken to Italy as a prisoner of war, following which no trace of him remains. However, as far as is known, that correspondence has not been preserved. There are certain indications (especially in Dr Ivan Pavlička's autobiography *Through My Eyes*) that during the spring of 1941 Petar Buha re-established connections with the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, previously severed, which appears to have contributed to his sad fate, but unfortunately there is not sufficient evidence to prove this, and we cannot rule out the possibility that Pavlička slipped in this hint in order to ensure a decent status for his protégé, the tragically deceased Petar Buha, as one of a number of heroes who gave their lives for the freedom of his homeland.

What we know only too well, unfortunately, is that Petar Buha was arrested on Wednesday, 9th September around noon, in Belgrade's Prizrenska Street. Even though at first it appeared that it was the result of a randomly carried out raid, it turned out not to be the case; accompanied by two fat, moustachioed policemen, reminiscent of his humorous comic strip about Mata and Bata, Buha was taken to the nearby police station, and later that same day, even though the reasons for his arrest remain forever shrouded in mystery, under armed guard he was taken to the former Belgrade Commune building, then the Royal Geological Institute palace, which, since July that year, had temporarily housed the notorious Department X of Gestapo's Belgrade branch.

During August, the cellar of this edifice was expanded very fast and adapted to serve as a succession of cells and attendant rooms for interrogation and torture, where the most dangerous prisoners were kept, while the bright, luxurious quarters on the upper floors of the building were used to organise exclusive intimate services for Third Reich officers.

Buha was placed in a narrow dank cell at the very end of a long corridor, in a dark underground room without any windows. It was there, precisely where the action of the final published episode of his life's work unfolded, that he spent the last three months of his young life, being fed with bread and stale water only, suffering real "terror in the labyrinth of the Geological Institute".

We have no way of knowing how Buha conducted himself during the course of everyday prolonged interrogation coupled with severe torture. We know not whether he knew anything that could be of interest to the officers and interrogators of Gestapo's Department X. We know not whether he wondered at the irony of fate, which placed him at the

very heart of his own fantasy. We know not whether he knew that the hour of his death was approaching or whether he believed in some miraculous rescue all that time after all.

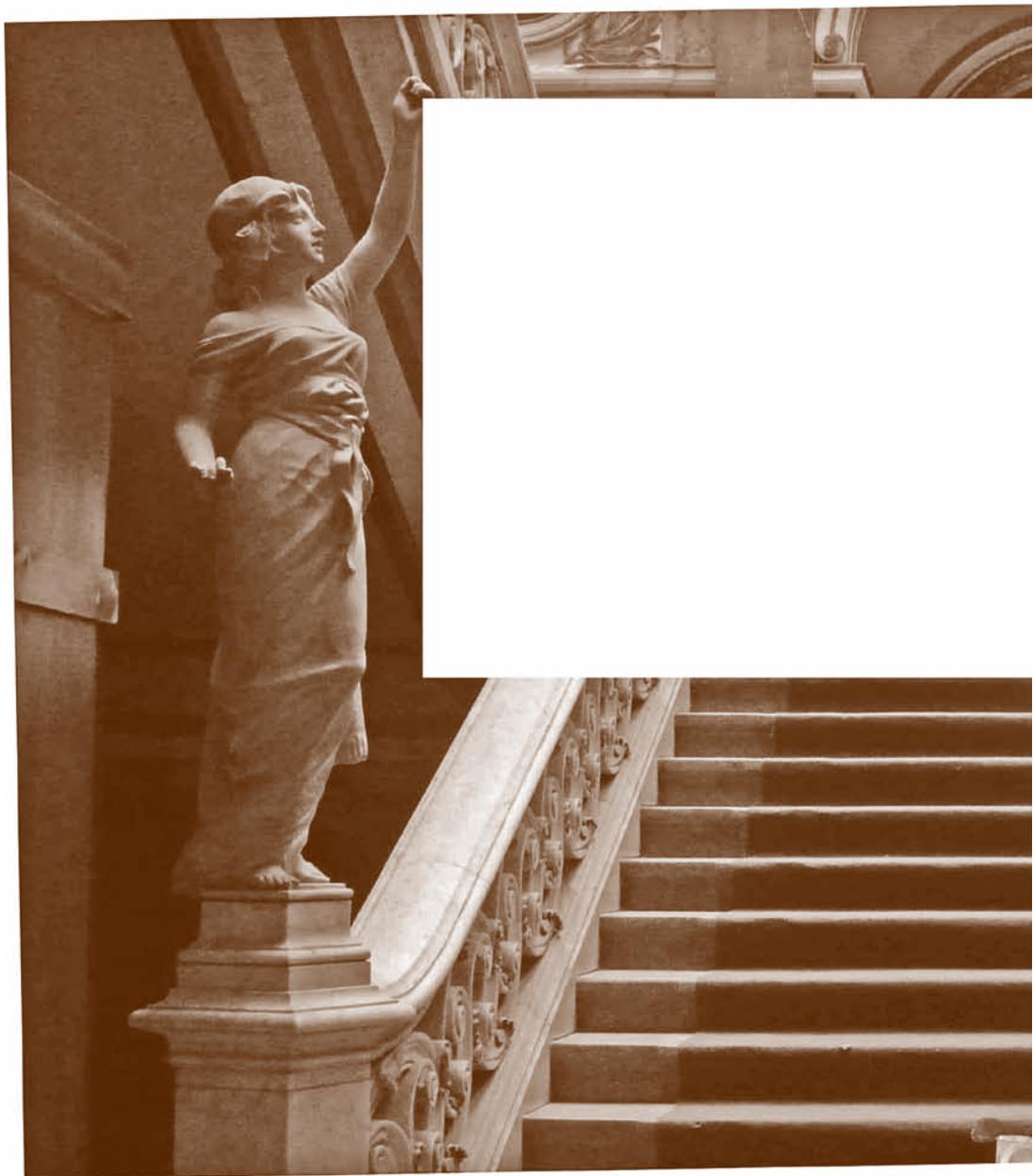
We do know this, however: on Wednesday, 31st December, before dawn, three Wehrmacht soldiers stepped into Buha's cell, lifted him off the floor, all broken inside as he was, his face covered with bruises from all the beating he had taken, without a single tooth in his mouth, and took him with them. Buha did not resist. Having placed him inside a truck, they took him, together with four other prisoners, whose state was equally bad, or even worse than his, to Jajinci, in the vicinity of Belgrade. They left them waiting there for two hours in bitter cold and icy wind, and then added them to the first group of prisoners brought over from the Banjica prison camp, who were to be shot en masse that day.

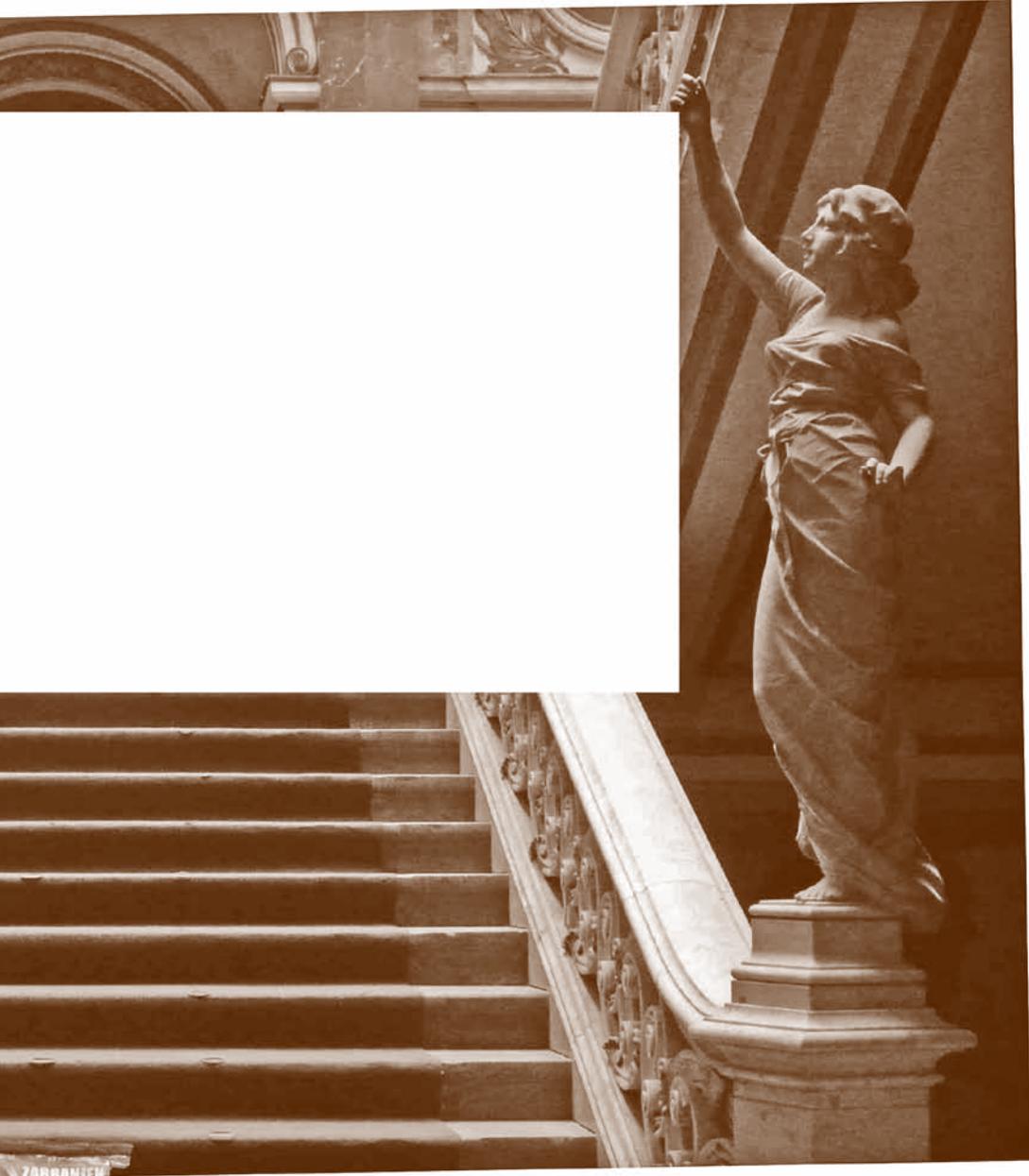
He was brutally executed on the last day of 1941, being twenty-five years of age. ►











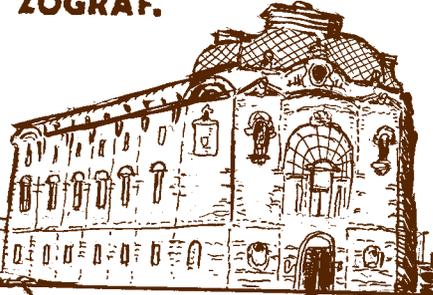
# THE VOICE

THE EDIFICE  
THAT WAS  
BUILT IN  
1905-1907

BY THE INSU-  
RANCE COMPANY  
'BELGRADE COOPE-

RATIVE' HAD, AFTER WORLD WAR TWO,  
MOSTLY SERVED TO THE HOUSE  
'GEOZAVOD' (THE INSTITUTE FOR GEO-  
TECHNICAL AND GEOLOGICAL RESEARCH)...  
THIS REMARKABLE BUILDING, TODAY QUIETLY  
DECAYING, IS SOMEWHAT OF A SYMBOL OF  
FORGOTTEN, DEJECTED BELGRADE...

ALEKSANDAR ZOGRAF.



IN THE VICINITY OF THIS PLACE I THINK  
ABOUT THE FORGOTTEN PERSONALITIES  
THAT HAD MADE THIS CITY NO LESS VIBRANT  
AND EXCITING THAN ALL NOTORIOUS 'GREATS'  
OF PUBLIC LIFE... ONE OF THE SPECTRES HAUNTING ME  
WAS THE POET RADOMIR PRODANOVIC, KILLED AT THE AGE  
OF 29, DURING THE ALLIED BOMBING OF BELGRADE ON  
APRIL 16<sup>TH</sup> 1944, ALONG WITH HIS WIFE AND SON...  
HE NEVER PUBLISHED ANY POETRY IN HIS LIFETIME, AND HE  
WAS KILLED WITH A BAG CONTAINING ALL OF HIS MANUSCRIPTS.  
IN 1962, HIS FRIENDS PUBLISHED A BOOK OF POEMS TITLED  
'THE VOICE' COLLECTING ALL THE WRITINGS BY PRODANOVIC  
THAT HAD BEEN PRESERVED IN CORRESPONDANCE...  
A GOOD CHUNK OF THESE POEMS SEEMS TO HAVE  
FORESHADOWED THE POET'S DEMISE, AS WELL AS THE  
ABSURDITY AND TRAGEDY THAT HAD MARKED HIS DISSAPERANCE...



IN A LETTER TO A FRIEND FROM  
1939, PRODANOVIC WROTE DOWN:  
"IT SEEMS THAT EVERYONE WILL,  
AT THE DAY OF THEIR DEATHS,  
SEE THE DAY OF BIRTH, TOO...  
AND AT THE SAME TIME, BY VIRTUE  
OF BODILY STRENGTH THAT  
THEY WILL BE REBORN...  
IT SEEMS TO ME THAT PEOPLE  
LIVE FROM ONE THROUGH  
DEATH, TO ANOTHER BIRTH.  
THIS (THOUGHT) HAS BEEN WITH  
ME FOR A YEAR NOW, AND IT IS  
SO CLEAR, NOW THAT BOREDOM  
HAS ALREADY CAUGHT UP WITH  
ME, AND THAT I WILL HAVE TO  
TURN TO SOMETHING ELSE..."

IN ANOTHER LETTER FROM 1940, RADOMIR PRODANOVIC  
WROTE DOWN AN AVANT-GUARDE POEM 'MAY WE SING'  
WHICH WAS SUPPOSED TO BE THE BASIS FOR AN ORATORIO  
...THE POEM IS NARRATED THROUGH PERSONIFIED  
PORTRAYALS OF IDEAS AND FEELINGS.

## HATE:

FOR FEAR I WOULD BE  
WHILE FOR WEAKNESS I AM  
AND OUT OF A MAN,  
WITH FLAMES BLAZING  
I STING



**PEOPLE:**  
FOR PEOPLE TO BE FROZEN EVEN IN A FLAME  
BECAUSE BLACK HATRED  
BLACKENED EMBERS STIRS.



**HATE:**  
IN VAIN, PEOPLE, ALL IN VAIN!



**LOVE:**  
WITHOUT ME - UNSUNG YOU REMAIN.



**PAIN:**  
WHEN, LIKE WITH A GOLDEN  
RAIN BOW  
I WOULD PAIN AND CHAIN THE  
DAYS.



**LOVE:**  
I DO SOOTHE  
THE WOUNDS  
WITH MY KISS.



**HATE:**  
IN VAIN! IN VAIN!  
ALL IS CUT OFF  
BY DEATH.



**LOVE:**  
NEVER, QUELLED NEVER QUENCHED  
WITH THE DEATH OF LIFE IF THERE  
IS NONE  
FLAME THROUGH MYSELF ENKINDLED  
AND IN DYING -  
IN DYING THE SOUL IS FOUND.



**EVERYONE:**  
ME TO BEHOLD - NOW WHILE STEPPING  
OUT OF YOURSELF  
AN ENTIRE UNIVERSE IS BORN FROM  
YOUR EYES  
YOU ARE DAMNED!  
AND I AM WITH YOU!  
AND WITH DAMNATION WE WOULD  
CRUSH THE SOUL  
LIKE A BLESSING THAT IS WITHIN US,  
IF WE DID NOT HAVE IT! -  
WE WOULD CRUSH THE SOUL -  
LIKE A BLESSING THAT IS WITHIN US,  
IF WE DID NOT HAVE IT! -

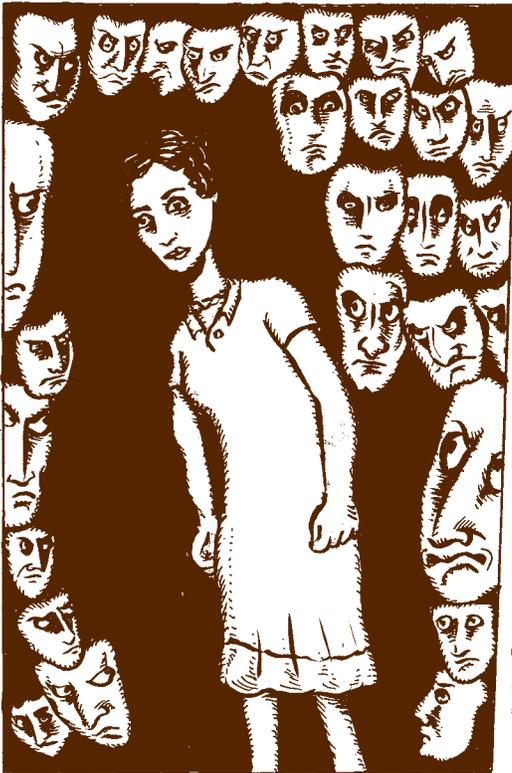


AMONG THE FORGOTTEN VOICES THERE IS A FEMALE WRITER THAT SIGNED HER BOOKS AS R. LENIC—SHE WROTE, ACCORDING TO HER OWN DEFINITION, LIGHT LITERATURE, ON THE SUBJECT OF CONTEMPORARY LIFE IN BELGRADE IN THE 1930s, MOSTLY FROM A WOMAN'S PERSPECTIVE.

IN HER NOVEL 'THE LOVES OF GORDANA'; SHE WRITES: 'THE XX CENTURY HAS UPSET ALL PREVIOUS ATTAINMENTS OF COMMUNITY OF MAN. TO PROVIDE AN ALL-ENCOMPASING PICTURE OF THAT MEANS TO PAINT A PICTURE THAT IS COVERED IN WAVES, THAT IS, FOAM WITHOUT CLARTY. BEING A WOMEN, I CAN BEST UNDERSTAND A WOMAN, AND SHE IS NOW CAUGHT IN THE WHIRPOOL OF WAVES ...'



"ROWS OF HOUSES, MEASURED SPACES BETWEEN ALLEYS WITH TREES AND UTILITY POLES; EVERYTHING THAT GAVE OFF AN IMPRESSION OF BEING REAL HAD BROUGHT HER BACK FROM THOSE TERRIBLE SPARKS OF A THOUSAND QUESTIONS: WHAT IS A WOMAN, WHAT IS A MAN; WHAT DO THEY NEED EACH OTHER FOR, DO THEY ALL KNOW WHAT THEY WANT; WHAT THEY WISH FOR, DOES SHE KNOWS THOSE THINGS AS WELL?"

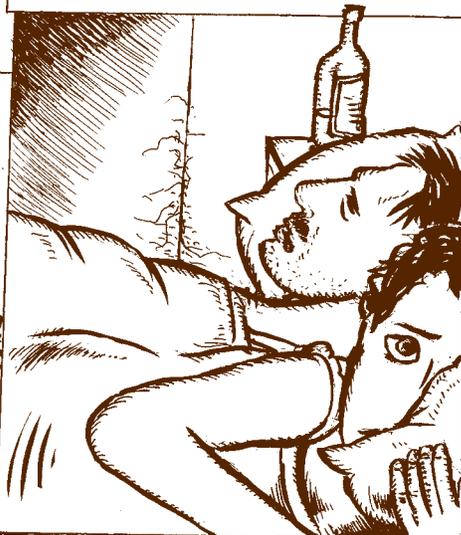


"WE ARE SO CLOSE, YET SO FAR AWAY FROM THE HUSTLE AND BUSTLE OF BELGRADE, THE MALICIOUS HEARTS AND COVETOUS EYES. AND STILL, THIS SOOTHING PEACE IS NOT WITHSTANDING... I FEEL SADNESS, A DEEP INCOMPREHENSIBLE SADNESS. MY SOUL, HEART, BRAIN, EVERY MUSCLE, EVERY NERVE, EVERY CELL IN MY BODY IS WEIGHED ON BY SOME STRANGE BURDEN... AS IF SOMETHING WILL SOON RUPTURE AND I GUESS TEARS WILL BURST FROM IT..."

"AFTER THE FIRST, UNHAPPY, MARRIAGE GORDANA STARTED LIVING WITH **MARKOVIC**, HER NEW FRIEND, WHO MOLESTED HER... SHE FALLS ASLEEP AND WAKES UP AS HE, RETURNING FROM KAFANA AND MUMBLING, CRASHES INTO BED SMELLING OF SWEAT AND WINE..."

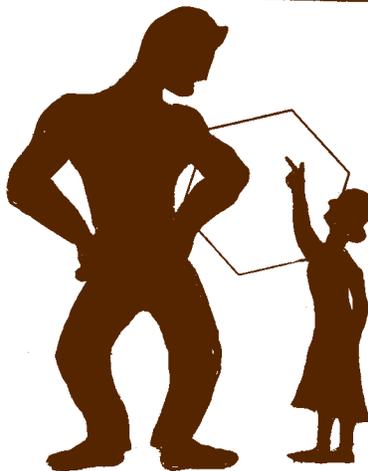
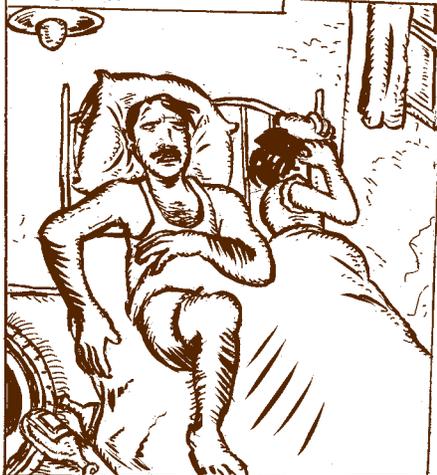


"SHE TURNED PRESSING HER NOSE INTO PILLOW - WANTING TO SCREAM: 'HOW AWFUL IS LIFE OF A COUPLE!'"



"THE DEAFENING AIR IN THE ROOM NUMBED HER NERVES LIKE A POISON WOULD. ACTUALLY, IT WAS POISON: IT SPILLED AWAY FROM **MARKOVIC**, CAUSED AS MUCH BY ALL THE BRANDY AND WINE HE HAD DRANK, AS BY THE TAVERN AIR THAT SATURATED HIS CLOTHES AND BODY"...

R. LENIC CONCLUDES: "OF COURSE, I DO NOT THINK THAT UNCONSCIONABLE AND MALICIOUS SPIRITS CAN BE FOUND EXCLUSIVELY AMONG MEN: THOSE TRAITS ARE TO BE FOUND IN BOTH SEXES, BUT MAN ENJOYS A PRESTIGIOUS STATUS IN OUR SOCIETY AND THUS HE IS MORE OFTEN IN THE POSITION TO BE DOMINANT..."



# GLIDERS

A young squirrel into rock'n'roll, American cars and skateboarding is unable to carry on the time-honored traditions of his family and dressing up as a flying squirrel to protect the home woods. As far as the narrative pace and rhythm go, this is Kasitonni's most clearly traditional story. It bangs its message into the viewer's brain with an irresistible force. The movie features extra special equipment, a musical interlude, animation, a real car and switching perspectives. It's easy to interpret *Gliders* as an autobiographical story written by the offspring of an entrepreneurial family who became an artist. ▶





## PLANET OF SEXES

*Planet of sexes* is probably the first movie in the world to be filmed in almost-Cinema-scope on 8mm film. The aspect ratio is 2.66:1, i.e. kasiscope mini-max. An unexpected love awaits a lonely US Air Force pilot on the planet of female warriors, castration robots and lizard creatures. The action switches from the blackness of space to the surface of the desert planet and into fortresses under its surface with blinding speed. Sweeping intergalactic vistas are interlaced with tight close ups of the actors' faces. ►

## BOB GUCCIONE HAS DIED

**TWO YEARS HAVE PASSED** since Bob Guccione died. The publicist who became famous for introducing full frontal nudity in the soft porn industry. In 1965 Guccione founded the *Penthouse* magazine, and for a few decades afterwards they fought a presumably pleasurable battle for the top against the „other” magazine, *Playboy*. Then, to put it simply, Reagan’s censorship laws came into force and the Internet began streaming pornography to the people. It was the end of a sleazy but glossy era.

For some reason, it is tempting to associate sexuality with „a good life”. Sex for everybody, sex in the bedroom or in the Bois de Boulogne, sex wherever. Sexuality and pornography are obviously not the same thing, but the two entities are not completely different either. One in the absence of the other, or as a piquant addition is, in any case, inextricably linked with human beings and their bodies. But a rejuvenating sex life is not for everyone, not even an acceptable sex life is guaranteed. Nor does everyone have access to a good life.

„A good life” is, of course, all imagery, and in our society today, these pictures are not entirely easy to distinguish from the basic pornographic functions: to excite, fascinate and create desire. We are floating in oceans of visual strategies depicting stylish homes, successful families and groundbreaking cuisine. The consumption dragon is a sordid creature. A predator in the most beautiful of all shapes; the promise of happiness. And it is our money that feeds the monster.



An unmistakable beat throbbed from the concrete masses at the Penthouse Adriatic when I stepped into the nightclub palace for the first time. It was actually just a few weeks before the aging Guccione passed away. I swear I could hear the 70s exuberant tones of carelessness and extravagance. Jerry Butler sang *One Night Affair* in 1972, the same year that Bob Guccione's imagination of La Dolce Vita became a reality on the beautiful island of Krk in the Adriatic Sea.

Haludovo\* and its operation in the former Yugoslavia would, according to Bob Guccione, „act as an antidote to the Cold War”. Guccione meant that the Cold War was one big misunderstanding that could be resolved through gregarious communication between the two worlds. With Tito's good memory and the sense of Western currency, the Penthouse Adriatic attracted for a few years a considerable number of foreign visitors. In exchange for true decadence surrounded by fabulous nature, they spent their dollars and deutschmarks in the legal casino which, however, was out of bounds for the Yugoslavs themselves.

For those who have a well-developed imagination, the smell of alcohol and cocaine is still palpable in these temple ruins of glass and concrete. But now the Cold War has come to an end, Bob Guccione rests in peace, and a contemporary romance of ruins is sweeping through the world, following the depredations of globalization. At least we can wish for sweet dreams during these days of full frontal transience.

[\*]

—  
Haludovo being the Yugoslav name for the Penthouse Adriatic







# THE BELGRADE STOCK EXCHANGE

**ONE DAY, A CATTLE OWNER FROM ŠUMADIJA** would set out for Belgrade with five hundred pigs — to sell them to livestock merchants, who would then transport them up the rivers Sava and Danube to Austria-Hungary and onwards, to Europe.

The pigs scurry down the road but since they have short legs, they make rather slow progress. The journey drags on — they have to stop for the night somewhere — and a pig-pen costs money. And they need to eat, too — and food costs money, too.

But if the owner hurries them onward, they get mighty tired, scurrying as they do on their short legs, so they will slim down. Fall off. They will lose weight, and that is not good, neither for the trade, nor for their owner. When they arrive in Belgrade, in the Savamala quarter, the merchants from across the river are already waiting for them. And other sellers, from all over Serbia, have already flocked there with their pigs. So, now, the pigs must be sold as fast as possible, without much delay. And until the right buyer is found, they need to be kept somewhere, again, for the night, and again, they have to be fed and...

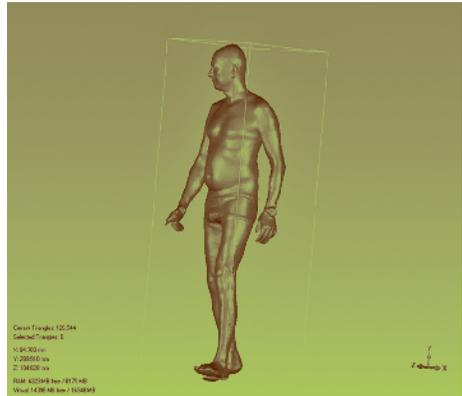
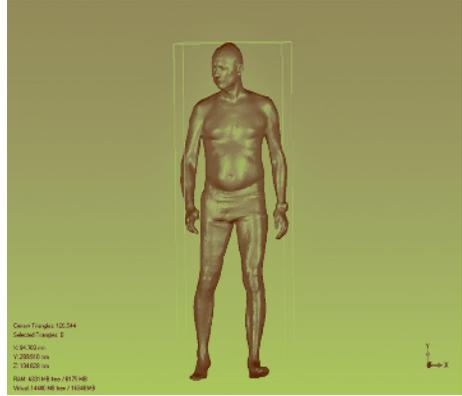
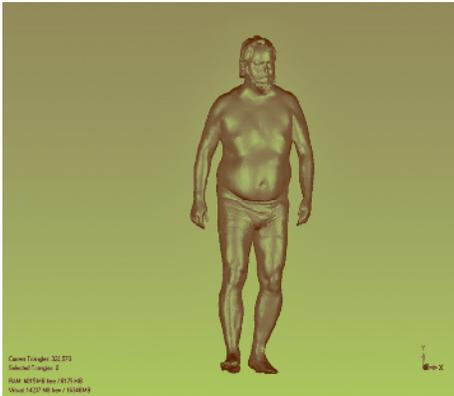
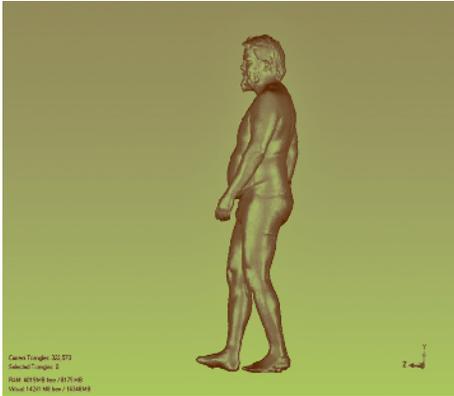
So then, the livestock owner gets an idea: when he gets near Belgrade, he will send a lad on a horse to Savamala, to deliver the message that such-and-such livestock owner is herding that many pigs at this-exact-price and to find him a buyer. So, the lad rides to the “Bosna” tavern, where the merchants have gathered and where the trading takes place, bringing the tidings that a livestock owner from Šumadija is coming, herding that many pigs, he gets the best price and goes back to inform the owner.

But there are a lot of pigs and a lot of merchants, and a lot of offers are on the table, so in order to make the dealing easier, they put up a notice board in front of the tavern, where the horse-riding lad is to write down the name of the owner and the number of pigs he is herding. Then a wholesale merchant, if he is interested, writes his name and price next to it. If somebody is willing to make a better offer, they simply erase that name and write down their own name next to a higher price... And so on and so forth, until the owner comes to Belgrade with his pigs. And when he arrives, all he needs to do is go to the notice board in front of the “Bosna” tavern, look at the last name on the board, find that person and deliver his pigs to him, collecting his money. And the merchant would already have a boat ready to load the pigs. And that is how pigs flowed up the Sava and Danube towards Budapest, Vienna and onward to Austria-Hungary, without delay.

As trade developed, the merchants would chip in and pay a lad to guard the notice board, and over time, a small table and a chair for the lad were provided, while the board was replaced with a large notebook, for writing down the prices offered.

And that is how the Belgrade Stock Exchange started. ▶





# ŠEST TOPOLA

**WHILE RESEARCHING FOR THE EXHIBITION,** I came across three curious photographs in a Belgrade flea market. They stood out from other photos in the market, as they had an unusually easy and leisured atmosphere. The three photographs were of two men walking on a beach, posing for the camera, trying to look attractive and sporty. On the back of the photographs, there is an inscription containing the year 1936, and two words “Šest topola”. After showing the photographs to some local people, I found out that “Šest topola” means “Six Poplars”, and is the name of an old restaurant situated on the banks of the Sava river, close to a group of six poplar trees. I went there to look for the restaurant and found out that the scene captured in those photographs has changed entirely — the smiling, tanned, carefree people are gone from the sunny boulevard, and only one poplar tree still remains.

The poplars may now have been cut down, and the two men may be dead for some time, but that moment on the beach in 1936 was captured and preserved in those photographs. I decided to bring these embalmed moments back to life, to re-create in the present the unusual sense of a good life seen in the photographs. Like the old photographs found in the flea market, my work captures a good life, snatching it from the flow of time, to be discovered and re-created. ▶



# RAŠA TODOSIJEVIĆ

—  
72 YRS.

**THERE ARE MANY DETAILS THAT I NO LONGER REMEMBER.** Whatever I have found out, except for some not very important minor details, came to me indirectly, incidentally and superficially; when one of the elders mentioned something or when someone remembered something all of a sudden, whereupon someone else added something of his own to it. It is from this thick fog, these clumsily piled-up surmises, that I shall try to cobble together a story. That is how it goes: some would say this, others would say that, and who knows where that leisurely prattle ended. The weather brings intimations of warmer days. Trees are starting to blossom everywhere. In April, wild chestnut-trees will blossom. In May, linden-trees will follow suit. When linden-trees blossom, mulberry-trees will turn red. Women from the surroundings of Belgrade sell flowers in Republic Square from wicker baskets and dirty buckets, right in front of the entrance to the National Theatre. Other women walk along Knez Mihailova Street selling hellebores. Even though it has grown appreciably warmer, Gypsy women from Vojvodina are still trying to sell leather gloves, which they probably procure in Romania. For some reason or other, I cannot seem to be able to sit down and write something down. I'll take a walk to Kalemegdan Park, admire the confluence of the Sava and the Danube, and presumably I'll be able to think up something intelligent along the way.

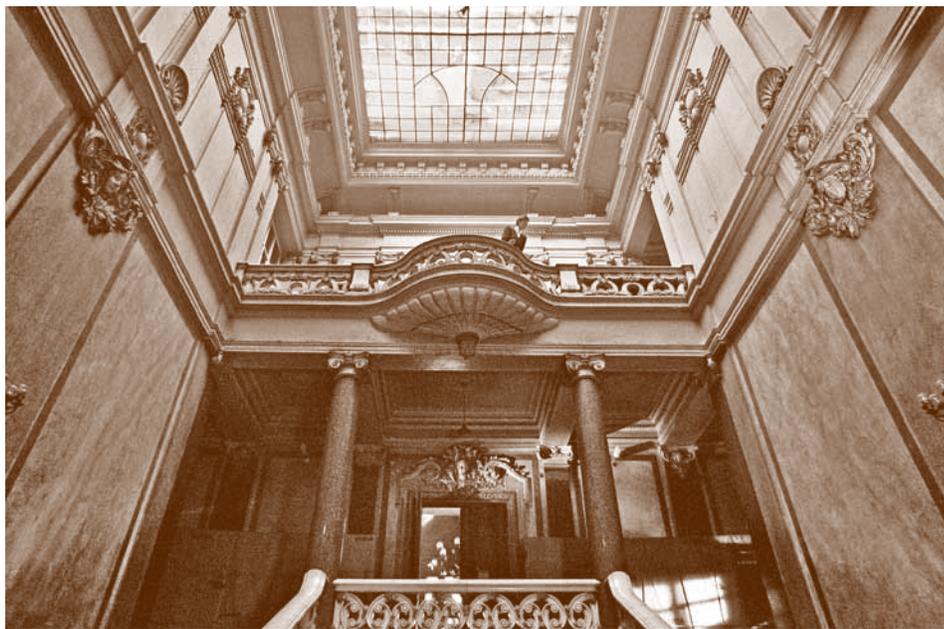
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The story that follows contains no answer to the question of how a long-drawn-out set of events, of no importance whatsoever to the homeland, the state and the “common cause”, sneaked in among the people in the fashion of a *relative*. Why did that scattered wreath of loosely connected episodes become something resembling *our novelette* over time, very much like a condensed *skaz*, of which everyone, from both sides of our street, knew something, with the exception, naturally enough, of the authorities, the State Security Service, the police and the agile military intelligence? At the time, everybody there claimed that military personnel, those uniformed rednecks, were informants. Today, fifty years later, that's distant past. A foggy notion. I very much doubt that those who had any dependable information about it, and kept their lips sealed to boot, are still alive. Everybody lies. Most of them lie, but some believe that their fabrications of long ago or their surmises have long since become solid truth. Just imagine what it would be like to meet some fat truth in the street that once was a huge lie.



Let me begin: Lieutenant Kosta Kostić — you would have to admit that the first name and surname are alike in a kitschy-humorous sort of way — was one of the sons of the merchant Nikodemos Kostoss. Lieutenant Kosta did not take after his father at all.

Kosta's father, sturdily built like a giant rhinoceros, with small ears, a round head, close-cropped grey-brown or ash-coloured hair, always with an angry frown on his forehead, was a Tsintsar from Albania. He was born in a forgotten little village in the Elbasan district. In his father's little shop in Tirana, he learned how to trade in textiles, speaking Greek, Serbian and Albanian equally well. To Albanians, young Nikodemos was an Albanian, to Greeks he was a Greek, and to Serbs he was a frowning staunch Serb. A veritable chameleon. Owing to his father's savings and secret connections, Nikodemos relocated to Montenegro. Once there, he decided to change his name. Of his own free will, Nikodemos abruptly turned into Nikola Kostić. Whenever he spoke, people thought he was a born Montenegrin and that his foot had never stepped onto the sea shore. Nikola passed himself off as a Serb, for it was too complicated to him to explain to all and sundry that he was actually neither a Serb nor a Greek but an Orthodox Tsintsar. In Cetinje, he married Koviljka in 1926. Little is known about that good, modest woman whose face was characterised by a sickly white colour except that she was small and thin *as a rake*, that she was a helpful and acquiescent calculating person, that she constantly invoked God's name for some reason or other and that she always wore black dresses, black stockings and black headscarves, which was not at all unusual for Montenegrin and Mediterranean women of that time. Even when she had, up to a degree, adapted to living in Belgrade, which was much later, of course, she never took off black clothes, thus leaving the impression of a *woman in mourning*. In the Balkans, there is always someone to mourn after! The dead are six feet under the ground, whereas killers take their time writing their books, memoirs and suchlike stupid things trying to cleanse their guilty conscience with the printed word. One got the impression that Koviljka had been a widow since birth. She bore Nikola three children, three sons, three hawks or three bids for their family's immortality; their first-born was the aforementioned Lieutenant Kosta. Their second son was the tall and handsome Teodor. For their youngest son Milutin, the pet of the family, who was born much later, in 1935, his father ensured a scholarship grant through his Party connections in Belgrade, so that went off to study abroad in 1960; first he went to New York, then to Buffalo. From Buffalo he waltzed over to Detroit. Who could get a scholarship grant for studying in America in those murky times? Only those with good connections. They say he was — and who gives any credence today to vacuous family twaddle? — a promising Party recruit, a young man to whom all doors were open, on top of which he was a very gifted student of electrotechnics, a veritable genius, a new Nikola Tesla, only one bright June morning, two years after his arrival in Detroit, early morning strollers and layabouts found him lying dead on his stomach on Belle Isle, right behind a monument to James Scott.



**115** Shooting of feature film *The Harms Case*, directed by Slobodan Pešić, still photography by Jaša Josimović, Belgrade, 1988

As for this James Scott fellow, he was a rich man (1830 -1910). He inherited a part of his property from his father, but he was also able to earn lots of money himself through skilful speculation with real estate prices. The citizens of Detroit remembered him as an unsurpassed layabout; he was known to all the whores and waiters in the city. Still, in his will he bequeathed one-fifth of his huge property for the purpose of building a memorial fountain called “Fountain of Joy” on Belle Isle. And on top of this, just to show who had dollars to spare, he had a life-size bronze statue of himself made and placed in the same park. According to some uncertain estimates, James left \$ 200,000 to the city authorities for that, shall we say, noble purpose, according to others the sum in question was \$ 300,000 or \$ 500,000, whereas on the basis of verified records the actual amount was \$ 600,000 — which, in the early 20th century, was a sizeable sum anywhere in the world, the United States included. Did James Scott bequeath money for building the aforementioned memorial fountain just to leave a trace of his existence in Detroit? Did he do that out of remorse he felt on account of his immoral behaviour and wasted life as the hour of his death approached, or was it because this fellow was intent on continuing to mock the hypocrisy of the God-fearing citizens of Detroit even *post mortem*, which sounds rather more likely?

*“Ladies and gentlemen — as Jim might have said to his fellow citizens — I was born rich. That is a fact I could not influence in any way whatsoever. Since I turned fifteen, I have been doing whatever I wanted to, and you’re hardly paragons of virtue yourselves: you grumbled for a while, and then agreed that a monument to me be erected on Belle Isle. For a sizeable amount of money, of course. Dante and Schiller were great artists, and I’m a man of your ilk. How many times have you gone around babbling about money and employment mattering the most, and everything else being of secondary importance? Whatever happened to the ethical principles, honour or pride of your brave Pilgrim Fathers, who sailed all the way from Plymouth to the shore of the New World on that rented sailing-ship called the Mayflower”?!*

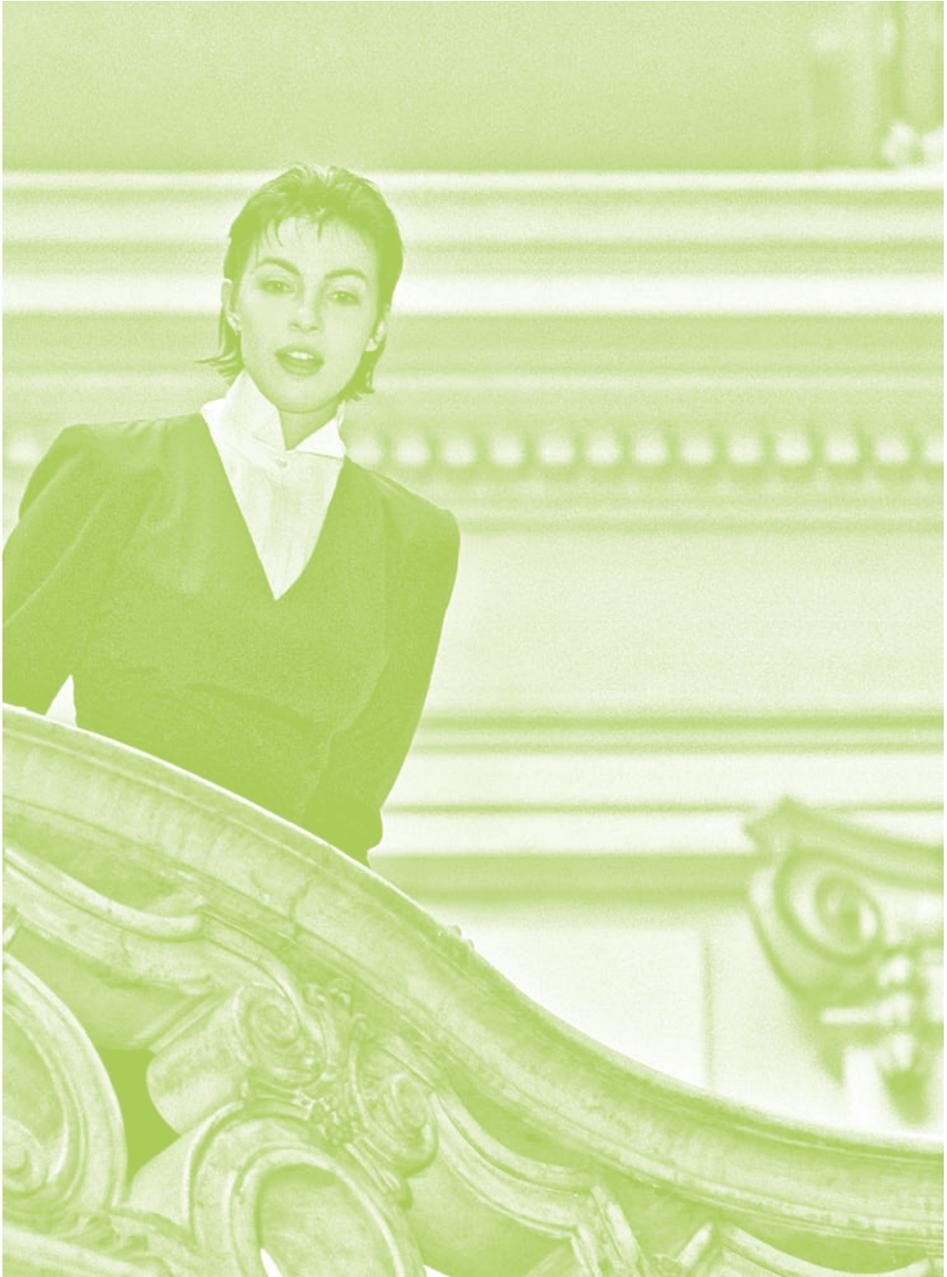
When it came to the mock neo-Renaissance style of “Fountain of Joy”, with its four stone lions and lots of bronze turtles, the executors of Scott’s will did not engage the services of just any architect, an obsequious practitioner of the trade, the way it tends to be done all over the world, but addressed none other than Cass Gilbert. Only a year before that, in 1913, that is, Mr Gilbert designed the highest building in the world at the time, the first American skyscraper called the Woolworth Building. James’s pudgy life-size figure was sculpted in bronze and then cast, following Cass’s instructions and under his supervision, by none other than Herbert Adams, a man of high reputation in North America at the time. The undertaking was finally completed 15 years after Scott’s death. So, there are people who are true to their word, after all.

And so it came to pass that on Belle Isle, which French colonists called Pig Isle, the citizens of Detroit received a gift in the form of sculptures of Friedrich Schiller, Dante

Alighieri, and alongside them a bronze statue of the great misanthropist and secretive schemer James Scott. That, in fact, is America. It is not worth the time or the effort to mention Messrs Marshall Fredericks and Allen Newman in this context. The sculpture of Dante was paid for by the Italian community in Detroit, and that of Schiller, naturally enough, by the local German community.



Let us go back to the murder of Milutin Kostić. Faced with a murder case wherein a young man of, say, 26 years of age, a student, temporary US resident, national of a Communist country called Milutin Kostić, of whom the dumb official of the Yugoslav Embassy — dumb in terms of job description, vocation and personal beliefs — could not, did not wish to or did not dare say anything meaningful, was killed by two shots, in the back of the head and the neck respectively, the local Detroit police could do little to solve it. Had it not been for a paranoid voice on the phone, speaking from some higher instance, which swamped the inspector on duty with an avalanche of not very educated guesses about espionage, Communism, the murder of a potential and precious defector, vicious political set-ups with incalculable consequences — especially concerning the colossal Bay of Pigs fuck-up — the entire affair could have been laid to rest in one of the cardboard boxes in the labyrinth of the police archive. Owing to the energetic Mr Paranoia, Milutin's apartment was searched again. His landlady, the elderly, honourable Mrs Agatha Jacobson, widow of the pharmacist Ivor Jacobson, was interviewed again. Mrs Jacobson, with her bulging blue eyes and wrinkled face, repeated what she had said before, which was that she had no objections whatsoever concerning Milutin's conduct. According to her, Milutin paid the rent in a timely manner, and as far as she could remember, and she still had a good memory despite her advanced age, he never received any guests up there on the third floor, nor did he ever make any noise at night. To say nothing of easy women, debauchery and drinking. Apart from his clothes, toiletries, bed, some food in the fridge, a gas stove, some shabby-looking dishes, several textbooks, a (rented) Remington Deluxe typewriter, the almost noiseless 1941 model, a nice-looking teak table (without any drawers) with a lamp, student notes — scribbled alternately in English and in Serbian — and a pile of local newspapers, nothing whatsoever was found there that could provide a clue which would indicate a motive for this murder and point to its perpetrator. What the police missed during the previous search of the apartment were a photograph of the movie actress Leslie Caron (containing her slanted autograph) intended for her fans, and some twenty sheets of paper (they were not numbered) containing a meticulously compiled list, typed on the aforementioned Remington typewriter, without any comprehensible reason for doing so, of almost all the objects that were presumably to be found in that apartment at one point. Somebody from the police station came up with the idea that this seemingly random list, compiled without any discernible order or connections among the items



contained in it, might be part of some code, but not much progress was ever made when it came to decoding it. Another cause for suspicion on the part of the police was a lack of any letters from Milutin's homeland. It seemed incomprehensible that this young man never corresponded with his parents, brothers, sisters, possibly a fiancée or, after all, with his friends in Yugoslavia. Just as there were no letters to be found, no medicines, creams, sedatives, aspirins or the like were found in the bathroom. The wooden shelf above the sink contained just a worn-out piece of soap, a toothbrush and a freshly opened tube of toothpaste.

Just precisely who killed Milutin, and why, of course, remained unfathomable to everyone; no one among the Kostičićs has ever uttered a single word concerning that mournful and touchy issue. However, the way things tend to happen in Belgrade, their neighbours surmised, or babbled, for that matter, that this bloody deed was committed by the sons of an aged Belgrade wholesale trader. The said trader, so the story goes, sent Nikola, that is Nikodemos Kostoss, as he was called at the time, residing in Tirana, various textiles through his channels before World War Two. Along with the textiles, he slipped in the odd book, believing that books printed in Serbian would make Nikodemos feel glad. Having relocated to Belgrade from Cetinje, around the middle of 1945 Nikola denounced the said trader, having set his sights on the man's villa, before the new authorities for being a capitalist bloodsucker, black marketer and collaborator of the occupying forces. The man ended up six feet under the ground; it happened at night, without a trial, a marked grave, for no reason at all, without a priest. Nikola had got it into his foolish head that, having denounced the man, in keeping with the ancient customs pertaining to such acts, he would get the trader's magnificent edifice in the prestigious Dedinje district, for the sake of which he had thoughtlessly denigrated an honourable man and sent him irrevocably to the darkness of Erebus. Be that as it may, Nikola, Koviljka and their children had to make do with a two-storey house and a small rose garden and a nice-looking cherry-tree in the part of Belgrade called Teachers' Colony. At the time, it was a quiet, secluded part of the city, and the said house was quite an imposing edifice. Nikola thought, or deluded himself into thinking, that the old wealthy man would be punished, strictly but fairly, by the new authorities, and that, having served as much time in prison as he deserved, "five or six years as a minimum", he would simply be expelled from Belgrade. They would put him on a truck, together with his belongings, and send him back to where that scoundrel had come from: Petrovac-on-Mlava. Ostensibly, Nikodemos had no idea that the rapacious army would pick the old man up immediately after he denounced him, have him shot forthwith and bury his body in an unmarked grave like that of a cur. He turned the man's family into displaced persons with gritted teeth, people whom the circumstances forced into the abyss of yearning for revenge. He turned his eldest son Kosta, then still a Lieutenant of the Yugoslav Army, into an enthusiastic, characterless informant, who even bragged among those closest to him about his dirty deeds and silly informant's skills inherited from the Army officers who constituted garbage of his own moral calibre. It could

be said that young Milutin, breathing in deeply the fresh air of the park on Belle Isle, perhaps, we cannot say this for certain, fell victim to the evil turmoil initiated by the unassuageable greed of his beloved and immensely respected father.

Having concluded in his nightmares that the old trader's son might be the man who "shot his good Milutin in a cowardly fashion, from the back", Nikola told the people from the State Security Service, almost raving as he did so, whatever weighed heavily on his mind, and they passed those surmises and claptrap hastily cobbled together through their own channels, an Orthodox priest prone to bribery, that is, to the police in Detroit. However, the man they suspected of having committed the murder supplied strong evidence that he was elsewhere at the time the murder could have been committed.

Someone cobbled together a vague assumption, a so-called secret service-peasant-style folk song, to the effect that the suspect was one of a pair of twins, possessing an uncanny resemblance to his twin brother, and that his alibi was insupportable under the circumstances. According to this assumption, cobbled together as stated above, although not entirely devoid of a material basis, it turns out that one of the twins killed Milutin Kostić in cold blood on Belle Isle and, having completed his task, returned to Brampton without any qualms of conscience, while the other twin paraded conspicuously among his acquaintances, so that they could testify, if need be, that he was where he was at the time and that not for a moment did he leave the birthday party of Kenny Grant, then still an unknown biochemist.

The theory about twins as perpetrators could possibly be accepted in Belgrade. However, the words of an exile whose father had been killed by the new Yugoslav authorities, coupled with statements of several reliable witnesses who attended the aforementioned birthday party, carried greater weight than those of an avaricious priest. ►



121 Shooting of feature film *The Harms Case*, directed by Slobodan Pešić, production design by Vladan Caričić, still photography by Jaša Josimović, Belgrade, 1988

# LOST PIGEONS

*Lost Pigeons* was developed in Ghent, where Takala became fascinated with the local community of pigeon fanciers. While top racing pigeons are auctioned at high prices, losing birds is an essential part of the pigeon sport, and all our street pigeons are lost racing pigeons and their offspring. During the racing season 2012, Takala collected information on the birds that the fanciers in Ghent lost, and posters were made to announce each lost pigeon. The posters connect to a sound piece, a phone conversation between the artist and a fancier, offering insight into the economy of the pigeon sport. ▶

Drawings: Siri Baggerman  
 Commissioned by S.M.A.K., Ghent

**Dolce Vita**  
 NL08-2020821  
 The most expensive pigeon to date  
 Sold on 29/1/1012 to Mr. Hu Zhen  
 for 250,400 EUR  
 Origin: Pieter Veenstra

- "Hollands best racer for the last decade"
- 1. Dutch Olympiad bird allround 2011
  - 1. Int. acebird long distance WENC 2010
  - 1. Nat. acebird WHZB 2010
  - 1. Nat. racing hen WHZB 2010
  - 1. Nat. acebird long distance WHZB 2010
  - 1. NPO Chateauroux - 1,416 birds
  - 2. NPO Signy Signetz - 8,664 birds
  - 4. NPO Sens - 6,740 birds
  - 8. NPO Abilis - 11,945 birds

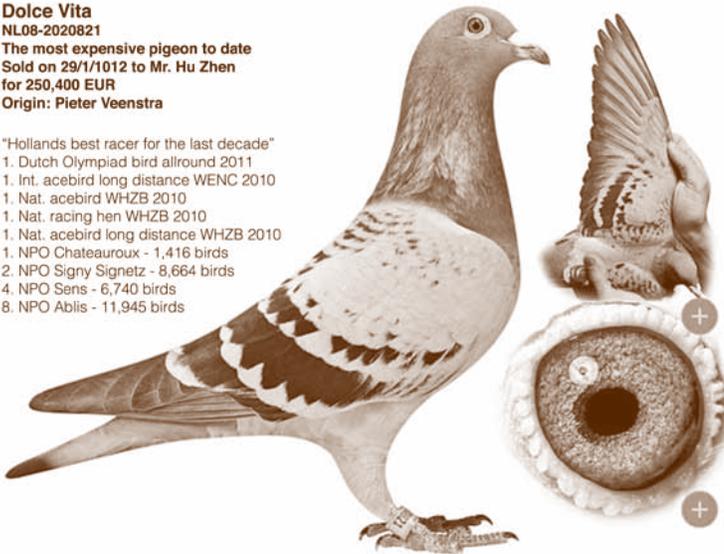


Image from the *Pigeon Paradise* web site

# LOST



*"11/06" BE 12 - 4185382*

If you see this poster please call:

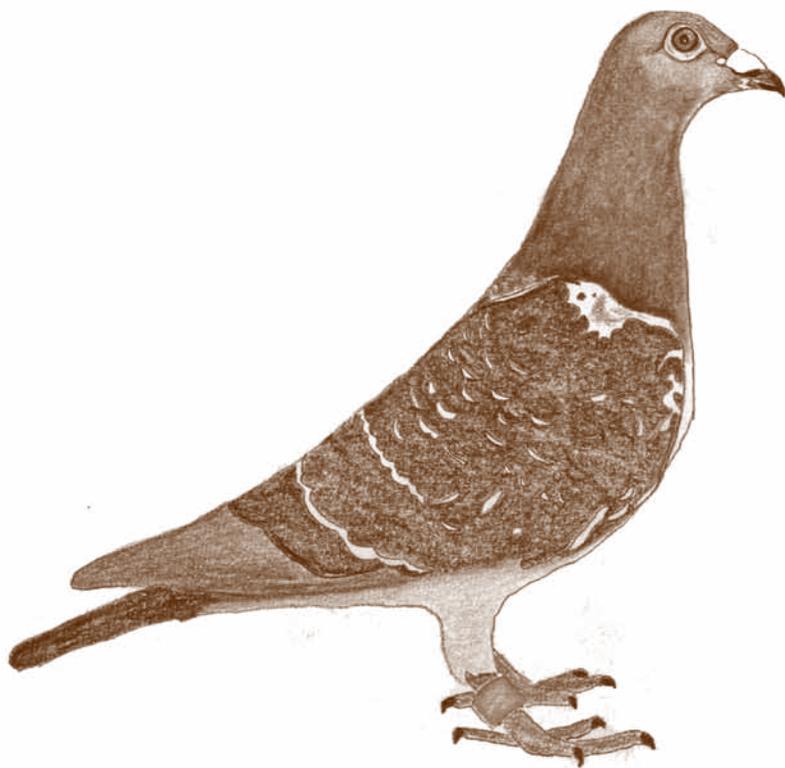
**+32 (0) 9 240 76 50**

*Lost Pigeons, 2012, posters, sound, courtesy of Galerie Diana Stigter*

**PILVI TAKALA**

**123**

# LOST

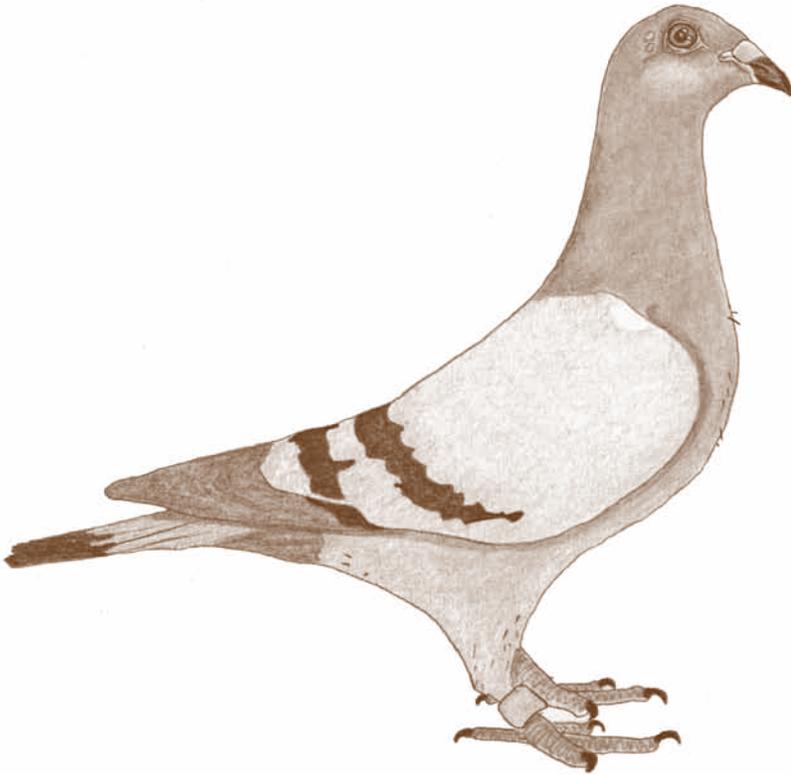


*"Zwarte Rivaldo" BE 12 - 4270213*

If you see this poster please call:

**+32 (0) 9 240 76 50**

# LOST



BE 11 - 4207082

If you see this poster please call:

**+32 (0) 9 240 76 50**



# SRETEN UGRIČIĆ

## UNDESIRABLE

**DANGER COMES FROM THE AIR.** The air, by means of invisible waves, transmits speech, words, unknown messages, unforeseeable meanings.

Danger comes from the sea, with the low tide, but it is only a tactical retreat, it must not deceive us. The threat mounts.

Danger comes from within and bursts out where it is least expected.

Danger comes from unclean hands. Danger comes to stay, Pontius Pilate says.

Danger comes unannounced.

Danger comes on a freight train, an interminable sequence of cars loaded to capacity, their contents unsealed and not having been cleared through the customs, along with the distortion of the deafening squealing and screeching of the brakes, on platforms 2, 4, 16 and 49.

Danger comes from the head. From the eyes, ears, mouths, noses. The threat mounts.

Danger comes from the bitter core of an almond pit, from the unstable core of a uranium atom, from the warm core of the family, because everything comes from the bitter, unstable, warm core of the family and everything comes back to the core of the family.

Danger lurks round the corner. Danger comes from this woman who stands on the corner for hours, exposed to a heavy shower and the wind, motionless, upright, silent. The threat mounts.

Danger comes from nowhere.

Danger comes even when it passes.

Danger has passed.

Danger comes from the air. How was it established that danger threatens from the air, of all places? The air, by means of invisible waves, transmits speech, words, unknown messages, unforeseeable meanings.

The harsh floodlights of the anti-aircraft defence pierce the sky almost to the stars. At night, the piercing floodlights are the colour of platinum, in daytime, they are violet-bluish. In broad daylight, certain stars hit by the floodlights can be seen for a moment or two, they flicker and then fade away. The floodlights of the anti-aircraft defence intersect, branch off, stretch interminably, abruptly changing direction and the angle in relation to the horizon of expectations at irregular intervals.

There is always the odd undesirable paper airplane, clumsily plunging downward at a low altitude, without having obtained the permission of the “*Customs Authority and Flight Control*”; actually, that is more of a desperate twitch than flight, the paper airplane takes an abrupt plunge, lest it should get caught by the unbiased floodlights of the anti-aircraft defence.

Cisterns of our intrepid anti-aircraft defence, equipped with hoses, spray asepsol and aerosol, lazily cruise the streets and shower every inch of public space, every tree crown that rustles, every handle and every shop window, every haircut combed in an orderly manner, with fine mist-like drops. The process of disinfection is particularly meticulously carried out in the main boulevards, at the main railway station, the main post office building and the building of the “*Geodetic Institute*”, formerly the building of the “*Customs Authority and Flight Control*”.

The smelly cleaners and filters of the anti-aircraft defence are an obligatory item in all state institutions, as well as all private rooms, corridors, entrances, access paths... This obligation is indelibly etched in the minds of employees of state services and those in charge of state secrets from a very early age. The see-through rubber gloves of the anti-aircraft defence are slipped on immediately after getting out of bed, and are peeled off and thrown into special containers every night by 10 o'clock PM at the latest.

Danger comes from the sea, with the low tide, but it is only a tactical retreat, it must not deceive us. How was it established that danger threatens from the sea, of all places, if we know that, according to ancient archives, the low tide has lasted for centuries? Even when it is not there, the sea, with its powerful tireless waves, breaks our shores, our borders, our territory, our habitat.

With its immensity, the sea breaks our mind. The sea overwhelms us. The sea irresistibly attracts us, the low tide drags us near. How is that possible if the sea is so far away from us? A detailed examination of sea water will show that sooner or later. An expedition of the “*Geodetic Institute*” has already been dispatched towards the shore on the other side of the horizon, its task being to take samples and to come back to the homeland as soon as possible. Until then, the sea frightens us. It is deep and far away.

Based on a strategic decision of the Scientific Council of the “*Geodetic Institute*” our shipbuilding yards have been built into the corridors of abandoned silver mines. Our cruisers, submarines and torpedoes shine, with readiness and determination.

Our ports are dry, but they are large enough. The wind shifts shallow waves of sand from one landing to another, from one lighthouse to another. The anchored boats and sailing boats list to one side, then the other.

Our navy never sleeps. During the course of his shift at the top of the mast, the sentry, binoculars in hand and a hawk perched on his shoulder, never blinks an eye. Our sailors never dream. Just like miners, members of our navy are entitled to working time and wartime benefits.

Our admirals, captains, sailors, navigators and divers live with their families in white settlements around emerald swimming pools framed by ivy and an aura of invincibility. Their sons can swim both before and after they are born, and both before and after death in decisive naval battles. The configuration and the depth of the swimming pools correspond to the configuration and the depth of the sea. Their life is short and intense. Their glory is permanent.

In the sea there is no air, which is an encouraging factor. But we cannot live without air, despite all the dangers that lurk in it. On the sea, there are pirates with black flags adorned by laughing skulls. We do not feel like laughing. The greatest monster of all lives in the sea, the one which dives for months after taking a single breath, which has never been caught, which we cannot even imagine. The unimaginable monster of the deeps has been pronounced undesirable in advance by a decision of the Scientific Council of the “*Geodetic Institute*”.

We know that after low tide there comes high tide. The threat mounts. Our mountains are our islands. We must never forget that.

Danger comes from within and bursts out where it is least expected. How was it established that danger comes from within, of all places, and that it bursts out abruptly and unexpectedly? Our ancestors have imparted that to us, from one generation to another, that is what our tradition says. What have we gained from tradition?

In the skies, among the innumerable, untold, unfathomable deities, there is one in whom no one believes. In every other respect, this deity is the same as all the other deities. Therefore, deities treat this exceptional deity in the same way that they treat any deity among them, among those magnificent deities. There is no disturbance when it comes to the eternal relations among deities. There is no difference there worth mentioning. Each deity is exceptional in some respect, and so is this one.

But the deity no one believes in still believes that there is a difference there, moreover, that the difference in question is even decisive. This deity does not know why it is different from all the other deities around it, and knows that it will never find out why this is so, and knows that it does not matter, but it still feels upset from time to time, inside. The threat mounts.

Thus, at one point, that exceptional deity trembles and decides to descend upon earth, among mortals, because it seems to it that they resemble deities no one believes in the most. And lo and behold – what the deity intended to do it did at once. Which constitutes proof of its divinity, even if no one believes in you, does it not?

Here is that disturbed deity among people, among those innumerable, untold and unfathomable mortals. It takes on the guise of the receptionist at the entrance of the “*Geodetic Institute*” building. There it finds peace. But only for a short while. The threat mounts. Enough to give you goose bumps.

The divine is always inside, whether it is visible or not. That is why danger comes from the inside – even when you are a deity – and bursts out where you least expect it.





When encountering the divine, people tremble momentarily, but they do not pay attention to it, they pass by without looking back.

Indeed, people treat it the way they treat other people, like a deity no one believes in. There is no disturbance of eternal relations among people there. There is no difference there worth mentioning.

But the deity no one believes in still believes that there is a difference there, moreover, that the difference in question is even decisive. It knows why it is different in that respect from all the other mortals around it, and knows that they will never find out about it, and knows that it is not important, so it gets disturbed, inside, and quickly returns to the skies, among other deities.

It is still here. It is still there. One moment it is here, the next moment it is there. It is always here and it is always there. On account of this deity, danger comes from the inside and bursts out abruptly and unexpectedly. And so, according to our tradition, in the skies, among innumerable, untold and unfathomable deities, there is one deity, exceptional and disturbed, whom no one believes in. And so, according to our tradition, on earth, among innumerable, untold and unfathomable mortals, there lives and dies a deity, exceptional but disturbed, whom no one believes in.

Maybe it is precisely this inner disturbance that is the cause of disbelief in this exceptional deity. Maybe, who knows? A deity that trembles. A deity without divinity. Equally hidden, unstable, unpredictable both at the entrance of the “*Geodetic Institute*” and in the skies.

Maybe, who knows? Tradition teaches us that this is no fairy tale. That the threat mounts. The deity that no one believes in is to be pronounced undesirable by all means. At the very next meeting of the Holy Synod, Admiralty and the Scientific Council of the “*Geodetic Institute*”.

Danger comes to stay, Pontius Pilate says. As the procurator of Judea, he knows that danger comes to stay? Let us look at the icon. In the icon, the investigation is already over, the people have already passed judgement. The man who claims to be God is not undesirable in the vast Roman Empire. But he is undesirable among the people of Judea and in the whole of Israel.

The procurator of Judea dismisses his servants and counsellors, goes down the marble stairs, pauses, remains alone in the atrium. he takes off his ring-seal with a black stone, raises his always clean hands to the level of his eyes. He stares at his empty palms for quite a while, at the thin, pink horizontal parallel lines running along them. Nothing, just the palms of Pontius Pilate, who finally passes judgement upon himself: *Hic ego non sum*.

Danger comes from unclean hands. It has always been so, and it will always be so. The threat mounts. Let us take a closer look at the icon. Is that atrium not identical to the atrium in the “*Geodetic Institute*” building, is that bifurcating staircase not identical to the bifurcating staircase in the “*Geodetic Institute*” building? How is that possible, knowing

that the icon was created six centuries before the “*Geodetic Institute*” building? How is that possible, knowing that the icon has been left in the safe of the “*Geodetic Institute*” and that no one has seen it for at least seven generations?

Danger comes unannounced. How do we know that danger comes unannounced? Why, that is what the timetable of our railways is like. Danger comes on a freight train, an interminable sequence of cars loaded to capacity, their contents unsealed and not having been cleared through the customs, along with the distortion of the deafening squealing and screeching of the brakes, on platforms 2, 4, 16 and 49 of the main railway station of the capital city. Where does this train come from? According to the documentation at our disposal – from nowhere.

The engine driver wipes sweat from his forehead, switches off the engine, gets out of the cabin. He hands the cargo over to the chief dispatcher. The cars have been counted, there are 112 of them in all. One carries 6 tons, that makes a total of 672 tons of cargo. The record is written down, signed and sealed by both men. The engine driver faints from exhaustion. From anxiety. From desperation. The dispatcher submits a report to his superiors about the cargo received. The dispatcher awaits further instructions.

The dispatcher remains on duty. He sends a message to his family by a courier, telling them not to worry, that he will not come home at the usual time, duty calls. He will remain on duty until further notice. Twenty-four hours elapse. Seventy-eight hours elapse. The dispatcher repeats his request to his superiors. The dispatcher inspects the train that has been entrusted to his care, knocks on the sides of the cars that are loaded to capacity with his hammer, and also on the wheels and the overloaded railway tracks. Nine days, seven hours and eighteen minutes elapse.

The courier never delivered the message. The dispatcher is the last person to have seen him. In his life, the dispatcher faces an increasing number of questions that he cannot answer. His palms sweat, his mouth goes dry, his voice quavers. The dispatcher finally leaves his workplace and makes for the “*Geodetic Institute*” building in a heavy shower.

Is that cargo of 672 tons undesirable? Who will unseal the cars, who will take over the cargo? Who is responsible? The dispatcher most certainly is not. The threat mounts.

Danger lurks round the corner. How do we know that danger already lurks there, round the corner? Danger comes from this woman who stands on the corner for hours next to the “*Bristol*” hotel, opposite the “*Geodetic Institute*” building, lashed by the rain and wind, motionless, upright, silent. In all likelihood, she had gone out of the “*Geodetic Institute*” building, crossed the street and stopped there, and it cannot be determined precisely when or why.

Her escape is, her raincoat is, her cheeks are, her eyebrows are, her vertebrae are, her toes are, her elegant sandals are, her thighs are, her hips are, blood flows down her bare thighs in the form of scarlet tears. Blood also flows down her temples and cheeks.

She likes blood. Blood is not noticeable on her. There comes the zealous cistern of the anti-aircraft defence and sprays her with asepsol. Motionless.

The camera lens zooms: struck by its penetrating focus, she sinks to her knees. The camera lens zooms towards her head: struck by its penetrating focus, her eyes look defiantly straight into the face of the order. The camera lens zooms: struck by its penetrating focus, the pupils of her eyes expand and expand and expand. The threat mounts. Such an expansion of the pupils of her eyes is undesirable.

Her hand moves, takes a short ladies' umbrella from the pocket of her raincoat. At the end of the handle is a button, she presses it, the umbrella opens luxuriously, immediately hiding her from the view of the camera. The camera lens zooms on the pattern on the impermeable fabric of the umbrella: hyper-realistic drops of rain and asepsol are printed on the impermeable fabric so convincingly that the octaeder of the umbrella blends with the concrete of the pavement. The woman has disappeared.

Before she died, this woman disappeared in the heavy shower, on the corner, next to the "Bristol" hotel, opposite the "Geodetic Institute" building. Her head is. Her brain is. Where is her husband, where are her children? Have they perhaps gone away to the seaside? Her brain has memorised everything, her brain is to be located urgently and eliminated.

Danger comes from the head. From the eyes, ears, mouths, noses. Danger also comes from the brain, which is the bitter core. Danger comes from the bitter core of the almond pit, from the unstable core of a uranium atom, from the warm core of the family, for everything comes from the bitter, unstable, warm core of the family and everything returns to the core of the family.

Danger comes from nowhere. How do we know that danger comes from nowhere? It is not merely to do with that cargo in the freight train cars at the main railway station. It is not merely to do with the air. It is not merely to do with the threatening low tide. It is not merely to do with the bitter core of the family and unclean hands and what not... It is well known, unfortunately, where that from nowhere is.

You enter the "Geodetic Institute" building. You pass by the receptionist in a sailor's uniform at the entrance, having said the password, which goes: "The counter hall". The air, by means of invisible waves, transmits unknown messages, unforeseeable meanings.

The receptionist will get goose bumps as soon as he hears the code word, but he will let you through without a word. You climb the left branch of the staircase. Whoever takes the right branch of the staircase, which also leads to the counter hall, will come across a locked door. So, you take the left curving branch of the staircase, go up with a light step, in no hurry whatsoever.

To anyone coming from the left-hand side, the door of the counter hall is open wide. Even though the threat mounts, step in freely, go to one of the counters aligned in two rows alongside the magnificent room. Do not wonder at the fact that the ceiling is so high, so far away that it can barely be discerned. Do not wonder at the fact that the heavy, luxuriously branching chandeliers are planted in the parquet floor, just step around them.

Do not wonder at the fact that there is no one in the counter hall. Nor is there anyone in front of the innumerable counters made of engraved glass, with a semicircular opening which forces one to bow down and pay respect, or behind them. Here the immediacy of that from nowhere erases the difference between in front of and behind, between for and against, between here and there, between up and down, between near and far, between left and right, between in the beginning or in the end and in-between.

There were no people in there even when this building belonged to *“The First Association of Stock Exchange Shareholders”*. There were no people there either when the building belonged to the *“Commune of Householders and Free Professions”*. Nor were there any people there when the building belonged to the *“Customs Authority and Flight Control”*. Or, for that matter, when the building belonged to the *“Basic Association of Associated Labour in Mining and Metallurgy”*. Also, there were no people there when the building belonged to the *“Institute for Insuring and Reinsuring Life, Health, Children, Property and Investments”*. Nor were there any people there when the building belonged to the *“Central Asylum for the Mentally Gifted”*. Or, for that matter, when the building belonged to the *“Admiralty, Ministry of Culture-tourism and the Monitoring/Information Service”*. There were no people there either when the building belonged to the procurator of Judea.

A spooky kind of absence reigns in the counter hall of our *“Geodetic Institute”*. However, in the nearest corner, there sits a child whose face is unwashed and tearful. The child sits on a pile of maps of sea bottom strewn across the floor, unsigned documents, dishevelled-looking files, indigo copies of strategic decisions, the carapaces of sea shells, crabs and snails, dusty laboratory tubes, opaque samples of crystals, samples of non-ferrous ores, invalid banknotes, dried mouse turds, smelly cleaners and filters belonging to the anti-aircraft defence, whimpering and complaining:

- We’re playing hide-and-seek, and everybody has hidden and I can’t find anyone. I know where they are, but I don’t dare check it.
- Why, where are they?
- In the safe.
- Where?
- In the safe?
- Where’s that?
- There. At the back. There it is.

The child points to the furthest corner of the counter hall. There is the safe, built in right up to the ceiling, resembling a giant tile stove, a bunker, a fortress within a fortress, a nightmare within a nightmare, a monster from the deeps that we cannot even imagine inside a monster from the deeps that we cannot even imagine. You should take the child by the hand and head for the safe.

After a pleasant walk, lasting half an hour at the most, you reach the last counter in line. You step behind the glass. The child can wait.

You approach the half-open steel door of the safe, whose width is narrower than the span of a woman's shoulders, whose height is that of a child, whose thickness is half a metre, whose weight is 672 tons. You step in with one leg only. You take a peek inside. There is nothing inside. There is no one inside. Only an undesirable, opaque from nowhere.

Danger comes from the air. The air, by means of invisible waves, transmits speech, words, unknown messages, unforeseeable meanings.

Danger comes from the sea, with the low tide, but it is only a tactical retreat, it must not deceive us. The threat mounts.

Danger comes from within and bursts out where it is least expected.

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Danger lurks round the corner. Danger comes from this woman who stands on the corner for hours, exposed to a heavy shower and the wind, motionless, upright, silent. The threat mounts.

Danger comes from nowhere.

Danger comes even when it passes.

Danger has passed. ►



*Voyage to Jerusalem, installation, 2012*



**GUD LAJF**

**GUD LAJT**

**GUD SAJT**

**GUD FAJT**



# HOW TO PROGRESS WITHOUT CHANGING ANYTHING?

## AN INTERVIEW WITH DUBRAVKA STOJANOVIĆ

**GOOD LIFE:** We see the history of the “Geozavod [Geodetic/Geological Institute]” building in Karađorđeva Street, that is, formerly “The Belgrade Commune” building, as characteristic and symptomatic of the history of modern Serbia. Built in the first decade of the 20th century, originally to serve for stock exchange and banking operations, it was intended to be a harbinger of a modern Serbia and the development of capitalist-type economic relations. However, quite literally the moment the building was completed, the Customs War between Serbia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire began, followed in quick succession by the Balkan Wars and the First World War. In the period between the Great Wars, when a new Stock Exchange building for the Yugoslav market was completed, the above-mentioned building, based on a decree issued by King Aleksandar, became the Geodetic Institute, which for the most part researched ore deposits. After World War Two, the Institute continued its work and started operating not only inside the country but also took part in great projects carried out abroad. Its crisis began in the mid-1970’s, due to the process of establishing “basic organisations of associated labour”, when “internal relations among its employees deteriorated”, and there were also indications of corruption-related activities. Towards the end of the 1990’s, this venue opened up for various strange undertakings, including closed privately organised parties. During the previous decade, the Institute moved out of the building, its structure started caving in rather dramatically, so that now, standing like an empty shell, it awaits renovation and to be put to some new use... And all this time, at least from the late 1960’s, the venue has been used for shooting a number of films and TV series, some of which have become very well known indeed, such as *The Master and Margarita* or *The Harms Case* (in both cases the said building provided the scenography for a story unfolding in Russia...). Is this not the history of Serbia in a nutshell?

**DUBRAVKA STOJANOVIĆ:** That is a true paradigm of our development problems. It is precisely that building that expresses the essence of it all: things get moving, some progress

is made. Then everything grinds to a halt. And every idea about what could be done further that would prove useful disappears as well. And thus the shell is emptied of meaning. And deteriorates. It would appear that this has precisely been the case with the majority of our undertakings aimed at modernisation. Many people say — there's never been enough money, nothing could be done. That building, and many other things as well, show that money's not the problem. Many things have been initiated, many of them even in time. But then things grind to a halt, and that lack of a system and concept becomes the most expensive thing over time. In the end, we pay a much higher price than what it was to begin with. The most expensive thing is constantly having to save ourselves from some predicament or other.

**GOOD LIFE:** You are well known for your view that Serbian society has been dealing with the same problems over the past 100 years, problems that it is unable to resolve, which prevent social development, that is to say, new forms of social imagination. What problems are those?

**DUBRAVKA STOJANOVIĆ:** For almost two centuries, from the First Serbian Uprising onward, Serbia has been running within several vicious circles it cannot seem to get out of. The first, and the most important of the said circles is the one beginning with the question of how to overcome a permanent crisis. The answer that we have been given for almost two centuries is that Serbia should progress, but that it shouldn't change while doing so. And whenever that question is raised and when the crisis becomes unbearable, the same key conclusion is reached — everything will be done only to prevent any real, in-depth change. What is created in this way is an illusion that the crisis is ceaselessly being resolved, that something is constantly being started anew, that debates are being conducted about which way we should go, that certain dilemmas exist — for example, whether we should turn to the East or the West. What is actually being defended is that essential feature of it all, the essential feature that is a leftover from the past, anti-modern, xenophobic, scared of Europe and of the possibility of a real reform really occurring.

We can easily point out such situations, let us try doing so in the case of those having occurred over the last forty years — the removal of the liberals from the political scene by the conservative Communists in 1972; the collapse of Communism in Europe in 1989, when the Serbian elite opted for starting a war instead of embarking on a process of transition; the assassination of Zoran Đinđić [in 2003]; the 2012 elections. All those situations presented opportunities for embarking on a process of effecting essential changes in society, the economy, politics, our system of values, but the actual direction we moved in was backward. During the course of our history, a lot more energy has been spent on preventing changes from happening than on attempts to really make them happen.

The second decisive vicious circle that Serbian society has been running in is the one beginning with the question of whether we should fight for inner or outer freedom, as they

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ДНЕВНИ ЛИСТ С НАЈВЕЋИМ ТИРАЖОМ У СРЈ

ПРЕМИЈЕРИ СРЈ И ХРВАТСКЕ, ДАНИЈЕ И ГРЕГУРИЋ, РАЗГОВАРАЛИ У БУДИМЛЈАШТИ

**ДВА УСЛОВА ЗА ПРИЗНАЊЕ**

● Владислав Језињковић, најпознатије политичко лице Србије за Југославију, говорио је у Будимљаштоу, али као кључне ствари споменуо је две основне тачке — статус Србије у односу на Хрватску и питање Провладе ● СТРАНА 5

**ИНИЦИЈАТИВЕ**

ИСТОРИЧАР ЂОРЂЕ МИТРОВИЋ ИЗ ИСТОРИЈСКОГ МУЗЕЈА СРБИЈЕ ПРЕДЛАЖЕ ДА СЕ У КРАЉЕВСКОЈ ДВОРОВИ УСЕЛЕ МУЗЕЈИ

**ПЕТОКРАКА С КРУНОМ**

● У краљевским палатама, где још доминирају комунистичке обележја, и даље седе чиновници, док трајно пропада национално богатство због које су нави крајем прошле године и трагично ● СТРАНА 12

**БЕЧ: ЈОШ ЈЕДНА ВЕЛИКА ПРЕВАРА СТРАНИХ МЕДИЈА**

**А ЛОГОРАШИ СРБИ!**

● Међу заточеницима-костурима, муслиманске националности, које је, прекиното, приказала аустријска телевизија, госпођа Мирослава Привислауер препознала своју рођену браку Зорана и Слободана Коњевића ● Репортажу снимила једна британска ТВ екипа, којој је наводно дозвољена посета српском логору, негде у Босни ● СТРАНА 6.

ЏОРѢ БУШ НАЈАВИО НОВУ „СТРАТЕИЈУ ЗА СПРЕЧАВАЊЕ СУКОБА“ У БИВШОЈ ЈУГОСЛАВИЈИ

**ПРИТИСАК У ШЕСТ ТАЧАКА**

● Наставање хуманитарне помоћи, макар и уз употребу војне силе; подршка легитимним владама Хрватске, Словеније и БиХ; још оштрија изолација Србије; спречавање ширења сукоба на Косово, Војводину, Сачак и Македонију, али и суседне земље; разматрање могуће акције НАТО пакта — основне су тачке плана америчког председника ● СТРАНА 9.

**РАШЧИШЋАВАЊА**

ДЕМОКРАТСКА ПАРТИЈА СОЦИЈАЛИСТА РЕГЛОВАЛА НА ЕНОРМНЕ ЗАРАДЕ У ХТП „БУДВАНСКА РИВИЈЕРА“

**ДИРЕКТОРУ — 25 ПЛАТА**

● Миодраг Мировић прима вероватно највећу плату у Југославији — 215.788 динара, плус 30.000 за одвојен живот ● За директоров стан — 138.000 динара ● Тражи се интервенција црногорске владе ● СТРАНА 11.

ЦРНОГОРСКИ ПРЕМИЈЕР МИЛО ЂУКАНОВИЋ НА КОНФЕРЕНЦИЈИ ЗА ШТАМПУ У ПОДГОРНИЦИ

**МУЋКЕ С БРАШНОМ — ИЗМИШЉОТИНА**

● Писање да су он и његови сарадници умешани у „случај брашно“, Ђукановић сврстао у предизборна подметања ● О астрономским платама у ХТП „Будванска ривијера“ влада ће заузети став ● Могућа отицања из МУП због догађаја у Пљевљима ● У Црној Гори нека конц-логора ● СТРАНА 11

used to say in the 19th century. In other words, it is the perennial question of whether we should constantly exhaust ourselves fighting to push our state boundaries forward and thus enlarge the state, or whether we should patiently work on its internal order, on developing democracy and institutions, on improving the economy and society. At some very rare moments in our past, we opted for the latter solution. Almost all of our elites, once again over a continuous period of almost two centuries, gave priority to the national question over the internal order of the country. That issue has always been proclaimed “the issue of all issues”, something we have to focus on right now, and we’ll easily deal with all the rest afterwards... Enormous funds and an awful lot of time have been spent on realising the national goals, which, formulated the way they were, are impossible to realise. They are impossible to realise, for in the ethnically mixed Balkans no one can establish a great ethnically pure state.

Sticking tenaciously to that particular goal, giving it eternal priority over everything else, testifies to that blockade, that obsession. That constitutes “opium for the people”, it is easier to manage such national exaltation, but that is no justification for the fact that this particular mantra has defeated common sense so often and for so long. That is why the continuity of that idea should be studied and seen as the most dependable obstacle to any real changes in society taking place. In this context, patriotism appears as the keeper of pre-modern society; as a shield of its patriarchal nature; as the foundation of its collectivism that suffocates any individuality and each and every individual; as the essence of its egalitarianism that prevents any individual or any social group from really separating from the mass. As long as that is the essence of our ideology, the only thing that remains to us is to constantly run within that same vicious circle.

**GOOD LIFE:** What lies at its basis, therefore, is a certain animosity of Serbian society towards modernisation, which is actually often understood as synonymous with the notion of “Westernisation”. In the 19th century, modernisation-related ideas such as the railway, electrification, standing army and the like were greeted with a lot of suspicion, rejection and resistance. Still, is this anti-modernising social consensus an issue that should be resolved by society as a whole or is it primarily the domain of its “elite”? How can social elites possibly change the inherent conservatism of our society? Has not the “elite” in Serbia always been either the implementator of “the will of the people” or extremely antagonistic towards society, thus marginalising itself, giving up on its role and striving to get as far from here as possible?

**DUBRAVKA STOJANOVIĆ:** That is the key question. The relationship between the elite and society is crucial for all modernisation theories. And everybody has his or her important role there. For society to embark on a process of development, it is necessary for the elite to direct it and to enable it, within the framework of legal regulations, to set off in that direction. Therefore, it falls upon the elite to set up a framework.

Our elite, ever since the beginnings of our state autonomy, has never done anything of the kind. The first laws that were adopted at the time of Prince Miloš Obrenović contributed to petrifying the relations that had prevailed in Serbian society under the Ottoman rule. Those laws did not allow the development of the market economy, the establishment of affluent social strata. After that period, once again in a very long and continuous process, we can follow the passing of legal regulations of which one could say that they tended to obstruct development rather than stimulate it.

When you proceed from such a starting point, then it becomes clear why a mature, civic society was not created over time, one which could stage a “final showdown” against the state, as had happened in Western Europe. Over there, those powerful and independent social strata started suppressing the state from the 19th century onward, demanding of it greater freedoms and better conditions for development. Clearly enough, such suppression did not work in favour of the elites of other states, but society forced them in that direction, fighting for its own space. Serbian society, on the other hand, remained dependent upon the state. It never acquired a sufficient number of independent social groups, let alone independent individuals, who could suppress the state and force it towards the model of the rule of law, whose first and foremost task is to ensure a clear-cut framework within which society is to develop.

In our society, social strata such as land aristocracy, industrials, financial capital holders, powerful merchants or strong representatives of free professions never developed as such. The majority of them were dependent upon the state, first of all financially. And naturally enough, they were unable to oppose the state. They couldn't force the state to abide by its own laws, to establish strong institutions, to separate various branches of power from one another and to stimulate further development. That is why everything is constantly vague, everything can be destroyed, there is nothing clear and firm to hold on to, and consequently there is no clearly defined fundamental direction of development that we follow as a society.

In the final analysis, we arrive at the conclusion that such a situation favours the elite itself the most. That is why I have often spoken of an “alliance of the elites”. When saying that, I was referring to a book by the great German historian Fritz Fischer, who, through his analysis of German society and the said alliance of its leading strata, explained the causes that led Germany to wage two world wars. He explained that it was in the interests of all German elites to conduct such a foreign policy, and that such a policy originated from the depths of the interests of the higher social strata.

I think that it can be established that, in Serbia as well, there has been a long-lasting continuity of such an alliance of the elites, for it was in no one's interests — speaking of politicians, intellectuals, entrepreneurs, the Church, the Army — that Serbia should become a part of the world and really change. In the event of such a change, they could no longer be a part of the elite, and their interests are clear in that respect. Hence the conundrum contained in the other dilemma — how to progress without changing anything?

Eventually, the problem is resolved quite simply by not changing anything. And this stasis, this petrified state wherein we endure is the prime interest of the elites. Unfortunately, it also works in favour of a slow, never actually reformed society afraid of changes and resisting changes. And that is where the interests of society and its elite meet, that is the “broad alliance” that obstructs change and blocks every new beginning.

**GOOD LIFE:** When it comes to the current resistance to tycoonisation, the drastic deepening of social stratification and other forms of vulgar capitalist transition, in Serbia today the ideas of the European left and social democracy are very rarely invoked, people rather opt for certain pre-socialist and pre-modern notions of social egalitarianism. As you mentioned on one occasion, such an ideology is both of the left and the right, and within its framework social equality is understood as the basis of national compactness...

**DUBRAVKA STOJANOVIĆ:** When answering your previous question, we dealt with that form of social unity. This question deals with ideological unity, of which we have already spoken. Therefore, that dominant ideology covers the entire political spectre. It is positioned on the left side of the spectre because it has components such as social equality and that specific form of collectivism, which is directly opposed to one of the cornerstones of the West — individualism. It is at the same time on the right, for it is based on nationalism as its essence and perennial political priority. Essentially, it is authoritarian, and that is one of its key characteristics — it is antidemocratic and anti-pluralistic, it excludes “the other”, it has no understanding of differences, it expels everything that is different on the basis of any criterion whatsoever. With such a potential, ranging from extreme left to extreme right, it closes off the entire sphere of the political. It is capable of changing its position, for a while it can be a regime based on the principles of the right, and then in the next phase it switches to the Communist order. We often speak of turncoats, of how abnormal it is, how can they be on one side, and then on the opposite side? But that is essentially an illusion. It is all one and the same side. That is why it is no problem for some people to be members of seemingly opposite regimes. Or to establish coalitions that seem impossible at first glance. Which makes the exit area very narrow indeed. That ideology absorbs everything and only changes the emphasis — one minute left, next minute right, or even both left and right at the same time. And that is why there are no parallels with movements and ideas that exist in the world of mature politics. That is why there are no pure liberals, social-democrats or even conservatives with us. Both our liberals and our conservatives advocate social equality as well as state intervention! It is clear, then, that there is no room for social democracy. And that there is no room for anything outside that all-assimilating and powerful ideology that had ruled, with occasional slight alterations, for two centuries.

**GOOD LIFE:** To expand on the previous question — it would appear that what we are witnessing today is an attempt to bridge the preceding five decades of socialist history and to base Serbia’s statehood on the pre-World War Two period and the monarchy. It

is especially evident in our cultural production: ranging from films (*St. George Slays the Dragon*, *Ivko's Patron Saint's Day*, *Montevideo...*), through television (*A Wounded Eagle* and other series based on Mir-Jam's works) and literature (for example, Dejan Stojiljković's *Constantine's Crossing*), right down to the interventions such as building a replica of Terazije Square from 1939 in New Belgrade. How do you account for this need to shift the popular imaginarium (since this is primarily a popular culture phenomenon) to a period preceding World War Two? Is there a place there for the ideological antagonisms that marked this period?

**DUBRAVKA STOJANOVIĆ:** This imaginary tradition, just like any other of its kind, is based on a mythical notion of that historical period. The image thus created is of us being Europe back then, of being very refined, of having a highly developed culture, so much so that women went for cosmetic treatments back then... That period is presented as a “golden age”, which every myth requires. This is necessary because, among other things, it conveys the message that, deep down, we have no problems really, just a temporary crisis. This also implies that our wise leadership will easily get us out of it. Furthermore, it also means that we were almost as refined as the French, but then Yugoslavia and Communism intervened, ruined us and set us back.

If the situation is presented that way, it remains completely unclear how Yugoslavia's problems came about and how Communism entered the scene at all. And just precisely how we happened to find ourselves where we are today. If we look at things that way, then we really don't understand anything and cannot explain anything. Then the entire 20th century slips away from us, we don't understand what happened and can say, as some historians and writers suggest, that we have missed it. Imagine a people that has missed the 20th century! Why, such a people truly lacks something, if we look at things that way.

We didn't miss the 20th century, on the contrary, during its course we expressed the essence of the social and political ideology that is still very much in evidence. And the period preceding the Second World War, just like the period preceding the First World War, was difficult, crisis-laden, unstable, marked by poverty, dramatic, and our society was deeply neglected. As I see it, everyone who participates in falsifying the past bears a grave responsibility, for they don't allow us to understand the real problems, and thereby prevent us from leaving that bad past behind us and moving forward.

**GOOD LIFE:** Our next question concerns the wave of restitution and the attendant mythologisation of private enterprise in Serbia. Thus, in newspaper feuilletons every endower is presented as some kind of a nice Uncle Scrooge who earns everything he owns with his ten fingers. In the case of the part of the city known as Savamala, popular imagination focuses on people like Luka Čelović (a wise man who saved and then invested...). This represents a shift from the way this period and that particular neighbourhood were depicted during the period of socialism (strikes, cruel masters,

rebellious apprentices...). Thus we get a markedly personalised model, which has replaced the model whose protagonists are not people but classes and their historical trends. The consequence of this is that today we can view the collapse of the system of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia only as a series of private catastrophes, but not as a clearly defined historical event. How do we go back to sociability, that is, to the public sphere in history and in politics once we have fallen into the trap of the idolatry of the private?

**DUBRAVKA STOJANOVIĆ:** It is never a single factor that plays a decisive role. There is always an entire mosaic of elements which influence things so that they move in a certain direction. If we believe that there does exist one factor, then we are very close to conspiracy theories, for that one factor can be influenced. Many factors influence events, but long-lasting processes in history help us realise what continuity is, what lasts longer than other things, what manifests greater resilience. That is not determinism, it does not mean that things have to be that way. On the contrary, it means that it is one of the strongest dimensions of our history, but it is not unchangeable. We need to study it, to define it, to see it and to know how to find a cure against it. I must believe that facing those issues can help us see the present more clearly. That is to say, that a different way of studying history, a deeper understanding of it, a critical pondering of it, can help us establish a more rational attitude towards the present and move forward. ►





**Grabovac-Knor, *Book of Good Manners*,  
„Svijetlost”, Sarajevo 1972**

Make sure that while abroad you do not get yourself into a tricky situation through some chance misdemeanor and loose the of a honest and decent man, because you must not forget that while abroad our nation will be judged on the basis of your comportment. ►







**B. Knežević, *Soccer Manual*,  
Mala športska biblioteka, Zagreb, 1954**

Some play advices:

Distributive attention comes in a number of forms manifest during the game. A common feature is the player's inability to shift his focus from the object of his gaze. The player's attention is concentrated on a single object. Faster attention shifting is an enormous tactical advantage. For precision shooting it is useful to the dimensions of the goal onto a wall then make this into a grid with each field marked by a numeral. This wall can be used for practicing many kinds of kicks. The wall is very economic as the player does not lose time while learning which accelerates automatization of the kicking technique. ►





# THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE

## AN INTERVIEW WITH MARKO ŽIVKOVIĆ

**GOOD LIFE:** There are two ways to initiate this conversation. One is through your book, which is, so to speak, an entirely pioneering effort in its attempt to translate some specific features of our national imaginarium — and in the course of the interview we'll explain, to a certain extent, what you actually mean by it — and thereby universalise them; what we mean by universalisation is that, from now on, precisely owing to your book *Serbian Dreambook*, in the academic sphere we can actually speak of some *commonplace features* that characterised this environment particularly in the 1990's, which all of us living here somehow always saw as *untranslatable*. That is one of the things which constitute some sort of a specific character, of which many people from these parts will say: Come on, no one will understand that. No one will understand what we experience here, those curious things, those contradictions of sorts, some crazy things surrounding us. No one can truly understand that but ourselves.

That's one way of doing it, then, and the other pertains to something we'll touch upon towards the end of the interview, we'll have to ask you something about your artistic position, that is, about what you do as an artist, taking into consideration that what you do is actually something very close to what we intend to do. What I'm referring to here, of course, is the relationship between space and fiction, space and memory, and what kind of connection actually exists between a story and the immediacy of the object, its phenomenality, as well as the physical relations of certain things. Now that we have defined the points of entry, we'll pose our first question to you: How did you decide at all to embark on such a sizeable undertaking, first of all, to study so much bizarre material, in order to create such a serious, actually theoretical, anthropological book?

**MARKO ŽIVKOVIĆ:** I'll use the expression you used yourself, which I'm coming to like more and more, namely — *brazenness*. It was a very brazen act on my part, in fact, to decide to undertake this.

I actually wanted to deal with Japan. I even spent some time in Japan back in '92 and '93, and then I totally flipped because at that time war broke out in Bosnia. I spent days and days listening to short-wave radio broadcasts, and I realised that Japanese society was much too happy and therefore boring, and I decided to become a native ethnographer.

**GOOD LIFE:** There is a joke about Mujo [a stereotypical Bosnian, translator's note] and a Jap. They asked Mujo and a Jap called Hiroshi, what the most important thing in life was to them. The Jap says: "Well, to me Japan comes first, it constitutes my structure, that which shapes me. My company comes second, the place where I work, and my family in the third place." Then Mujo says: "Well, with me it's the other way round, for me, my family comes first, the company I work for takes second place, and Japan only comes third." And thus Bosnia turned out to be your Japan.

**MARKO ŽIVKOVIĆ:** Yes, I love Japan, for one thing. For another, the idea of studying your own society has been around in sociology for some time, and that's nothing unusual. I had a few colleagues, some were Indians, others Chinese, to whom it was very natural to deal with India and China. My first reaction was to laugh and say — how can you do that, won't you find it boring? Well, then my own society turned from a boring one, boring to me, that is, into a highly interesting one, unfortunately, for all the worst reasons, and at the same time I saw Japan, which to others, say, Americans, is terribly exotic, as the most natural and normal country. It's small, and most ordinary people live in small flats in high-rise buildings, they dry their washing on their terraces, and their children go to school alone, wearing school uniforms — everything looks the way it does with us, and opposite to what it is in America. In Japan, the major national news item for months was the fact that their most popular sumo wrestler had got engaged to their most popular model, and two months after that, the leading news item was the fact that they had broken off the engagement. Then I said — what a wonderful, happy society it is where that is the first news item in the local TV Chronicle! In any case, I decided to switch to Serbia, that is to say, to become a native ethnographer.

But let me go back to brazenness. Anthropologists essentially observe big things through small things. In other words, their power resides in the act of going to a small village, meeting someone there, staying there for two years, finding out whose sow has had litter, and also arriving at far-reaching insights through this. It is in this that they differ from sociologists, politicologists, etc. I brazenly rejected all that and said: I won't proceed from "something small", I want to tackle the whole of Serbia at once, globally. When I returned to Belgrade after three years, I encountered those stories about some savages who'd come and taken over the city, about Diesel gangs [young men wearing Diesel jeans, translator's note], and I said to myself — I'm interested in those Serbian stories. For quite a while, my working title was "Stories That Serbs Tell to Themselves and to Others about Themselves", which is a direct paraphrase of Clifford Geertz. Culture is a set of stories we tell ourselves about ourselves. Thus I saw that as the approach that felt closest to me. Quite simply, to listen to what people say and how they say it. In a nutshell, my mentors advised me to find some small community or collective (for a while I toyed with the idea of infiltrating a radio station in the role of a participant-observer), which I brazenly declined to do and undertook a frontal assault on Serbian stories in the manner of a Don Quixote.

**GOOD LIFE:** So, that distance was essential to you?

**MARKO ŽIVKOVIĆ:** Yes, it was. And I think I had it. However, some of my professors were still doubtful. It's all well and fine and politically correct to have native ethnographers, but they still look at you with suspicion, for the entire discipline is based on an Englishman in a safari helmet going off to Africa to study something extremely exotic. Exotic to him, naturally. The idea was that if you belonged to that culture, you'd be like a fish in water unable to see the water. Fortunately, at the time when my mentor criticised me because of that, the late Stojan Cerović wrote something ingenious; that had to do with the hostage crisis, when NATO threatened to go ahead with air strikes in Bosnia, and then the Serbs captured some soldiers who were part of the peace-keeping force and tied them to a bridge. And Stojan Cerović says — it's easy for foreign journalists, they think that if they don't understand something, it's merely because they're not from these parts, and how do we explain to them that we, who are from these parts, don't understand a thing either, as if we were from Kazakhstan? And that was the justification I gave to my mentor, that no one was actually a native here. The water had got so muddy that even the fish started noticing it.

**GOOD LIFE:** We can even say that a real shift from one country to another did occur. You left one state and came back to a different one, just like that character from a story by Eduard Limonov: while he travels by airplane, three states under him disappear and he lands in some fourth state. Therefore, something on that level happened to you between '89 and '92. During that period, you really were a foreigner.

**MARKO ŽIVKOVIĆ:** Perhaps. In any case, later on, in the preface to my book I dealt in some detail with what it actually means to be in my position: that I can present myself as someone who is a total native, and then again, I can also be like someone who is in America, see, and I can get both kinds of stories. The kind of story that locals give to a foreigner, as well as the more intimate variety. Up to a point, I could control that role of mine. Sometimes I could pass myself off as someone who, even though he is from these parts, had been in that “big world” out there for a long time, and consequently had no idea what was going on here, and consequently needed to be explained things the way you do to a little child, which is the typical attitude that the locals assume towards a foreign anthropologist initially, and if I wanted to, I could pass myself off as someone who had been buying bread, milk and yoghurt in that grocery store on the corner since childhood, and thus get the kind of story that they tell to a neighbour.

**GOOD LIFE:** Now we come to a paradox that you deal with. You deal with some things that should actually be comprehensible in themselves, and should thus lead to some kind of social understanding in a way. And the conclusion we actually arrive at is that the

basic reason why you deal with it is the inability to understand it, the impossibility of understanding it. How did you understand Serbia at the moment when you embarked on that research of yours, and how did you understand it afterwards? Did you actually get what you expected from your research, or did your attitude change during the course of the research?

**MARKO ŽIVKOVIĆ:** I did experience a certain shock after being away for three years, and the country I returned to was not the same as the country I had left. In that sense, I was confused initially but ended with an insight which, I hope, was deeper than the initial impression I got. On the other hand, you couldn't really say that everything had changed, and that country, despite everything that was happening, was a society I had grown up in and knew in an intimate way, naturally, as a member of a particular class, particular circles, etc., with a normal dose of short-sightedness towards those who were different. Now, we know what happened. The middle class was ruined, what had been taken for granted no longer existed. I actually saw that from all the complaints coming from the "Second Serbia", especially the hurricane they unleashed against *turbo folk*. Those were complaints coming from a class divested of power, a class whose values were no longer at the top of the value ladder. Therefore, it is true that some kind of disintegration did occur, but that disintegration arose from the activation of some older stories that had already existed before. In a sense, you can say that what was dominant became sidelined and what was "on the verge of madness" simply got placed in the centre. It's more a case of that kind of a change than one of something entirely new appearing. And when you study those often quite deranged stories more closely, you begin to understand their logic, that there is a method in that bizarreness, and that underneath that picturesqueness there lie local variations on some much more universal themes such as: the contrast between barbarity and civilisation, between the urban and the rural. Just as imaginary is the alleged continuity with the golden age, the erasure of undesirable pasts and the romanticising of idealised ones, and the like. When you realise that behind the unbridled grotesqueness and bizarreness there is a limited number of motifs and scenarios, and that they all have their histories, genealogies and very clear sources from which they are disseminated into the heads of individuals, then everything becomes clearer and more understandable. In my case, then, there existed a trajectory from confusion to understanding. In any case, the whole procedure was also, among other things, my personal psychotherapy, a need to understand something that is deeply traumatic. It's good if someone else can derive some insight out of that and understand better what he experienced himself. There is, however, a more abstract lesson that I drew out of that entire research, one which has nothing to do with our specific situation, but is more sociological-epistemological in character. What I understood is that all of us, as ordinary people, are caught, so to speak, in the whirlpool of the quotidian, we have a high tolerance threshold towards incoherence. It is a normal occurrence that logically incompatible ideas coexist in our heads. You'll see that every

ХОРОСКОП



ЗДРАВЉЕ

ДОБРО



ЉУБАВ

ПУШИТЕТЕ ЈА



ПОСАО

ДОБРО

time you watch the “Impression of the Week” (popular local TV talk show). You’ll hear people referring to and combining things in their heads that should not be combined. The fact that, as scientists, we are taught to think coherently and consistently, and are trained to spot any incoherence, illogicality and bizarreness with a hawk eye, well, that is unusual and rare. You can read about what I have just said in the work of Alfred Schütz, for example, but working in Serbia has convinced me of the normality of human incoherence in a visceral manner, a gut feeling sort of way. That was my greatest insight while I dealt with the strange illogical logic of conspiracy theories, and the lesson I learned there, which is my main insight into the matter, is not that the scientific world-view is, quite simply, superior to the quotidian view, but that, as scientists, we should harness our arrogance and accept the poetics of human incoherence, which is actually our natural state.

**GOOD LIFE:** The central notion in your research is *imaginarium*. Or to put it more precisely, *the national imaginarium*. How do you understand that notion?

**MARKO ŽIVKOVIĆ:** I didn’t proceed from the notion of *imaginarium*, I started out with the notion of the story and its elements. Then it was — well, all right, what is it that I’m dealing with, what are the parts of this story? Are those idioms, are those some figures, are those some dichotomies...? A story can be taken apart down to its elements. My initial idea was to concentrate on some idioms and to see, first of all, what was repeated. Wherever you see repetition, you there is something happening there. Perhaps the best example of this is the story about highlanders and people from the plains. You see that it features in a great number of things. For example, when you look at the theory that the war was fought between highlanders and people from the plains, you see that this particular story is repeated in connection with the relationship between Serbs and Croats. However, both Serbs and Croats have their people from the plains. In other words, the same dichotomy is repeated at increasingly lower levels — a situation reminiscent of boxes within other boxes. And then, which is very amusing, especially to real highlanders, you come across the same thing in Vojvodina, which as flat as a pancake, in the form of a division into pig-raising and wine-growing inhabitants of Srem (from the Mt Fruška region). And it is there that you begin to discover some kind of structure to these stories. Only when I switched from such elements and structures to grand narratives, and started analysing how they were intertwined dialogically, I discovered I needed a notion to unite all that. *Imaginarium* became that notion. I took it a kind of hyperdimensional space that encompasses all the possible dichotomies, gradations, increasingly complex molecules of narrative elements, stories and intertextually linked genres pointing to what can be thought in Serbia at all. It was convenient that the term had already been used by Čolović, who, naturally enough, was my role model and guide, and that it rhymed with (and was also reminiscent of) *bestiarium* and *herbarium*. Therefore, the book could be understood both as a kind of hyper-space of Serbian imagination, and as a collection of stickers, an album of Serbian “Animal Kingdom” of sorts. From there to a Dream Guide, there was but one step...

**GOOD LIFE:** As I understand it — the moment when that imaginarium becomes a part of some, how shall I put it, political or any other public discourse, when it becomes a part of some attitude, some argument, that is, something which is advocated, not merely a comfortable place where the community lives in its stories, and starts being used as the scene of political struggle — that is the moment, as you say, when imaginarium becomes argumentarium. Something that constitutes the crucial argument of each public debate. How do you see that process in Serbia?

**MARKO ŽIVKOVIĆ:** I was at the receiving end of a lot of criticism coming from local anti-war activists, whom I respect very much. To them, from the point of view of their political struggle, it seemed that this thesis was a postmodernist one. I find it very amusing, for I consider myself to be extremely anti-postmodernist. I'm the sort of lecturer who advises students infatuated with Derrida and thinkers of that ilk to study the works of Marx, Durkheim and Weber first, and then to come and talk to me. But to them, presumably it seemed that, since this thing called *imagination* was being mentioned, it must be something literary, and thereby postmodern. And what is very likely the most important things of all, it seemed like mere academic fooling around while the country was burning, in a situation which required acts, not words. Personally, I shunned activism during those years, not because I didn't approve of the political activities of various opposition organisations, but because I considered it dishonest to claim the right to moral superiority as an active opponent of the regime without actually exposing myself to the risks and hardships that all those who permanently resided in Serbia exposed themselves to. I lived in America, and was only an occasional guest in Belgrade. I was a local, then, in the sense of intimate local knowledge, but not in the sense of existential choices.

But let us go back to imaginarium and political action. However literary and post-modern academic it might seem, in a small community such as Serbia, which has a limited number of media, what I'm talking about can actually be established very clearly and based on facts, in an almost positivist manner. It was very well known how the transfer of ideas and notions that we were infatuated with unfolded. For example, that something had reached us through Milja Vujanović (notorious Serbian TV personality), who'd heard it from Dragoš Kalajić or from Milić of Mačva (far-right Serbian visual artists). Those were the spokesmen who advocated those theses, which simply drifted around and could be used as they were. Perhaps the most powerful thing of all was the Byzantine thing, the spiritual vertical, etc. Then there were poets who came up with slogans that were extremely powerful. We can deal with it theoretically, we can say it constitutes intertextuality. You don't have to tell the whole story, it's enough to slip in just one key word, and that key word invokes the entire genre, which, naturally enough, is an authoritative genre. It can be a reference to St Sava, or something equally untouchable. You do that using one key word, or one symbol, or in visual terms, we can talk about the White Angel fresco from the Mileševa monastery, which became ubiquitous during that very period. There is

another convenient thing there. When you refer to St Sava today, in the 21st century, there is a temporal abyss separating you from him. Now, there exist strategies that you can use to minimise or maximise that temporal and contextual gap. It is quite clear what it means to minimise the gap. That means identifying yourself with St Sava as much as possible. It doesn't even have to be done verbally. You see that Kusturica has placed the St Sava church in the middle of his Drvengrad [Woodtown]. You can say what you want against him, but you mustn't criticise that. In other words, all those soft literary, postmodern notions I'm talking about, those metaphors, those rhetorical figures, imaginariums and dreams, are actually not soft at all. They are used to fight hard fights and to legitimise bitterly hard actions. And so now, even though so many years have passed, we cannot avoid those commonplace phrases that I talk about in my book, we cannot do it even when the rhetorical intention is precisely the opposite – to maximise, not minimise the gap between the mythological source and the current political moment. Now politicians are saying that their goal is no longer some heavenly, transcendental Serbia, but an earthly Serbia. Alas, those are the very same people who invoked heavenly Serbia for quite different purposes. They now use the same idiom, that “heavenly Serbia”, to signalise another policy, but it seems there's just no escaping that “heavenly Serbia”. Consequently, on the basis of this book I cannot foresee what specifically is going to happen, but I can say that some of those stock phrases, will probably still be around, and that they will serve to legitimise political actions. Thus, presumably, imaginariuum is at the same time an argumentarium and provides rhetorical support to political action.

**GOOD LIFE:** You mentioned turbo folk as a frequent topos wherein the identity of the so-called Second Serbia is formed. At the same time, turbo folk became a place where the class taste is defined, and also where the national identity is indirectly defended. Turbo folk was shifted even further east: in an interview given to a local newspaper long ago, the Turkish ambassador said that in his native country that kind of music was referred to as Iranian, and that he resented Turkey being mentioned in the same breath as that musical thrash. What kind of an impression did it leave on you?

**MARKO ŽIVKOVIĆ:** Now I'm in a position to watch young people, newcomers to the scene, deal with it: a female student is working on a doctorate, and she's not the only one dealing with the Second Serbia. The turbo folk phenomenon attracted my attention, just as it attracted yours. What interested me about it was to see what was repeated in that story. Obviously, the story about turbo folk is the story of a class divested of power. On the other hand, I had a background to this from studies about other transitional societies, and in the case of Russia, for example, the thesis that dirges constitute a genre has been worked out in some detail. And so, I immediately pricked my ears, for those dirges have their own rhythm, and prosody as well, and there are things in them that are constantly repeated, and therefore, they have the characteristics of a genre. Another thing, turbo folk is a matter of taste, and taste is a



# BORBA



NEZAVISNI POLITIČKI DNEVNIK

Ponedjeljak, 16. novembar 1992. godine □ LXX □ Broj 322 □ Cena 400 dinara □ Direktor Ivan Mladen □ Glavni i odgovorni urednik Miroslav Vukobratović

DANAS ZAVRŠETAK SEDNICE SAVETA BEZBEDNOSTI O JU-KRIZI

## Sami protiv celog sveta

Debata, po najavi, biće završena usvajanjem dokumenta o hermeličkoj blokadi SRJ, kako pomorsko-rečnoj tako i rigoroznoj kontroli suvozemnog transporta ● Na listi oko 40 govornika treba da se nađe i Ilija Đukić

(Od dopisnika „Borbe“)

Valington. — Ako je raspo- red snaga i raspodeljenja snagav kakav jeste u poludne vreme, ako se u to, dubina o nalog koji vodi u petak, 13. u mesecu SR Jugoslavija ne sme da bude iznenađena što je pred višest- oštaju u Savetu bezbednosti sa-

ma raspravu o celom svetu. To gljvanje i porizavanje ko- me smo bili izloženi, međutim, daleko je od završetka. Debata našlu temu nastavlja se danas, a završice se usvajanjem docu- menta kojim će međunarodna zajednica pokazati da obezbe- di opredeljenje stanizija prema Si- bari i ČNHG Goru najavljenom po-

mersko-rečnom blokadom i ri- goroznom kontrolom suvozem- nog tranzitnog saobraćaja. Istovremeno u rezoluciji se mnogu očekivali nove teške op- tuzbe na ratunskepeh onizlanih SRJ u BiH i prebise međunar- odnom interencijom zbog na- stavljanja rata i širenja dostadi- nih zabrana i dogovora, ali ne i

skidanja embarga na uvoz na- ružanja u BiH, lin iz ove snage pokazuju da istidivstva pre svega islomake zemlje — od lo- ga vreme istidit. Slika koja se isprema za svetsku javnost, pot- puno je ero-bila i šidim u skladu sa savremenim raspolože- njem onih koji vode glavnu re- ku. ● STRANA 4.

REPORTERI BORBE SA OSLU- BODENIM ZAROBLENICIMA SA MANJACE

### U beli svet, kada se nema kuda

Umerle svojim kudama i pro- piscima oslobođeni, za koje nije bilo dokaza o krivini odgo- vornosti, odlaze u zapadne- evropske zemlje ● Muslimani i Srbi se nikada nisu izrekli, ev- za krvavom u istom loncu — go- vore zarobljenici iz kolone nato- bednih



DANI ZATOČENIŠTVA: Logorasi Manjace primili su fokus preteklog leta

● STRANA 5.

OPOZICIJA PRED ODLUKOM O IZLASKU NA IZBORE

## Preračunavanje u velikoj zbrci

Ortale su tri varijante: dve liste opozicije sa Čosićem i Panićem, dve liste bez Čosića i Panića i neizlazak na izbo- re ● Izjašnjavaње predsednika Dobrice Čosića očekuje se narednih dana u televizijskim intervjuz

Istori su lakoređ pred vrsta- ma ali još uvek se ne zna u kak- vim se grupacijama stranke opozicije krevali u osvajanje vlasti. Celokupna pregovrativa- nja prenamencija i opoziciji se prati atmosfera nedunmica i konfuzije Na subotnju sednici Glavnog odbora Demokratska stranka potvrdila je da odlazi na izbore u okviru bloka Saveza demokrate, a očekuje istod raz- govora i u Demokratskoj koali- ciji. Demokratski paketi Srbije sa svih usaglašavanja potvrdi- lo je stvaranje Demokratske koalicije, ali je pomnio i to da neće izati na izbore ukoliko se ne ispolne udovi o smeviravnu rukovodstva RTS Ali, kako stoji u tom saopštenju, stvaranje De- mokratske koalicije trebalo bi da doprine uspostovu tim cilju — stvaranju ravnopravnim talo- va za „istinske demokratske le- tice“

Sa sigurnošću se može reći da je okončana ideja sa jednom listom opozicije. Odluku još sa- mo tri varijante: dve liste sa Čosićem i Panićem, dve liste bez Čosića i Panića i neizlazak na iz- bore.

Te dileme koja sada postaje najvećevostilja de resti sam predavnik Čosić. Naime, ljudi koji odlaze iz njemu, vraćaju se u različitim oklošajenima o pread- sedniškim namernama. Na sa- stanku Demokratske koalicije prošlog petka trebalo je da uspe- hni budu upoznati sa mišlje- njem predsednik SRJ koji je tog jutra trebalo da se sastane sa premijerom Funđem. Ali, do tog susreta nije došlo.

Povratkom sudaru trebalo je da bude osnovno pitanje: hoće li predsednik Čosić stići na jedni- stavnu listu ili ruku od lista po- blo je sama ideja o Demokrats- koj koaliciji potkožila na toj pre- miji. Umešlo tog, predsednik

Čosić oglašio se u četvrtak svoje saopštenjem u kojem pokazivaju da još uvek nije odlučio i da će to učiniti kada ponovo prouči shvatanje programe. Prema svome list se onid zna, predsednik Čosić će brge opredeljenje izneti u televizijs- kom intervjuz u toku ili u sredu.

Za to vreme, premijer Đukić jede je intencijom kontaktirao sa političkim akterima. Prvo se sasao sa predsednikom Čosićem, a zatim je razgovarao sa članovima „Politikskog komitea“ Demokratske koalicije, a zatim i sa predstavnicima Demokratske stranke. Za danas je zakazan ponovni sastanak Demokratske koalicije.

U DEPOSU se sudaraju sa vladitom vrstom konfuzije. Na- me prema dosadašnjem mislo- loženju u Spisakom pokretu, ob- nove, ova stranka i „stavica

ležna DEPOS-a spremna je da izade na izbore. Takva orjezija- ča nalazi za protivljenje, pre- svih, onih koji su ranije bili član- ovi DS. U glasovima na vladit- ošim listama DEPOS-a, orjezija- čija da se ide na izbore izgubila je šest puta, pa setako može tu- mažiti javna rezerva koju SDP ima prema izborima. U posled- njem intervjuz „Borbi“, prijavio se Voljoš. Koalicija je re- kao da bi trebalo zadržati one koji su spremni da u sudstojim uslovnim listama na izbore.

Odluke se, inak, da ope Čosić i Panić potkili, da se jedini stiti na listu „Saveza demokra- tar“, a da se drugi osliti složod- dan na drugu grupaciju ukoliko se ona odluku da ope na izbo- re. Izbrak je vilika i došlo je vreme za „III“ —

Dražen BISTENIĆ ● STRANE 2 I 3.

DANAS U BORBI

DNEVNIK

POSLE ODLUKE SAVEZNE VLADE O DEVALVACIJE DINARA ZA 25% ODOŠTO

Ozvaničeno crni kurs

● STRANA 2.

DRUŠTVO

DR NIKOLA MITROVIĆ, MINISTAR ZDRAVLJA SRBIJE O REFORMI ZDRAVSTVA

Racionalni zacija po ledima direktora

● STRANA 7.

IMA LI BRUCOLOZE U SRBIJI

Ugrožena i stoka i ljudi

● STRANA 8.

RAKOVICA — MEZIMICE I LI ŽRTVA DRŽAVE

Mastodont na infuziji

● STRANA 9.

POLITIKA

OKRUGLI STO „BORNE“ KAKO CRNOGORSKA PARLA MERTARNA OPOZICIJA GLEDADA NA SRJ

Takozvana ili obećana zemlja

● STRANA 10.

**OSIGURANJE**  
**FIDUCIJA**  
Borba osigurava Vaše imovinu — Pomoć u slučaju i drugi pomoć osiguranjima  
**WIENER STADTCHER**  
Kvalitetno osiguranje stite kod naših domaćih osiguravanih društava  
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matter of certain class markers, and that is why it entails a visceral attitude to it. There is a little ironic distance on my part, for I belong to a class of people who get sick after being exposed to two minutes of such music. I belong to the Second Serbia, just like my parents, and my entire environment cannot stand turbo folk, and at one point I started getting on their nerves for beginning to like turbo folk. I have written a brief text which was not included in the book, and which deals with Rambo Amadeus. He constitutes the next rung on the turbo folk genre ladder. With Rambo, when he's at his most inspired, you have no way of knowing whether he's pulling your leg, being ironic, or whether he's serious. He may actually be ridiculing the bourgeois class that ridicules turbo folk. He has recorded a video spot with Vesna Zmijanac [a turbo folk star, translator's note], then he fools around with the gusle [a traditional Montenegrin string instrument, translator's note], but you cannot be entirely sure whether he's making fun of the gusle, because at one level he's a Montenegrin who's just plugged the gusle into a synthesiser. Now, how do you develop that idea? This is where we begin to lose the thread of it all, for technically speaking, we have no way of dealing with ironies of which we are not sure that they constitute irony in the first place.

**GOOD LIFE:** Your book is primarily aimed at an international reader, and in that respect it is a success, for as I have told you, a foreigner, our colleague Mika Hannula, has pointed your book out to us.

**MARKO ŽIVKOVIĆ:** Now we switch to art...

**GOOD LIFE:** Not just yet. We switch to something that still concerns your book and what I have just said, that is, translation and the above-mentioned reader, and generally speaking the relationship between the external and the internal. Let us proceed from a personal anecdote — one of my first conversations with the Mika Hannula had to do with Kusturica and Aki Kaurismäki. What it was all about was that he came to Serbia fascinated by Kusturica's films, and I went to Finland being equally fascinated by Aki Kaurismäki's films. We found ourselves in a very awkward situation because his opinion of Kaurismäki is very similar to my opinion of Kusturica. He will say of Kaurismäki that he exploits something which is essentially a phantasm and I could say the same thing to him about Kusturica. Now we reach the issue of genre, and I would say that this particular genre is represented in these parts precisely by the two people you mention at the very beginning of your book: Emir Kusturica and Milorad Pavić. One highly respected writer and one exceptionally well respected movie director, who, in a way, have created that genre here. What seems to me to be missing in your book, or perhaps I'm mistaken there, concerning the influence the Serbian imaginarium has been exposed to due to the manner of our culture's reception abroad. Both Pavić and Kusturica are examples of authors/artists whose success on the world art scene has moved in a backward direction. Is that something you have thought about, or have you rejected dealing with this issue?

**MARKO ŽIVKOVIĆ:** There is a part of the book where I touch upon Kusturica. It has to do with the auto-exoticisation aspect that peripheries manifest in relation to the metropolises. The metropolis in question is, say, Paris, which is primarily interested in seeing something exotic, and if you present to the metropolis life in Serbia as it really is, they find it boring, and so authors have made a pact to the effect that they say — we'll give you what you want, we'll give you exoticism in a number of different variants, whatever your view of us is, we'll magnify it — you believe we live in mud and blood up to our ears, fine, we'll serve you mud and blood to your heart's delight. Or you'll do what Pavić does, romanticise that story. Or you have Rebecca West. The closer she gets to Macedonia, the better she likes it, because it is more and more of a contrast to her England, and she has something or other against it as an intellectual, and so the more exotic the Balkans get, the more Balkans-like, and Macedonia is the Balkans of the Balkans, the closer it is to her heart, and that is barbarogenius. Micić was the first one to understand it in those terms: "A-ha, those are the advantages of our barbarism! Our vitality is greater than yours."

Therefore, that kind of logic is to be found in the book, but it is possible that it was not consistently developed through other things. It is part of the first chapter, which was the first one to be written, and it says — that's a general framework of sorts, that Serbian stories are a reflection of those relations, although this is not always the case, I didn't want to make it look as if they were entirely determined by how we imagine others, those more powerful than us, see us.

**GOOD LIFE:** Quite simply, this is a society that is bursting at the seams in every possible way, is dissipating, disappearing, people are leaving, and that process still goes on. You, Marko, are the first generation that left, not just for existential reasons, but actually for other reasons as well. We are living at a time when all hope is being lost that any kind of future will bring anything, and due to this fact, the imaginarium probably gets more intense.

**MARKO ŽIVKOVIĆ:** What is specific about it is that this Serbian imaginarium has already become faded, it is becoming bizarre. That is strange; I don't know if you've seen the oath-taking ceremony of our gendarmerie — it was quite terrible; but that's sort of routine. It's a bit of an extravagance now, this Kosovo-invoking oath, considered to be lacking in taste even among its chief protagonists. At least, that's the way it seemed to me from Canada.

**GOOD LIFE:** Is Kosovo the only remaining fulcrum of that imaginarium?

**MARKO ŽIVKOVIĆ:** Yes it is, but I cannot put it any better than Čolović, who had this to say about it: "Kosovo is a switch that tells you which imaginarium we are in now." And when you mention Kosovo now, that's old-hat stuff now, but presumably it has some effect, for the President of the Republic cannot say openly — Here, take Kosovo. The imaginarium

appears to be strong because it seems that there are no alternatives to its main points. And so Kosovo, for which no one was willing to give his life, appears to be strong because there is no other, equally strong mythological item to counter it.

**GOOD LIFE:** And now something about your art...

**MARKO ŽIVKOVIĆ:** Well, in the meantime I've married Gordana, a painter from Belgrade, and I've seen the problems she had to face in America, for her education at the Academy was totally different from the way those things are taught in America. Now I am in a position to watch her problems in trying to adjust to this, and I actually watch someone who deals with art in this way. We embarked on joint work out of a kind of desperation. I dealt with photography, and then we did some things connected with the city. They were connected to the city because, especially to her (I had already got used to it), an American city was not a city compatible with our standards. It is empty, it has no centre. She found that strange, for she found herself in a city that was no city to her. To her, Paris is a city, she'd lived there before — or Belgrade, for that matter. I started photographing the most boring parts of Edmonton, and those were empty bus stops, I photographed them obsessively, using a big camera that takes half an hour to set up. Today, developing those is entirely retro, but it sharpens your perception. After I had photographed that particular bus stop about a hundred times, I came to love it, because I knew what it was like in every season. Then I started making a series of big photographs on paper produced by Fotokemika [Croatian manufacturer of photographic films, translator's note] that I'd lugged all the way from here. That paper has the texture that I wanted, and Gordana bought those paints that are used for painting photographs manually, which is terribly difficult. We made a collection that we called "Lovable Edmonton", and we wrote — THERE IS NO IRONY. We learned to love Edmonton by investing an awful lot of energy in watching and experiencing Edmonton through an artistic process.

**GOOD LIFE:** In other words, your dealing with art is an attempt at creating an urban situation.

**MARKO ŽIVKOVIĆ:** That's a story about how to make interesting something that you don't notice at all. There are certain points of convergence between art and what I do, for that kind of artistic sensitivity is very close to ethnographic sensitivity, the sensual approach to everyday things that natives no longer see, which you make strange and significant, for you describe them in detail with love and care. In maniacal detail. That's where artists and ethnographers meet.

I got together with a group of anthropologists who deal with art, not just as anthropologists studying primitive art but doing something through art. It's a movement emerging there, some sort of *creation-based research*, I don't know myself what to think about it. It's the emergence of a recognition that the artistic process is, in fact, some kind of a research process in its own right.

**GOOD LIFE:** That is what they refer to in Europe as *artistic research*, and the term has been accepted as such at some universities. Mika Hannula dealt with this approach taking into consideration that it is some sort of non-disciplinary research, and that no methodological coordinates are required.

**MARKO ŽIVKOVIĆ:** I think it's very nice, but in a way it means assimilating the artist into the financial scheme developed for sciences.

**GOOD LIFE:** Which is logical, for artists no longer have their own financial foundation...

**MARKO ŽIVKOVIĆ:** Thus I see it as very good that artists are trying to pass off what they are doing as *research*. Whether they will exert some influence in return, for the purpose of clarifying what *research* means in sciences, that I don't know, but it would be very nice if it were so.

**GOOD LIFE:** That's where a misunderstanding arises!

**MARKO ŽIVKOVIĆ:** I am fascinated by these attempts at conducting a dialogue between sciences and art. Whatever I've seen in that vein, those were huge misunderstandings. To me, everything starts from a conference that I attended in 2006, during the course of which they lined up top neuroscientists on one side and top artists on the other — Marina Abramović, Laurie Anderson, Robert Irwin, etc. The scientists gave their Power Point presentations and talked about something that had nothing to do with art. And in that completely absurd situation, they engaged the services of Arthur Danto. They placed him there as a mediator, and he was very uncomfortable about it. At one point he said that he didn't see any connection between what the scientists and the artists were saying, for the scientists were talking about some elementary emotions because that was the only thing they could study. So they told their story, and the artists were puzzled, for they didn't know what they could say to that. The only one who was able to say something was Robert Irwin, who had participated in some serious experiments concerning sensory deprivation. All in all, it was very awkward.

**GOOD LIFE:** Why, that was a vulgar positivism of sorts?

**MARKO ŽIVKOVIĆ:** Positivism that lives on and is very resilient. I think it has something to do with neoliberalism. Because it connects well with sociobiology, and sociobiology is, in fact, the logic of social Darwinism, which is actually the ideology of capitalism. And so, to me, all that is connected politically. It is relatively easy to discover and criticise. It's a bit more difficult, but it's still rather clear when you establish, for example, an institute for neuroeconomy, it's quite clear to me that it exists in order to establish a particular view

of the economy. Here's a perfect example — last year in Belgrade, I was flipping through TV channels, and I think what I settled for was History Channel, and there was a story there about the history of greed. There was some good historian there telling us that it was a historical category, and how greed was a punishable sin, and how that sin (I know of books about it) got so transformed that in the end greed became a virtue. I saw that it was presented by somebody who knew about such things, but lo and behold, all of a sudden a woman from such and such highly respected university appeared, it doesn't really matter what she said, she only mentioned — the brain, and that immediately makes it look that greed must be *hard-wired*, that is, etched into the brain, and therefore innate, an inbred element of human nature, and consequently eternal and unchangeable. And the whole story that preceded it, about a drastic historical change in our attitude towards greed, that it was some sort of social construction, fell through.

**GOOD LIFE:** 3 And let me go back to where we began, to your book, and let us bring this conversation to a close. The purpose of your book, I'd say, is to show that there is no explanation or discipline that can provide a superior explanation of a complex socio-political cultural issue

**MARKO ŽIVKOVIĆ:** I like to think in terms of multidimensional worlds, and hard neuroscience or sociobiology actually constitutes a terrible flattening of everything — the abolition of dimensions. What is important to understand is — what that managerial spirit, which is the foundation of those reductions, requires. It requires a number, it requires that you flatten something that is dialogical in character, which presupposes a higher level, and this flattening is the end effect of reduction, it flattens all those levels to one level below culture and politics, for if it is in the brain, your individual organ enclosed within your skull, and if it is the product of your genes, then the following question arises — where is politics in all of that? It is easy to be sceptical today and to say that there is no science that can provide a complete explanation of a complex society. Well, of course there isn't; in a trivial sense, the individual human mind cannot understand the complexity of society, of which it is but a small part, in its entirety. Still, I'd like to end this by saying that I believe that, within the framework of the current division of labour among disciplines, this discipline of mine, anthropology, is closest to this ideal of a complete and nuanced understanding of society. Anthropology, when it is well implemented, combines a kind of Goethe-like delicate empiricism, a sensory approach to the concrete, with the ability to easily connect micro and macro levels and jump from one world to another. And this world is always criticised from the perspective of another world. That virtue of anthropology, I think, is nothing mystical. Quite simply, for some historical reasons, anthropology, despite the role it had within the framework of colonialism, has never coupled with any of the great bureaucratic systems of the state, not with legislation, or business, or health care, or the military, or education. It has remained relatively small, no one has invited it to provide

expertise, to measure the immeasurable so that the immeasurable could be controlled within great bureaucratic systems. Psychology, for example, was created precisely out of this bureaucratic need to measure personality, motivation and the like. Anthropology has been left alone, which is why it enjoys the luxury, in its insignificance, of being in a position to develop its sophistication. And it is a delicate kind of sophistication that combines softness and hardness into a careful suppleness of sorts. ►





НАША КАМЕРА У БОСАНСКИМ ЛОГОРИМА

## САМО ЗА РАТНЕ ЗАРОБЉЕНИКЕ

На подручју БИХ које контролише српска војска, на неким мјестима постоје и логори за ратне заробљенике. У овим логорима се налазе и војници из Војске Републике Српске, који су заробљеници из Војске Републике Босне и Херцеговине. У овим логорима се налазе и војници из Војске Републике Босне и Херцеговине, који су заробљеници из Војске Републике Српске. У овим логорима се налазе и војници из Војске Републике Српске, који су заробљеници из Војске Републике Босне и Херцеговине.

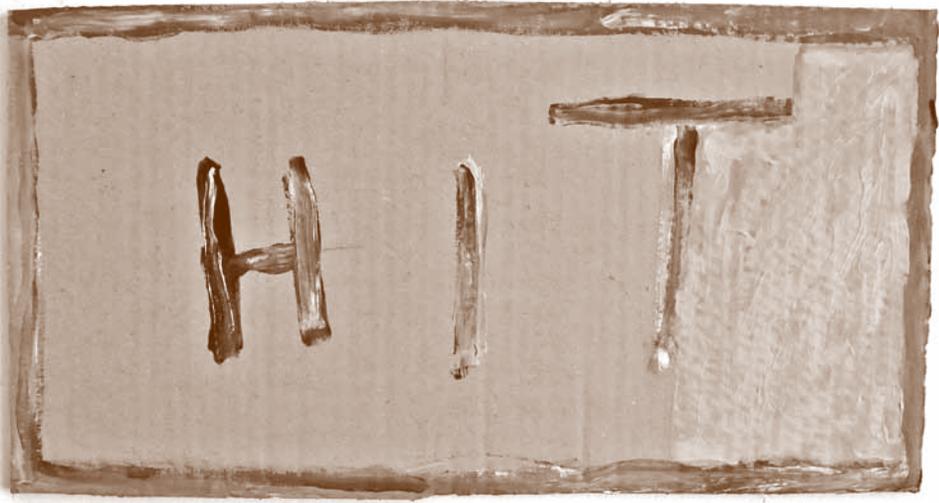
За ратне заробљенике на Мадриду, који су заробљеници из Војске Републике Српске, који су заробљеници из Војске Републике Босне и Херцеговине. У овим логорима се налазе и војници из Војске Републике Српске, који су заробљеници из Војске Републике Босне и Херцеговине.

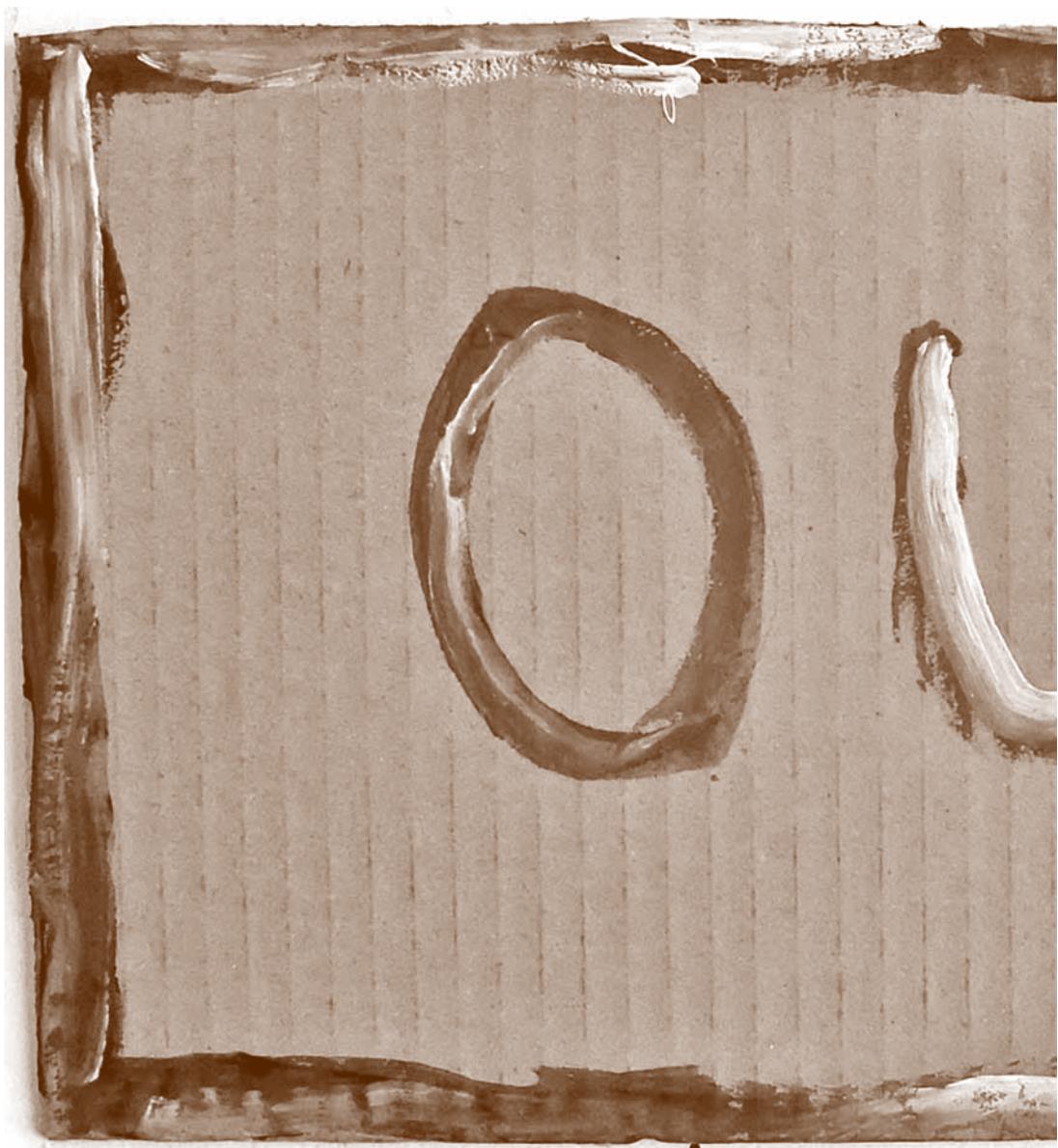


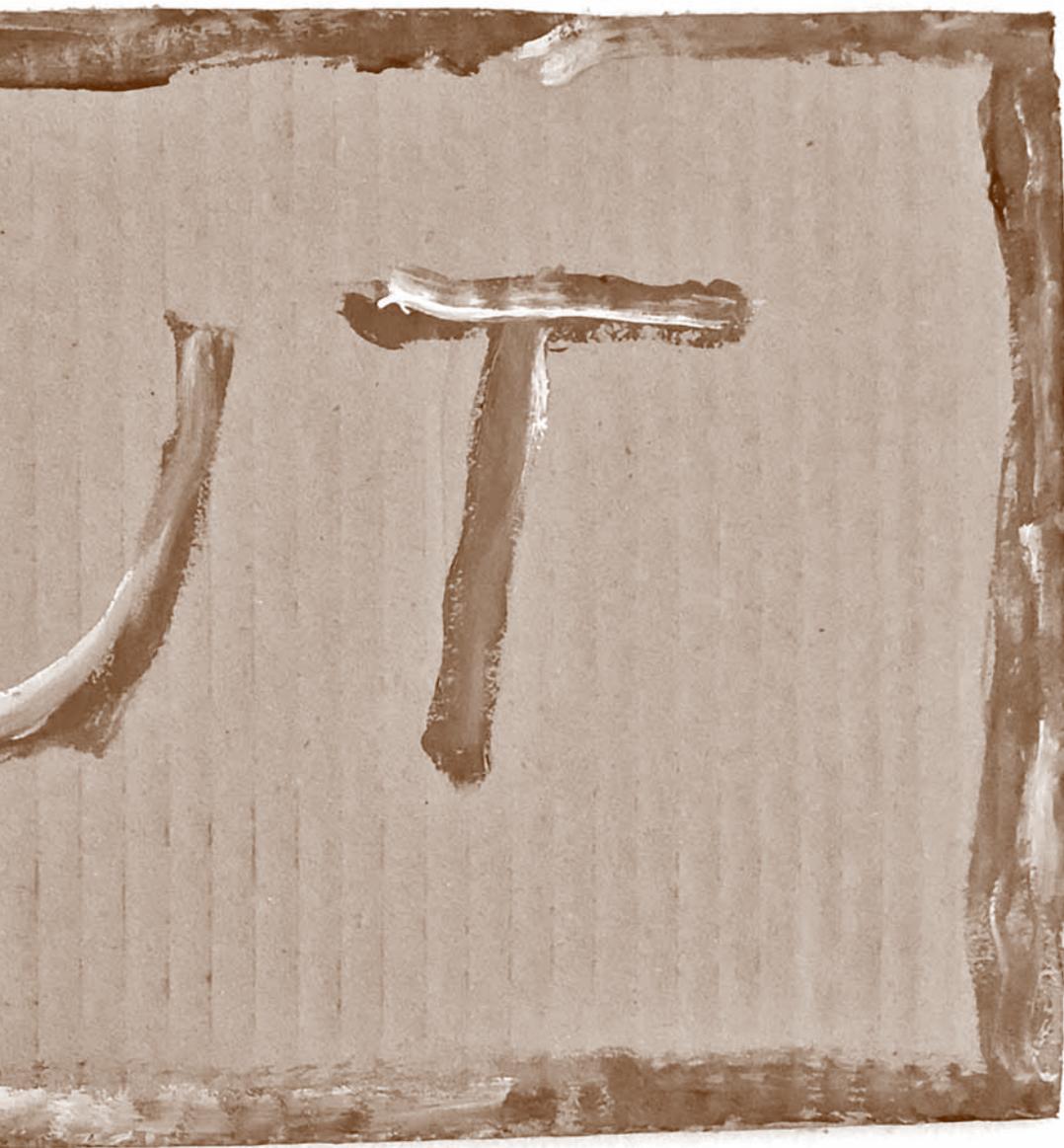


## TO PUT ON PUBLIC DEBATE 2

I exhibited the work "To Put on Public Debate" for the first time in 1980, at the Gallery of Modern Art in Zagreb. The work consisted of phrases that were so frequent in the socialist era that they contaminated everyday language. Today, new words are put up for public discussion: capitalist-English words that dominate our language space. We do not know what they are to us. Everything is "in", everything is "out", everything is "business" and "top", everything is "shopping friendly" and a "hit", everything is "exclusive", everything is "copy/paste", everything is SMS and PR, everything is "corruption" and "show", everything is a "trend" and "sale", everything is... He who gets it will understand. ►









# GEO-INSTITUTING

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## AN INTERVIEW WITH NEBOJŠA MILIKIĆ

**GOOD LIFE:** We find ourselves in the space of Geozavod building, where our exhibition is to be set up. This structure was first built to house a stock exchange, the Belgrade Cooperative, at the very moment in time when there were enough entrepreneurs who believed in the idea that it was possible for this country to become a modern, capitalist country, in which such an institution could be one of the pillars of the system. However, right after construction had finished, the Pig War between Austro-Hungary and Serbia broke out, followed by World War One seven years later. Afterwards, the building became the home of the newly established Geological Institute... Our exhibition explores the relation between physical narrative and social imagination, since physical relation with the space is more than mere comprehension of history. This space becomes a place of exploration — of the ability of a society to think and imagine itself. The companion book consists of more than contributions of the artists — there are essays, comics, short fiction and also conversations with people whom we hold in high regard, and whom we believe have a certain connection with this space or with the history of the building itself. It could be said that you are directly concerned in that regard, being a geologist, someone who was in that field professionally and who has later decided to venture into a different, seemingly completely unrelated field. For geology, no society exists, and you now concern yourself with things that postulate the social as being of prime importance. We are interested in your story and the story of your decision, as well as the story about your relation towards science and art. So, our first question is — have you ever actually entered this building while you were working as a geologist?

**NEBOJŠA MILIKIĆ:** Yes. Every geologist that has worked in Belgrade has entered that building, for one reason or another. I entered it for the first time when I was in my sophomore year at the University. I applied for volunteer work. To get out in the field and see what kind of a job it actually is — since I had decided to study geology, among other things, because it was an opportune way of postponing my military service. I was somewhat interested in discovering the “secrets of stone”, but that was more of a fancy. Still, there was a quiet terror of sorts permeating my family in regard of me choosing a profession. It was “believed” that technical sciences are a serious thing, while the humanities were not seen

as really useful. Also, there was a belief that one could get hurt from too much messing around with the “social” (here I would just wish to point out that the extent to which the events of World War Two, as well as all the collective suffering and traumas during and after the war, had profiled the lives of all of us who had “grown up happy, free of war” has become clear to me only recently). When you are in a technical field, nothing bad can happen to you politically — that was a common belief. Still, it had quickly turned out that, at least for me, geology has, let’s call it, a philosophical note. Because, in order for a man to study geology, he has to install, literally, a new system on his cognitive apparatus. Maybe the best way to describe this is with an anecdote concerning a group of geologists that were out doing field work somewhere in Montenegro — and those crews usually have to go to places where even the locals don’t get to — when they met a shepherd who had brought out his cattle to a place where fossil ammonites can clearly be seen in the rocks (those are shell imprints or molds of sea mollusks akin that are to the present day nautilus, but that went extinct a long time ago). The fossil of their shell in stone has a shape that represents an obvious system, even to the layman’s eye, but the layman cannot easily assume what kind of a system it is. When the crew explained to the shepherd what those things pressed into stone are, he retorted: “Well, I sure watched and watched... And did not see.” And that is geology. Learning to watch and see — to think of time, spanning millions and millions of years, and learn to recognize and understand the traces of its passing. And doing so not only in time, but also in space, you begin thinking in a different way. When you say that today something is “in Serbia”, for example an ore of some sorts, it would be prudent to know that at the moment of its creation, this piece of what is land today — and what was once sea bottom — was somewhere far, far away from here, possibly even on the Southern hemisphere... And everything you see around you gets a new look, a new connotation and temporal dimension, so that you would not get too cocky. But yes, there is no place for “society” in geology, an often vice versa, because there is a senseless lack of geology in general school curricula. But, let us not forget, both geology and geological science are created by people and the entire society should benefit from them, as well it should from any other science. In return, geology as a scientific, discursive and economical practice, inexorably suffers from “societal ills”. I have not dealt with that issue extensively, but a parallel could probably be drawn between the (often hysterical) push for ever more detailed taxonomy of fossils at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the insistence on racist biology, eugenics and, finally and initially, social Darwinism in science, culture and politics.

**GOOD LIFE:** That is really interesting, seeing that for people who are concerned with culture, in the broadest sense of the term, time exists only since material traces of culture exist. That is, for, what, three or four, or ten thousand of years at most — but, in any case, significantly shorter than millions of years a geologist is dealing with. How does one familiarize them self with those millions of years?



**NEBOJŠA MILIKIĆ:** There are two ways — one is to try and adopt that specific culture of understanding what time is — because in geology, as is the case in every scientific and societal practice, there exists a specific cultural codex. The other way is automatic, similar to that ancient attempt to “install” color onto black and white television sets — there was an option to put a plastic mask with several primary colors on top of the screen, so everything in the lower section of the screen was green (I guess that was supposed to be “grass”), yellow was in the middle (houses) and blue was in the upper section — the sky. You simply accept it as is — and that’s that. Still, it is also necessary to install a new logical system of sorts. No wonder that you can get disassociated from everyday life and society in that way. As is the case with some other sciences, after all. I really wasn’t sure that I wanted that, that disassociation from society — disassociation as a life path dictated by a profession. Anyway, that is how I ended up going on field assignments twice a week with a crew from Geozavod, staying for a couple of weeks at a time, just to try it out. We would get together in front of the building at 7 AM, we would get into the company car, a “fića” (fiat 600), and get out in the field. We would go to Priboj, Prijepolje, Rudo... That is when I saw how it all works in real life. First, it is often physically quite demanding work. Second, it is really rewarding work. You get something back for the effort you put in, you are filled with discovery. Because, what does a geologist do in the field? He collects and notes data about observable rock formations, about their relationships, and then, after getting back to the “base”, to the office (most of the now empty rooms in Geozavod were once offices of various geologists), he further examines the rock samples and, by interpolating the data, he concludes what is the makeup of the Earth’s crust in the region that was explored, its structure. I am talking about the fundamental practice of geology, geological surveying. Besides schematically depicting a part of hither-to unknown terrain on a plane (a map), a geological survey, like any other survey, deciphers the deep structural relations between rocks and their formations. The crew I was attached to was still working, if I recall correctly, on creating a Basic Geological Survey of the SFRY, that is, they had gathered and organized sets of data about the Earth’s crust on the territory of SFRY, which would then be put at the disposal, as a Basic Geological Survey, to other geological disciplines, with the initial reconstruction of all events in the Earth’s history which had led to the existing makeup and structure of the crust. The investigative method is similar, in a methodological sense, to forensics. Like, if you would find several crashed, burned-down and then pressed cars, doused in acid, and then you would begin to determine — based on bits of material, their position and types of damage — what kind of forces were at work and what exactly happened to them. Geology does the same thing, except its subject of investigation is the Earth’s crust. For me, that was really fascinating stuff. But, reconstruction of Earth’s history is, to a certain extent, subjective, especially since it is directly linked to the degree of scientific, and also cultural, development. Geology itself has a history, the history of reconstructing the history of the Earth. Among other things, it enables the further existence of a struggle between a sort of technical and a more humanist “vibe” of geology. On

many levels. For example, sometimes we passed through the villages where we, a geological crew out in the field, were the only thing of note that had happened in twenty years. People would get out in front of their houses, completely in shock, to see who is coming. While I personally was really interested in those types of encounters, I noticed that other geologists with me were mostly fed up with all that. It was a waste of time for them, dealing with those people. The easiest thing for them was to just say that they are looking for ore — that, at least, is universally understood. Then the villagers would talk to them about what they saw in there area and how they experienced and understood that. All of that was of great help in my later scientific work, especially when it comes to education. By the way, this all took place in 1985.

**GOOD LIFE:** Do you remember what this building had looked like back then?

**NEBOJŠA MILIKIĆ:** Of course! Rooms, corridors, every corner... Everything was packed with shelves upon shelves of books and material. Material that has been brought in from all the fieldwork was everywhere. It was standard to come back from doing fieldwork with sacks of rocks — samples of rock material. Then that material would go through a second and then a third triage (the first was, naturally, done in the field) in order to discern if there was anything of interest for the laboratory. To that end, you would extricate a small piece which would be honed until it was paper-thin. Then you would take out a lab order from your team leader and take the samples there — the remains of those laboratories are visible even now all over the building, even in this state of disrepair. Then you would get the data from the laboratory analysis, or you would study the preparations yourself, from the point of view of a mineralogist, a petrologist or a paleontologist. If you are a paleontologist, you would look for signs of life, i.e. fossils and fossil remains. So, you would start supplementing field data and you would slowly, with the help of relevant literature and in cooperation with your entire team, as well as other teams, reconstruct the origin and the history of that specific part of Earth's crust. And that is where the inevitable — something that in my opinion has a lot to do with culture — would be encountered, because all that brings you into the world of rationalism, enlightenment, modernity. I mentioned earlier the making of the Basic Geological Survey of SFRY. So, that was a technical research and land mapping project, but it was also a really modernizing, modernist and cultural project. So, a process and a project that takes something amorphous, unsystematized and unknown and creates something consistent, structured and known from it. It makes the land we walk upon familiar and understandable. Of course, that is nothing extraordinary or strange in itself — all other countries and their geological offices to that (or, as is often the case in the Third world, geological offices of countries or companies that had colonized or have economic ties with those countries). But in our case, all of that also had to do with socialism as a form of government. So, everything had that “touch” of enthusiasm and national interest. I encountered that enthusiasm at the University, when I began my studies.

The leading figure of that project was professor Miodrag Dimitrijević — Kvak. I remember when I was at one of the final presentations of that project at the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, I think it was in mid-1980s, it was he that had said that the Basic Geological Survey of SFRY was an exceptional economic, research and cultural — that was his exact word — a cultural project. And there is something else that was really interesting: when the surveys made by a Geological institute of one Yugoslav republic were being matched up with the data gathered by another, sometimes agonizing and often improvised struggle to reach an agreement regarding borders would ensue. Right at the borders. What I mean to say, agreement regarding the borders of geological bodies and formations — at the borders of the republics, since teams from two Institutes would often come to different interpretations of the history of the same portion of Earth's crust, even when building upon the same — or very similar — data. Of course, there is no need for mystification: that kind of thing always happens at the edges of two teams' research areas...

**GOOD LIFE:** Did you come to Geozavod in later life?

**NEBOJŠA MILIKIĆ:** Of course. I came to see the people I went to do fieldwork with, to hear what's going on with the projects. Later, when I was working on my master's thesis, I came here to have some petrological analysis done. That was in 1996 or 1997. Look, I see it this way — when socialism fell, so did this place. During the 1990s, that institution was put in the “nobody cares” category, along with many other things that were deemed unimportant. That was just a part of a decision made by an entire society — whether and how to invest into a research system, for which it is not known whether, if ever, it would bring any benefits. During that period, it seems to me that the place was devastated by state neglect. I had the opportunity to witness the slow decay of this place, but that process had started earlier in some ways; even today I believe that it was possible for that socialist system to work, but at that time it did not really work, judging by what I could hear from my older colleagues. When you would step into Geozavod, it seemed as if you were, in some way, backlit by the current socialist myth. Many experts, and some of my professors, were championing private initiative even then, like giving concessions for geological research and exploration...

**GOOD LIFE:** Actually, what had happened was something completely opposite from what your family had feared. Suddenly, fundamental, natural sciences were not interesting anymore, and all sorts of speculative activities had become profitable. But, geology was not connected to large, industrial capitalists. That is how this place began, back before World War Two had started, even German investors were interested.

**NEBOJŠA MILIKIĆ:** Of course, but that is like saying that art historians make a good living out of artwork being sold.

# LUNAR DEED

From MoonEstates.com and the Lunar Ambassador to the United Kingdom, the United Kingdom's only authorized reseller of land on the Lighted Lunar Surface, this document represents the transfer of ownership of 1 (one) acre on the Lighted Lunar Surface.

This property has been lawfully purchased from Dennis M. Hope, The Head Cheese, who by nature of the Declaration of Ownership filed with the United Nations on the 22nd November 1980, was the recognised owner of said property.

This deed is for the Lunar property listed below:

Area F-4, Quadrant Charlie

Lot number 028 / 0080

This property is located 2 squares south and 6 squares east of the extreme Northwest corner of the recognised Lunar chart.

This deed is recorded in the Lunar Embassy located in Rio Vista, California, United States of America, in the name of

*Ahmet Ögüt*

from hereinafter known as owner of the abovementioned property.

This deed is transferable, tradeable or assignable upon the decision of the owner at his or her discretion.

This document conforms to all of the Lunar Real Estate Regulations set forth by Dennis M. Hope and shall be considered in proper order when his authorized Ambassador to the United Kingdom's signature and seal are affixed to this document.

*Francis P. Williams*

1 Sep 2012

This sale approved by Francis P. Williams,  
Lunar Ambassador to the United Kingdom

Date

Transfer of Ownership

TRANSFEREE NAME

Date

TRANSFEREE NAME

Date

TRANSFEREE NAME

Date



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**GOOD LIFE:** What was in fact your specialty?

**NEBOJŠA MILIKIĆ:** I specialized in paleontology.

**GOOD LIFE:** So you finished your studies at the end of 1980s?

**NEBOJŠA MILIKIĆ:** No. Even though fieldwork had helped me to really make a leap forward in my studies and to make the decision that, after all, I do want to do that with my life, student life was sweet and I kind of stretched it out. Just enough for political tension in the county to start. So I got into politics — mainly at the level of discussing it with my friends and family. But also publicly — I was once taken into custody for publicly calling out (in the street) a state official. Now I can say that I had the right premonition of things and that I felt a catastrophe was upon us — and lo and behold, it was right when Slobodan Milošević had appeared on the political scene that I really, truly fell in love with science. Science had opened up new landscapes of complex thinking and understanding for me and everything that was happening around me had simply began dancing before my eyes, like it did for that shepherd — because you cannot fall in love with science and not fall in love with rationality and understanding. And the strangest thing for me was the knowledge that all of those things, the scientific practice, the institutes, the projects, they can all exist even if at that very moment everything around you is smoldering and crumbling from all that irrational thinking. But, I also had realized, to my disappointment, that people who were quite decent at science were often the most superficial demagogues and most base nationalists, i.e. that they believe in all the same things as those who had never come into contact with that “foundation of enlightenment”. Recently, I began reading a lot about fascism and it help me to better understand that phenomenon — factographically, too — for example, I learned that the scientific elite from all over “normal” Europe and the USA, especially in Anglo-Saxon countries, participated in the genesis of Nazi violence, from projects that researched “superior” and “inferior” races, eugenics etc. to (specifically in Germany) book burnings. Besides that, I quickly realized how science, in its academic form, obediently nurtures authoritarian and hierarchical relations. Also — it is one thing when the people involved are simply bad or less reputable scientists, but I was shocked when those things were done by extremely educated, notable and solid experts. When, for example, you see a world-renowned expert kowtowing to, for example, some stuck-up and (professionally speaking) completely outdated older professor or academic, simply because that person can help him career-wise. As Primož Krašovec from the Worker’s-Punk University correctly noted, relations of personal dependence and patronage keep the academic and scientific elite, that “avant-garde of enlightenment and progress” in the sphere of pre-modernity! They who should, through some kind of a victory of the rational, transcend capitalism, nurture feudal relations in their workspace!

**GOOD LIFE:** Understanding continents comes down to caring for principality.

**NEBOJŠA MILIKIĆ:** Well, look at that international aspect of science. For example, the layers of Earth's crust that I had worked with are the same here and in Austria, Slovenia and Romania. And they are all named for one small town in Austria, where they were first described — the Gosau layers. Just like Karst topography is called thus wherever in the world it is encountered. They were first described by a Serbian scientist, Jovan Cvijić, and that is why Americans call “vrtachas” vrtachas. A karst field is a “karst polje”. They have a little trouble pronouncing it, but they do say it. However, that is not a reason to get excited and write about that with exhilaration in popular magazines like “Zabavnik” — it is only the internationalism and universalism of geology. How could you forget all that and heartily embrace nationalism? Still, the difference between universal and general should not be forgotten, since that is where the fateful crack or, better yet — rift between science and politics could be.

**GOOD LIFE:** Do you think that such capillary structure at one time in the SFRY helped the spread of nationalism? The system itself had quite sophisticated means of social communication, that were then used to spread nationalism?

**NEBOJŠA MILIKIĆ:** Borderline events are really important in geology. When does one form of sedimentation stop and another begins? It does not have to be a sharp transition, most of the time it isn't, but before changes in sedimentation occur, there has to happen a change in the environment, and those changes can then be clearly seen in the procession of layers. In geology, or to be more precise — stratigraphy — a set of environmental characteristics, reconstructed on the basis of fossil and other data, is called a “facia” (from the Latin *facies*, meaning “face”). And now when (as a geologist) I look back at those times, it is as if I see a dividing line on their “face” in all those environmental changes, and in facilitating the creation and domination of that vulgar sort of nationalism. Its creation is, judging by previous “environmental changes”, connected with what was, among elites of the time, a universally accepted application of a generally liberal discourse that had inadvertently allowed for the recuperation of, for example, some specific evil-doing discourse, for example, chetniks. For example, at the final year of my studies, some people, somewhat disappointed with what they felt was proof of bad organization and unproductiveness that had leaked from geological institutions and enterprises — but interpreted almost exclusively from the perspective of consumer, material standards — at one time started talking about establishing private companies. Now, why would you need private enterprises in geology, when you have official services and machinery and almost everything? That private company of yours can only prosper at the expense of already established, public structures. But all of that took place in parallel, in the framework of the same “face” of social environment: both the political-economical liberalization of the discourse

of scientific practice — by talking about a better job and business “in the private sector” — and introduction of that hegemony of nationalist discourse. There is a story by David Albahari, about crimes in Bosnia. About the who, how and why of coming into a position to do monstrous things to helpless civilians. The protagonists of that story are either some kind of neo-lumpen, that appeared from those freshly initiated economic reforms of the late 1980s, or they are small entrepreneurs or employed in some state- or publicly-owned company that is at the edge of solvency — ideal to become somebody’s spoils at the least sign of societal distress. That is, actually, historically speaking — the essence of fascism, there is no fascism without the middle class being endangered. There has to be a middle class, there has to be an existential impact on it and there has to be fear and bitterness. Also, in 1988 Ante Marković comes, economic reform is underway and everything seems like we are living better then ever before. But, segregation is coming into full swing. I remember going to London with a lady friend, just like that, to visit our friends, without much preparation or consideration. We just took a car and set out. But far be it that just anyone could have done that, for example Pišonja and Žuga from the song by Zabranjeno Pušenje, could not have. Albahari wraps up his story by insisting on the irrational, on the perpetrators of rapes and massacres in Bosnia being mentally ill. Yet, histories of fascisms tell us something else, specifically, about the rationally explicable prerequisites for irrationality and barbarism to become the norm and to catch on in the general populace — those ordinary people described by Christopher Browning in his book about the final solution, people who had directly murdered tens of thousands of men, women and children and who could not or would not be touched by the liberal-capitalist judiciary after the war. Therefore, one of the most important tasks of rationality is investigating historical defeats and catastrophes — one’s own, but also in general. So, a lot of things had helped to spread the nationalism, it burst onto almost every sphere of life — and one should not step back from all that complexity with some kind of revulsion stemming from superiority, but rather, one should look it in the eye.

**GOOD LIFE:** What was the main motivation for you to, as you yourself said, get into politics? The appearance of nationalism? Did you, intuitively, discover that essence of fascism you were talking about just now?

**NEBOJŠA MILIKIĆ:** It’s very simple. I was, as a sincere Yugoslav, affected by the rhetoric and practice of authorities in Serbia and I understood very well where that would lead us. I was raised to be patriotic towards Yugoslavia, which is also a problem, since feeling Yugoslav is also a sort of nationalism, in the end. Everyone who served in the Yugoslav People’s Army and who has been drilled to eye any Albanian with suspicion will understand what I’m talking about. It is my impression that the concept of socialism in SFRY broke down on the cultural level and that socialism was unable to produce a cultural model that would guarantee the survival of the economical model. As a geologist, you would go to all those villages and

you would see that there was still a giant chasm between the rural and the urban and that rural people were living a hard life, but also that nationalist resentment had easily found a way to callously exploit that very real picture of the exploited and “deteriorating” village. Do you remember those political TV ads with images of an idyllic and yet traditionally codified village? If you would go to that village, first you would see how that idyllic picture from the TV ad (and it was for the SPO party, early 1990s) is a big lie. Second, it is anti-modern in every respect. And third — it was certainly a much worse solution (just as a reminder — among other things, a yearning advertisement of homemade bread, which can be promoted only by someone who had never kneaded and baked bread themselves, every day!) then what had already existed in socialism, the very reason why rural areas were going under, but mostly because it was necessary to once and for all do away with backwardness and destitution of rural areas — by industrializing the economy and modernizing the country. So, you would traverse those rural areas as some kind of, let’s call it, vanguard of industrialization and exploitation? And you can see that it will not go down easily at all. A rather conflicting experience, you have to admit — anyway, all of those things had part in keeping my interest in society and politics, which has never completely died out.

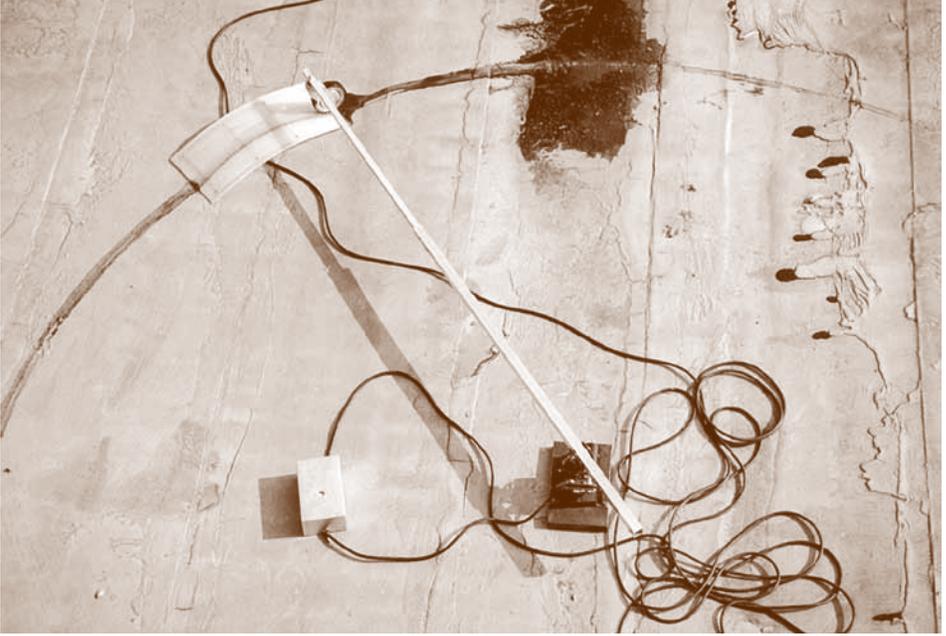
**GOOD LIFE:** So, in what way did you get into politics? Back then, at the end of the 1980s, there were only two ways to get into organized politics: you would either become a member of one of the dissident, opposition groups that were constituting themselves as political parties, or you could get into what was left of those almost extinct structures of the socialist system, like student and youth organizations. How did you choose to act at that time?

**NEBOJŠA MILIKIĆ:** Oh, it was a complete mess. The office of the student’s organization at my school were still plastered with original photos of the 1968 student uprising. And now, everyone was suddenly liberal, often nationalist, and there is a photo on the wall of the faculty building with the sign that reads “Red University Carl Marx”. I had the feeling that everybody was uncomfortable with those photos and slogans still being there and that they were nudging them about, trying to hide them somehow without really throwing them away. Anyway, I tried to act through such institutions of the system, sometimes even through that student’s organization. In essence, as disappointed in the system as I was, I believed in reason, which means an existing system for moderating social processes and dialogues.

**GOOD LIFE:** You were there, at that famous meeting with Milošević during the 1991 student protests, as a member of the Students’ Alliance?

**NEBOJŠA MILIKIĆ:** Well, I wasn’t a member of that Alliance, but I was becoming more active in various political actions. For example, I remember breaking up a rally organized by Slobodan Vučetić (until recently, a judge of the Constitutional Court, then a candidate of

the Socialist Party of Serbia) in my local community center. He was their candidate in my constituency. I will never forgive myself for enticing people to vote, directly or indirectly, for Ljuba Tadić, whom he was running against. Ljuba was insufferable, but at a glance, if you had to choose between him and a candidate of Slobodan Milošević's party... It was a somewhat similar thing between Tadić and Nikolić the first time. And Vučić was, as it would later turn out, one pretty nice and conscientious guy. Luckily, Ljuba didn't win, some harmless relict of SPO did. But let me get back to the situation with Milošević. I applied to be there not as a member of some structure, but as the very thing political parties hate the most: a freelancer. As soon as I heard about the delegation that was going to speak with Milošević at the Rectorate (of the Belgrade University) I tried to convince all the protestors that had gathered around the fountain at Terazije square that all of us should go to the offices of the Student's Alliance and ask to be included. Parties opposed to the regime believed back then that they could simply topple the system over on the wings of simple anti-communism, so none of their activists wanted to associate themselves with such a contact. And I told them that we should go to the Student's Alliance and ask them by whom and how they meant to be represented there? Of course, nobody wanted to go with me, so I went there myself. That's where I saw what an institution really means. Simply put, it was a students' institution, and as usurped and corrupt as it was, when any student would come to them and tell them: how can you allow Milošević to play you for fools after the events of March 9<sup>th</sup> 1991 and all the protests that followed them? — they had to acknowledge that and process it in some manner. That is the strength of institutions. Institutions, despite everything, have a life of their own, a structure, an ethics, even. And in order for them to continue functioning, even if only in part, it is enough that one man believe in them. So, I entered into that conversation at the Rectorate in a completely official manner, with the delegation of the Student's Alliance. That is why my appearance had left such a strong impression. I stood in front of Milošević and threw all my umbrage and pain at him. I didn't come at him as if I were some fiery opposition leader, but as a man asking that elementary order be respected. As somebody who was warning Milošević that he is not doing his job, and his job was to stop the war. That actually was not in favor of what opposition parties stood for. They were left in a check-mate, because electoral defeat was devastating to them. They believed that the general protest that took place after March 9<sup>th</sup> was actually the only way to oust Milošević from power. The opposition simply counted on them being better at nationalism, and that awakened nationalism would put the reigns in their hands because they were better at nationalism. That was their position, and it turned out to be a check-mate. I tried to put the king in check, so to speak, in order to somehow get us out of that position. For the paralyzed opposition, that was incomprehensible. And on the side of the regime, it was really edifying to see people who were hard-line regime supporters to show some respect for me, I guess they were sort of convinced that all that could not have happened spontaneously. After that meeting, one police general, I believe it was Major Obradović, and Milošević's bodyguard, Senta, came up to me — and continued arguing with me. It was all, as Ostap Bender would say — congenial!



**GOOD LIFE:** Well, what did you say to Milošević that had irritated them so much?

**NEBOJŠA MILIKIĆ:** During those ten minutes, I had obviously, both discursively and “stylistically” speaking, bettered Milošević, who approached the discussion in his most base manner — with contempt for the proceedings, petulance and phrases. And maybe the things that I was saying weren’t that important, but the important thing was that I was speaking without fear. Why was I fearless? — because I believe in the “strength of the rational”! That sycophant setting around him (where, naturally, professors from Belgrade University had shined, they were wholeheartedly flocking to be the first in line) was nothing but simple submissive respect for the guy that was the strongest around at that moment. I think that average Milošević voters, after the first minute of my expose, experienced a complete blockage of their perceptive apparatus and that they could only see that it goes on and on, that it is no freak occurrence, but that it possesses completeness, sense and structure, and that it is being spoken by someone who is “normal” and not simply hysterical, but possessed by a “healthy” and justified anger. There was no antidote among Milošević’s entourage with its standardized shield-odium towards their foes that was vulgarly produced and perpetuated in its media — for that sort of rational wrath. Essentially, I told him three things: “Don’t jabber in public!” (regarding his retarding speech with which he had addressed the gathering), “Do not run riot around the country like a dimwit!” (regarding his arrogant and rampant political opus during the election campaign, the protests etc.) and “Start doing your job, since you got to it, in such a way!” (regarding the fact that, whatever my opinion is about him and his electoral shenanigans — I get that he has a certain legitimacy and therefore a responsibility). So, what do the people who had built their entire careers on succumbing themselves to all that hogwash, arrogance and manipulation have to say to that? Naturally — nothing. Because it was all true — yes, it was somewhat insulting, but because of whom and what? Certainly not because of me and my speech! After all, we were at the University — and ruthless realism and rationalism had blasted through the armor of the regime.

**GOOD LIFE:** Did you continue your dealings in politics after that? When exactly did you leave geology behind?

**NEBOJŠA MILIKIĆ:** I was in politics non-stop, you can imagine what kind of follow-up my appearance had caused... I volunteered to work at the elections, I helped with protests and campaigns. At my school, where I started working as an assistant lecturer, I found myself surrounded by banal nationalism, be it pro-regime or the so-called “democratic”, quasi-enlightened. All in all, the climate where I had started working was, politically speaking, unhealthy. Besides, there was an aura of romantic inactivity and some sort of incomprehensible conceit, at least in my immediate surroundings, so I naturally had the choice of either participating or fighting against it. At first I fought, for example, for the reform of schooling.

So I arranged a meeting of all the junior lecturers in our institute, up to the docent level. I think that was a complete shock for professors, although it was in no way targeted against them. For me, that reform was important because of the transfer of knowledge, which is especially a problem in the science of geology, because, as I have mentioned, you do not learn anything about it over the course of your primary education, and on top of that, during the first half of 1990s, teaching geology had, for reasons that are well-known, suffered additional setbacks. A lot of people chose geology because they were unable to get into another school, or because they in fact did not know what they want. For me, one of the greatest discoveries of all time is the possibility to, through a system of superior transfer of knowledge, transform a group of 30 or so completely disinterested students into a group of involved future geologists. Through work, through a system, through a new model of teaching (and practical work) and regular testing, it was possible to make them interested in the curriculum. For example, regarding methodology, I would let them use literature during tests. A book is of no use if you hadn't read it at least once. If you didn't think about what you have read, it is still of small use, because the test questions were designed to facilitate thinking about lessons as opposed to rote reproduction. The results were extraordinary, but those "innovations" of mine had caused strong resistance among concerned professors, including accusations that I am helping students to pass the tests or that I am "letting them cheat", which would explain the good results. That shocked me, it was unbelievable for me, that somebody could interpret things in such a way. And those accusations had followed me until the time came for oral exams, when it became obvious that this approach was followed by results and that those young people actually understood and were familiar with the subject matter. But a couple of other things had happened. On top of one course, which was really wonderful, General Paleontology — it deals with those general rules of fossil research — I was given another course, Paleozoology, which is the science of the origin, build and classification of those organisms we encounter in their fossilized state. I was not particularly interested in the subject, nor did I like it during my studies. For me, it was not much more than hundreds upon hundreds of pages of tedious data that had to be learned by rote, without much understanding. I felt I was completely outside of all that. Still, even that had worked out, somehow, and then the political situation once again escalated and things got complicated all over again. The University strike of 1996/97 began and of course, I started the strike at my school, along with a couple of friends. I gathered signatures from other young docents and assistant teachers, maybe a couple of professors, and we included the petition among the faculty meeting points, where it was voted that we should go on strike. And then the protests started, with their endless discussions and tension, and I fell behind with all the procedural work on my master's thesis. Then, I go to Marseilles, to attend a paleontological conference. That experience completely changes my perception of things, I realize that in we in Serbia, regarding that specific area that I work in, are in a catastrophic state, that we have fallen behind terribly, methodologically speaking. And not because some technical or material inferiority, but because of simple laziness and negligence.

We. When I say “we” I don’t mean “all of us”. There were people at every institute that were doing science very very seriously and successfully. But that somehow had nothing to do with their colleagues, they were playing solo, without acknowledging the all-encompassing degradation. Anyway, after Marseilles, I decided that the elementary outline of my master’s theses cannot be based on the traditional approach at the time, but that I would have to attempt to immediately introduce the dominant methodology at the conference, which was becoming classical even then. Of course, I was not capable of such a feat at that moment, that kind of thing takes a decade of practice. And that is where procrastination starts, I am tinkering with things, I practically have no mentor, members of the exam commission are pulling out and the continent of politics in my life starts to emerge — I realize that there is no neutral space that science naturally tries to claim. And then, they almost blackmail me, they tell me, like, I have no more time and it has to be done in the traditional way. And of course, I told them “no” and not because I didn’t want to, but because I simply can’t do it. It was not any sort of high-brow discussion on morals, it was more of a hierarchical pushing and pulling. I believed that the work I had done had come too far to let it go to waste and that I would do “my” part in the manner I believed was proper. But all that, in that particular situations, really was not up to par with what a master’s thesis should be, and they rightfully rejected it. So, push is slowly coming to shove, I spend another entire year at the school, fixing up my thesis — that is, adding the traditional part (which, to be clear, is not pointless, but it was horribly boring to me). In the meantime, I receive another offer to renounce my “thesis” and to “make peace”, but I really did not have any more strength to rework it and I had no more affinity for all that stuff — to enter the mold of scientific and research work in that profession. Anyway, all in all, it was due to specific circumstances (remember that “facies” thing) that I am now retroactively interpreting, and I think that my interpretation is pretty accurate, but it may be biased, i.e., subjective. In any case, nobody was “hounding” me there because I was “in opposition”, which is what many friends of mine today believe, but rather because it was, in my opinion and experience, a closed and atrophying community from which I was, by or against my will, expelled by the force and the dynamics of my own character as well as the character of my surroundings. Nothing could equal the relief of knowing that I did not have to go to those faculty meetings once a month anymore. Sitting there, discussing sporadically, all of that was simply devastating for me. And not only for me, but for others, too. Everybody saw it, but nobody did anything about it. All the pre-modernity of that academic setting was revealed there, that dumb automatism of career proceduralism. Mechanical regulation of careers as proof of what is happening in the teaching process — a mechanical transfer of knowledge.

I mentioned already, those 30 students that could be interpellated so that 30 people that did not know where they are going could turn into 30 people who desire to listen and learn geology, who know exactly where they are going. Slowly, I had realized that it doesn’t have to do anything with geology, that I desire to do that kind of thing, generally: to politically interpellate people.

I was already doing some other stuff parallel with my work at the University. I started organizing the tenant's council in my building, which blossomed into a couple of projects. I became a member of the Civic Alliance of Serbia, with the idea that, it being a small party, space could be found for some of my ideas and projects. Of course, that was an illusion.

But before all that, back during my student days, I became interested in art and I had even started collecting art pieces. I remember buying a small sculpture by Mrđan Bajić back in mid-1980s. It was disappointing, how my immediate surroundings, my friends etc. had reacted to that (“You gave 500 Deutschemarks for that??”), but maybe they were right!

**GOOD LIFE:** Do you remember anything else that you have bought?

**NEBOJŠA MILIKIĆ:** Well, anything I liked. So, “likeism”. For example, I still have a drawing by Zlatko Glamočak. What I could afford. I bought a painting from Uroš Đurić. If I analyze those works now, all of them in some specific way, mark a kind of a conflict with modernity, a sort of denial, negation, renunciation of modernity. And it was the spirit of the times back then, to question the heritage of modernism and all its associated principles. Back then all those processes would bother you, like, you know that modernization is necessary and yet somehow it is boring, it is wearing you, you out, you can't count the ways in which it is tormenting you, and you see a materialization of those “torments” of sorts in art (in the case of Bajić and Glamočak, those were really specific painful grimaces) and so you think — if you enact possession of those objects, you will have control over those “torments”. You buy it and you hang it on a wall and enjoy it, but when that fetishistic obsession slowly lets go, the torment stops and you start wondering: What to do with it now?

**GOOD LIFE:** So it was there the whole time, as a parallel interest of sorts, and at the end of the 1990s you discovered that it was possible to do politics through art. Could we say that was the case?

**NEBOJŠA MILIKIĆ:** What was interesting for me in texts about art was that in them I started to encounter explications of some of the political conflicts I had felt. I was not satisfied anymore with what was to be found in opposition daily and weekly press. Then, I was significantly influenced by the work of Milica Tomić, *XY Ungelost*, especially because I was at Kopaonik during that period of protests in Kosovo, which are the subject of that work. I worked in Mountain Rescue Services, so I listened to police frequencies on the radio that we had there. I had completely suppressed that memory — until Milica's work came along. Somehow, I realized that I need a new sort of language in order to communicate what was of interest to me. Realistically, I tried to develop and introduce a “new language” in my master's thesis and that ended with me literally begging the members of the thesis exam committee to read ten other scientific essays I was referencing. Let's make it clear, I do not claim that my thesis was “misunderstood” or “extraordinary”, on the contrary, it was all

about an elementary level of communication of a professional problem, about its alphabet. So, it was a quest for a language that could help me verbalize the problem. I am not aware of any other area except art that immanently seeks and nurtures such a language. Philosophy could be closer to that, on this side of the prosaic, but art often delves directly into the problem, at least the sort of art I am interested in.

**GOOD LIFE:** Are you in a position that art somehow leads you away from science towards politics?

**NEBOJŠA MILIKIĆ:** To quote Badiou, those are equal truth procedures. The only question is — who is keeping the procedure in the given coordinates. The procedure is kept by the academia, the profit and petty-bourgeoisie and nationalist prestige. Science is specific in that you cannot do science independently. You can comment on it, but to do it you need infrastructure that an individual cannot have. Art, on the other hand, at least deceives us that it is a free field, where even that kind of independent research is possible. Politics seems to aspire towards uniting these two principles i.e. procedures. Today I still often-times feel as a paleontologist with an exclusive and phantasmal ability to influence the environment he is studying, like in *Back to the Future*.

**GOOD LIFE:** Could it be said that in some way art exists because of its impossibility? For example, that is what Jacques Alain Miller says about psychoanalysis. That it is an impossible profession.

**NEBOJŠA MILIKIĆ:** Well, that impossibility is what attracts the most. If one of my attempts at “renovating” or reforming the community that I belong to at a given time would fail, or to be more precise, the attempt to recreate it, I would need another attempt, so I would welcome even that “impossible”, experimental space. Of course, the field of art is filled with different problems and misunderstandings. All kinds of disappointments and fatigue are possible there, but if my position is not one of hegemony, which I would naturally desire, at least one can survive without that deadly automatism that does not pay heed to changes and often does not react even to catastrophe.

**GOOD LIFE:** Aren't cataclysms valuable for a geologist's work? Like an epoch event that changes and washes away everything it encounters?

**NEBOJŠA MILIKIĆ:** Well, the question is — a cataclysm for whom? When you approach a supposedly calm period of geological history with a materialistically cognitive mindset and start analyzing what is seemingly a monotonous sediment and make a microscopic cross-section, you see that there are thousands of cataclysms for organisms that had left traces there, of themselves and those cataclysms. And when on the subject of university, we can

look at the last year's student protests as a sort of a procession of quiet cataclysms. Above all, for the University itself, because of the absence of support by the professors to the blockade (kudos to professor Todor Kuljić, who is incidentally probably the top scholar on the subject of fascism here, and it is not a coincidence that such an expert would give his support to the students), then because of the shameful — according to the impressions I had gathered from press releases by both the faculty and the students — sneaky, slanderous and thug-gish acts of the Faculty of Philosophy, and finally because of the — according to published statements, but also to a completely subjective impression of mine — behavior of some poor University official, maybe it was the rector himself, which was more fitting for a small-time crook or a swindler (I simply cannot believe that such a person could be the rector, after all I am still in some ways a man of the University, as late Gotovac would say “once an assistant lecturer — always an assistant lecturer!”) etc. It was also a cataclysm for the students who could not afford to pay their tuition, then for those who could and who will have to pay them and who will therefore develop a bloodthirsty, competitive ego and “business” spirit. Taking on jobs while studying, in order to, for example, pay their rent in Belgrade, will degrade them both physically and psychologically and it may prevent them from studying further. Then, it was a cataclysm for the professionals, who had not said a word about it all, there are almost no serious professional reviews of what had caused those events, except some pretty social-Darwinist lobbying by professor Turajlić and laments of the officials from the Ministry of Education (you can listen to what a representative from the Ministry has said at a discussion in CZKD; it is unbelievable what that man is orating). But, what is much more dangerous than catastrophes — from which it is sometimes pointless to run away — are the periods of “calm and order”, during which everything is atrophying and rotting away. Could you imagine the following: during one of the last days of the blockade, a psychology teacher comes to the student's assembly and says that for several days he had been looking for the place where the assembly is being held, but he could not find it? And then, he is all like, reporting how many people from the faculty are supporting the student's cause, but nobody knows where all that is taking place?? Oh my goodness... But that was still moderately catastrophic, because, imagine the pedagogical and moral profile of a philosophy or sociology teacher that can calmly look on as thugs, be they uniformed or not, enter the university building to deal with the students! One should not judge the decline of an institution or a discursive practice only based upon the look and the state of the building it is housed in, nor simply based upon the material well-being and social position of its proponents. Luckily, as opposed to minimal analytical care displayed by today's chroniclers and researchers, our world will once be under the microscope of diligent examiners of the faces of ancient past — you are smiling at them in vain. ►

# PLAYERS



*Players* portrays a community of 6 poker professionals who live within a larger poker community in Bangkok. Playing poker is more just a way to make money, more than a passion for them, but the rules that govern their community follow the logic of the game. They use the probability theory, the fundamental theory of poker, to ensure that they treat each other fairly, and that everyone contributes equally. The systematic and studied manner in which these poker players look at everyday life may seem absurd, and it is all too easy to condemn their lifestyle, but the actual shock might be due more to their ignoring their original society than to the way they have built their own. ▶

Thank you: people of Scandi Tower  
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# A PLACE FOR IMAGINATION — 2 PROJECTS, 1 DISCUSSION, 4 ANNEXES

## AN INTERVIEW WITH WOLFGANG KRAUSE

**GOOD LIFE:** We will intentionally begin in a naïve way. You are sitting on a train, it's boring. At some point, the person sitting next to you asks: What is your profession? How do you answer?

**WOLFGANG KRAUSE:** I make art projects.

**GOOD LIFE:** All right, but then he asks: What are art projects?

**WOLFGANG KRAUSE:** They are projects in a public space or in exhibition spaces with other artists. They are inscenations — inscenations of installations. It is a form of directing.

**GOOD LIFE:** Do you see yourself as a curator or an artist — or both?

**WOLFGANG KRAUSE:** The inscenations I create are works of art. It's always art in communication with others, in an open form.

[NACHTBOGEN]<sup>1</sup>

**GOOD LIFE:** Chronologically, the first of the two selected projects from the early 1990s (**nachtbogen** & Knochengeld)<sup>2</sup> we'll focus on, is **nachtbogen**. In hindsight, what was most important about **nachtbogen**?

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Night Arc,  
translator's note

[2]

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"fake money",  
translator's note

**WOLFGANG KRAUSE:** Before that, I have to say something else. Namely, the fact that I grew up in the DDR, in East Germany, in the Soviet occupation zone. I studied in Dresden. But what we learned there was not at all required by the cultural policies. The school was an island but there was no demand for those contents in the outside cultural life. After my studies, I went to Berlin but all the galleries in East Berlin were taken by the Comrades.

At the Dresden Academy for Fine Arts I have realized large-scale inscenations during a four-year period (1980-1984), with many participants. In the process, the entire Academy was remodeled several times. However, there was no possibility in Berlin to continue this form of work, especially in larger scales. I didn't want to realize my work in a church. It still represented a shelter for me, but not an option. It was too religious for me. There was no possibility in the country for me to work in larger scales in public space. Only after the 1989 Change did it become possible for me to work in the public space and to act as a citizen. Also, it needs to be said that I grew up in a country without a sense of social belonging. There were no social problems that were openly discussed. However, the precondition for projects such as **nachtbogen** is always a free country, not a dictatorship. After the Change, one could apply for funding and work publicly again.

**GOOD LIFE:** Let's discuss a biographical detail for a moment. The years between the end of your studies and the fall of the Berlin Wall. Did you consider leaving your own country?

**WOLFGANG KRAUSE:** Unequivocally, yes. To go away. But the problem was my family. I have three sisters, one was at the university and the other two worked in the field of pedagogy, so if I had gone away, my sisters could not have worked anymore. The question is how to solve the problem in the family? In my case, two sisters clearly wanted to leave. However, the parents would have stayed home without children or grandchildren. Going away implied that one would have to cross the border first and get to the West. However, the second issue was that one could never return to the city one grew up in. Eventually, the entire family would have to go away and such responsibility was difficult. It happened, though, that the 1989 Change clarified everything. All of us wanted to go to the West, the whole family. My documents, half of my works,

everything I needed, was already there. That is why I spent years living out of suitcases. After my studies I knew that I have to leave this country but I didn't want to get shot and I didn't want my sisters or my parents to end up in prison.

How do you resolve that? Between 1984 and 1989 my friends and I always lived out of suitcases, we were not really living anymore. We sold everything we could.

**GOOD LIFE:** What does that mean?

**WOLFGANG KRAUSE:** You didn't have a home anymore, you didn't rebuild anything because it was clear that in many respects there was no future. As far as leaving was concerned, it was clear that one could not take anything along and that one could also not start human relationships that were impossible to maintain later. Close friends always knew that.

**GOOD LIFE:** Ok. **nachtbogen**, version one, fall of 1991. Where did the idea come from for this project?

**WOLFGANG KRAUSE:** Immediately after the Change I founded the "im Dreieck"<sup>3</sup> gallery at 6 Oderberger St. with my friend Matthias Körner. The triangle was comprised of Matthias and myself, and the artists.

Developing and implementing ideas in context, together with the artists: space-oriented, site-specific, unique temporary works. I selected Oderberger St. because I know this street very well. **nachtbogen** took place in the city and the architectural space of the street – houses, façades, passageways, footways, partially the cellars, ... all possibilities were to be used in order to create an impression of a free ambience. The individual works were exactly thought-out for the street space and they were supposed to be easy to experience for the visitor. An open experience rather than a gallery space. The whole street was a cross-media inscenation – without the visitor's fear when setting foot on the island of art. Here we have to go back again. I come from a small country. DDR had a population of 17 million, a little bit more than the Netherlands. The country was "walled up" from the outside, people were only leaving. Interesting people never came. We were always alone. After the Change I could work publically but the city also opened up and we were host to all of

[3]

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"In a Triangle",  
translator's note

Berlin. Look at our district, look at our houses — all the houses were open and one could come inside and simultaneously feel art and context. Everything happened concurrently.

**GOOD LIFE:** Back to **nachtbogen**: What was most important about the whole project?

**WOLFGANG KRAUSE:** The most important was the fact that we succeeded — this triumph — that something was **possible** in the public space, that one was a responsible citizen of a city and of a country. In the past the police controlled everything, now the police is tasked to support my projects. It was a lot of work and a lot of organization, which was also cumbersome at times. Getting permits from the environmental agency, civil engineering office, everything that goes along with it, installing electricity, traffic signs, roadblocks, making it work, and that the artists in the city don't work hidden somewhere in factories, but that they're "here" and belong to the society.

**GOOD LIFE:** What happened between then and now? A brutal question, of course, but still. The district where you live and where you have worked for more than 20 years is almost beyond comparison: between 1991 and 2011 approximately 80% of the former inhabitants moved away. Where is the hope now?

**WOLFGANG KRAUSE:** That time is over. The renovation is still ongoing. But it also needs to be said that until the late 1980s Prenzlauer Berg was a destroyed district. You could still see the bullet holes from the war, ruins, burnt houses, missing houses on corners...

But there was always room for imagination in the ruinous city. Today the view doesn't go further than 20 meters, to the next block. Back then, the view went beyond: above spaces between buildings, above garage roofs and further. Those are always places for imagination: there could..., there could have...What used to excite, inspire and drive me in this place — does not exist anymore. It was a unique period of a radical social change and I decided to work in that time and with those spaces. I don't want to surf — I want to work with spaces I know.

**GOOD LIFE:** When was the point reached when nothing here could be moved further anymore?

**WOLFGANG KRAUSE:** It is relatively clear to recognize: with the completion of the renovation and the rising rents. On the other hand: Imagination never ends. There are other districts, there are other cities – and inspiration.

### [KNOCHENGELD]

**GOOD LIFE:** How did it start back in 1993?

**WOLFGANG KRAUSE:** The idea came from Bert Papenfuß, the poet. I invited him. He proposed the project. It was logistically an entirely new dimension, in all respects. We were a group of four people who realized everything.

Our group was named *Ioë Bsaffot*. It's a made up name, an alter ego. The name also came from Papenfuß. It does not stem from the German language but from a special language called Rotwelsch which was particularly used by robbers. It means: "counterfeit papers". This name worked for us as protection from the law. Also, it is strictly prohibited to produce money and to install monetary cycles. We asked more than 50 artists to produce a new banknote. Each banknote was printed in 100 copies. During a seven-week period, businesses, cafes and stores accepted our fake money as money and a means of payment. The gallery became a bank. Once a week it was an exchange office: deutschmarks and fake money were exchanged at a 1:1 rate; one could shop and pay in Prenzlauer Berg and in Mitte and when necessary, deutschmarks were received as change. The principle was the devaluation of money. The money was supposed to be devaluated. If you didn't use your money for a week, it was less worth the following week... Money should not be "hoarded". It was clear: the monetary system of the Federal Republic of Germany was not functioning. High interest rates and income without performance of the rich, large assets became larger...

At the time, we first had the East German mark, then the deutschmark, etc. The great thing about it was the motto: artists make money. That is the dream of an artist: you can make your own money and pay with it.

Here are the names of all the artists who took part: Breeda C.C., Via Lewandowsky, G.P. Adan, Stephan Hachtmann, Igor





Zaidel (CIS), Sarah Marrs (USA), Rita Hensen, Thomas Schliesser, Wolfgang Müller, Hans Peter Kuhn, Ronald Lippok, Carsten Nicolai, Helge Leiberg, Jenny Rosemeyer, Ina Wilczek, Holger Stark, Josefine Günschel, Niko Tenten, Gruppe M, A.R. Penck, Angela Lubic, Daniel Habegger, Volker Wilczek, W.A. Scheffler, Olaf Nicolai, Raabenstein, Klaus Staeck, Volker Ries, Henning Christiansen (DK), MK Kähne, Christine Schlegel, Andrea Pichl, Mike Zimmermann (USA), Klaus Killisch, Sabine Herrmann, Urs Jaeggi (CH), Dietmar Kirves, Dirk Lebahn, Siglinde Kallnbach, Klaus Theuerkauf, Jeanette Kipka, Strawalde, Nils Chlupka, Laura Kikauka (Canada), Brad Hwang (USA), Gerd Sonntag, Ludwig Eben, Klaus Haller & Gloria Mészáros, Anne Jud, Bert Papenfuß, Uta Hünninger, Jürgen Schneider, Gamma Bak, Wolfgang Krause. It worked. I lived seven weeks with that money.

**GOOD LIFE:** Twenty years later: what was most important about the Knochengeld project?

**WOLFGANG KRAUSE:** It was a piece of art and a piece of robbery. We were the first alternative money project in Germany since 1900 that was not halted by the judicial authorities or the police. All the economic philosophers and experts in monetary theory who speak about alternative money, who studied it and taught about it, had no courage to start something like that themselves. Later they came to us and partially held their classes here.

We were the first to practically implement those ideas without thinking too much about it. A pirate piece and a fortunate one, too. We were also fortunate to have the press help us. From the first day we had very good, knowledgeable articles in the *TAZ* about alternative monetary ideas in England, Canada, etc. On the second day, the *Bild* daily got involved. And after that, a day later, it was on all newsstands: Prenzlauer Berg is printing its own money. It resulted with more than 100 newspaper articles about the project, a full page in the *ZEIT* weekly, various TV programs.

By the way, about the monetary union: Everything was going so fast, you could exchange only 1,000 or 2,000 East German marks at an 1:1 rate, then it was all over. As a consequence — and that was noticeable here in Oderberger St, as well — none of the people from the East had money to invest in houses. Only the westerners could do that. That was not convincing.

**GOOD LIFE:** Well, it was convincing, in their colonial principle...

**WOLFGANG KRAUSE:** I want to add something about Knochengeld. The practical part of it was interesting: We had to keep incredibly intensive communication with the businesses. We were all completely at the end of our strength. Each day we had visitors who supported the idea and wanted to exchange money. The new money was running out.

It was a communication project. A new dimension of my work. Back then, even the universities moved their classes to the gallery where Knochengeld took place. In regard to my practice, I can say that I have paid with fake money and was able to survive doing so. We wanted to incorporate the different city scenes — Tacheles, Tödliche Doris, Endart, young and established artists. A. R. Penck was best known and Strawalde (Jürgen Böttcher, filmmaker and painter) was on board, as well. Penck was aware of giving great support to the project with his involvement. He was also familiar with the laws and he said: You'll all land in jail, only I will get away with a fine.

**GOOD LIFE:** This incredible amount and intensity of communication. What else can you say about it — what was important?

**WOLFGANG KRAUSE:** It is interesting to communicate with so many different partners and having to adjust differently to each new partner. Each conversation is led on its own basis. In fact, you need a promoter or other help in order to be able to stick to your idea. On the other hand, it is very enriching to network with so many participants. It reflects the diversity of our complex lives.

**GOOD LIFE:** Is the alternative in reducing and focusing everything a little bit?

**WOLFGANG KRAUSE:** No, but when you have money, you can delegate. You can get good people when you've got cash. The mediated and sponsored positions represent too much of an energy loss.

**GOOD LIFE:** Conclusion?

**WOLFGANG KRAUSE:** Of the entire period?

**GOOD LIFE:** Yes.

**WOLFGANG KRAUSE:** It was a luxury. It was always self-realization; I do not regret one moment. I have accomplished everything, almost everything I wanted.

**GOOD LIFE:** What about hope? Where is hope?

**WOLFGANG KRAUSE:** Hope is inside me.

# ANNEX I-IV (WOLFGANG KRAUSE)

## ANNEX I

### ART IN CITY SPACE, ART IN PUBLIC SPACE

The precondition is a free, democratic society in which a responsible citizen can become involved in the public debate/ public life, in a self-conscious, free and creative manner, as a way of communicating with different fellow citizens, thus being able to articulate and participate. In that context, I particularly like the formulation by Albrecht Göschel about urban space “as a civic encounter with the unknown”. I want this encounter with the unknown to happen in the public space, not alone at home, in front of the TV.

## ANNEX II

### PROJECT PRACTICE I

„to modestly participate in the production of a new reality”  
Carl Einstein, *Fabrication of Fictions*, 1973

Parts of the project/ construction site:

- a control center for direct communication
- a bulletin board with up to date information for everyone
- description of the project with a team list, dates, etc.
- outlines of the new site/ city plan- framework conditions
- relevant permits
- open door for the team
- keys
- clear responsibilities and contracts outside and within the team
- timetable with clear dates for individual construction stages
- emergency plans, night duties, personal safety, phone lists, etc.

My responsibility:

- work backpack

- toolbox
- black folder with all relevant materials and contracts
- hardcover workbook
- pencils
- sturdy footwear
- robust clothing (also cold-resistant)
- drinking bottle
- G 1000 trousers, with a “pocket office”
- ingredients, vitamins of all kinds for endurance
- personal corners, with a chair- cash

### ANNEX III

#### PROJECT PRACTICE II

The planning and inventing of projects is a beautiful thing because it opens inexhaustible spaces to imagination. When the “thought-out” project becomes concrete and begins in earnest, that’s even more beautiful. The practical part is always a good change: most notably because the project then creates its own existence and many things become practical. A sensual time begins in new spaces and structures, a time in a new reality, friction with others and the exposing of ideas in reality. At the same time, one is active in reality, a part of the concrete context; one becomes a protagonist, an acting person. The opening of the construction site marks the beginning of a temporary state of emergency for everyone involved. Life begins in a new creative situation: pleasure, curiosity and the sparkling of ideas, as well as opening for new contacts. All the doors for the unfolding of endogenous drugs such as euphoria, adrenalin, etc, are wide open... The construction site is indeed a space of invention. The construction later transforms into presentation and communication containing hope of a previously unknown future.

## ANNEX IV NAUSEA

only 3 domains worked in the DDR:

- sports
- border protection
- and state security

Ever since school, we were treated as though we were not the country's children but guests of the DDR. Many people I have held in high regards and worked with, had already given up when it comes to this and only wanted to leave this country. The dullness of the "Comrades" was unbearable. Besides, we lived with the awareness of 1968 (Prague), the expatriation of Wolf Biermann (1976) and the democratic movement in Poland (1979). From 1980 onwards, I spent four years organizing and designing large-scale inscenations rich in tradition at the Dresden Academy for Fine Arts. During our studies, too, we were treated as guests of the DDR and its party. At some point in the compulsory classes (Marxism/Leninism) I realized "that I don't have a DDR visa, that I'm not a visitor in this country, that I live here and that this is my city".

That clarity helped me very much in realizing where I stand and that my own life is not the socialist cemetery of the DDR. That the omnipotence of the system is not all there is. And also that I do not want to postpone my own life and my precious time for later, when we all finally get to the West... Since nothing of social relevance was ever carried out, I grew up without "a feeling of social belonging". ▶

WOLFGANG KRAUSE / SILVIA LORENZ

WITH: MARIE LUISE BIRKHOLZ, TARO FURUKATA, DANIELA GUGG,  
PETER MÜLLER, PATRICK TIMM (BERLIN) AND TREĆI BEOGRAD

## IN SAVAMALA

**THE GEOZAVOD BUILDING IS LOCATED** in the heart of the Savamala district on the Sava River in Belgrade. „in Savamala“ is a transition from the interior of the exhibition to the real outside context as a creative friction with reality.

The six-day project represents a bridge from the *Geozavod* to the surrounding city space of Savamala, to artists from Belgrade and back.

The participating Berlin artists are not a group, but they were invited by Wolfgang Krause and Silvia Lorenz for this concrete project. The project envisages cooperation with the artists' cooperative Treći Beograd.

The Berliners' foreign view is intentionally placed beside the knowledgeable view of the Belgraders as an open, dialogue-based form.

The work begins as a process of discovering the city on the spot, walks and lingering — a well-rested and attentive view is a precondition.

As a result of detailed observation of the specific situation in the city space of Savamala, temporary involvements or settings, ranging from intervention to installation, will be developed in a short time. The sites, ideas and a title will be considered during this time in Savamala. The material used is simple and cheap, or found.

There is no presentation, it is primarily a matter of the effect of the moment. The document is a picture, perhaps a postcard. ▶

Berlin, August 14<sup>th</sup> 2012









## EXPEDIUM

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# PARLIAMENT OF TRANSITION

**PARLIAMENT OF TRANSITIONS IS A CONSTITUTION OF VOICES IN OPPOSITION.** It is a space for personal narratives and local views to take shape and functions as stimulus for criticality and creative response. Within that space, Expodium operates as a host, an agent provocateur, a collector and a moderator.

Parliament of Transitions is an actual place that calls for some serious story telling and it's a staircase with an entrance as an exit and the exit as an entrance. It's going up and going down and going all around past, present and future while it assembles Belgrade as a dreamland — a curse — a saving raft.

The text that follows is an abstract from a transcribed sixty-minute interview of a Serbian immigrant, living in the Netherlands for twenty-two years. He left Belgrade in October 1990. Let's call him A.

[06.03]

*And there were lots of shops — I mean not lot of, but there were shops in the Belgrade they called the 'free shops' — like duty free shops and you could go as well, but you are bying actually all foreign products, but for — you could not pay in dinars — you had to pay in Deutsch marks.*

*They were located everywhere in the city and that was actually meant for tourists, but because there are not so many tourist they are meant like — ok, then you can go and buy. You have to have a visa from other country — they gonna let you. And then after a while they were just letting everybody to buy the things — you know. You could not buy a television — that was too much. You need somebody — you just come with a foreign person — is like — ok, come with me, you show your passport — I like a television — and you know — that was ok — then you can buy television for me. Because, you know — it was not done to have a television, which is like Serbian because — or Yugoslavian made by that time. So if you wanna buy Siemens or Sony or whatever, then you have to go there — cause we did not have at that time — you know — official stores — foreign products, because they wanted to protect own market and own products which actually sucks. It was no good quality. So that was like — and I am talking about the 80's, and that started easily to change at the end of the 80's beginning of 90's because — and then after that was just the whole country collapsed — you know was only the foreign products.*

*And it was a trend that everything has to be foreign — you know like the idea is that — and I am talking now about Belgrade — you know — because it was like, as I told you, it was very important in the communist — now I am a bit couple of years back, when still like a communist country with a one party and when was like we are all equal — but it was very important at that time to show there are some people who are more equal than others. So like if you wanna be somebody — in a way not like really somebody, but just to show yourself — you know to your friends, then in at home you have to have the VCR and you have to have the VCR in your room and a television which is not Yugoslavian made, and you have to have like no Turkish coffee but Nescafe and — Actually, we are, you know? — Very simple — we are watching the foreign sitcoms — you know the series, and we are copying that life without actually experience — you know. We are really like — everybody thought that the life in a West is better so we gonna live that life in our own bubble — you know — like using the products. Because we had kind of enough money to have that lifestyle, but we didn't have the shops you know.*

*So what I was doing myself with friends — Friday morning we go with the car to Munich and Friday evening we leave. In the morning we are in Munich — whole day we go shopping for the clothes, for the coffee for the — even toilet paper you know — like because it was like this kind of western products for in the West was normal — for us was luxury you know. Because we did not — was that in the 80's they did not have these huge big rolls of soft toilet papers. They had some ridiculous — was kind of — you know — almost embarrassed to use it — I mean everybody was using it but — it's like that — and now I am thinking like Jesus! we are like — Actually we are like trying so desperately to be like the West, because that was like we didn't wanna be communists you know. Cause we had freedom of travel, we had the freedom of television — you know.*

*In the Belgrade we get in '85 — '86 MTV, you know on the television — and that was like — I had a friend of mine from Paris — was like "I don't have MTV in Paris" — you know — and we had MTV! We had all these media but no shops you know. So we are like watching how this like amazing life in the western countries — capitalistic countries but we cannot — we can afford but we cannot buy it — so you know?*

*And also was kind of going twice a year to Trieste to Italy for the clothes, for the new — you know what you can buy — cause that's like — and because you can't go shopping in Belgrade. If you buy something in the shop to wear around — you can of course, but it's embarrassing so — No! but it's really! I went to with my mother — going with the bus in the evening — we arrive in the morning to Trieste. Shoes — Things and — you know — and then we go back and then it's like on the border that they ask you how much things you have and then sometimes you have to pay some taxes, but that was still like doesn't matter if you just — you know — it was very important to say 'Oh yeah, we went last week to Trieste to' — how you say? — to — 'to get new clothes' you know — new things you know.*

*It was a way of living you know — like — because was like we always thought, and it was true that the western products were better — the quality was better because there was —*

*What they were doing in Yugoslavia — that was everything was owned by the state — so they just made something what was not important that the quality is good you know — because was like you have to buy it anyway because you had no choice. And then that's why they kept this market so close, because they knew that the quality of the products that they made there was so bad — the soon as they open the market, they gonna collapse — the whole industrial thing and everything is gonna collapse. Because, of course you are gonna buy something which is maybe a little bit cheaper or a little bit more expensive, but it's gonna last long.*

*That — and then actually we had this period of like — maybe after '87, '88, '89 when it was like a m a z i n g life you know? — Like they started to open it — to open the market — to open everything you know. And then — when then suddenly nationalistic feelings start to — you know — that you cannot — and everybody felt 'oh, we can have a better life if we are separate from eachother' — which was — I didn't understand myself — you know — why they are suddenly this — it's so important that I am Serbian you know like — I didn't really care about it...*

[13.22]

[46.26]

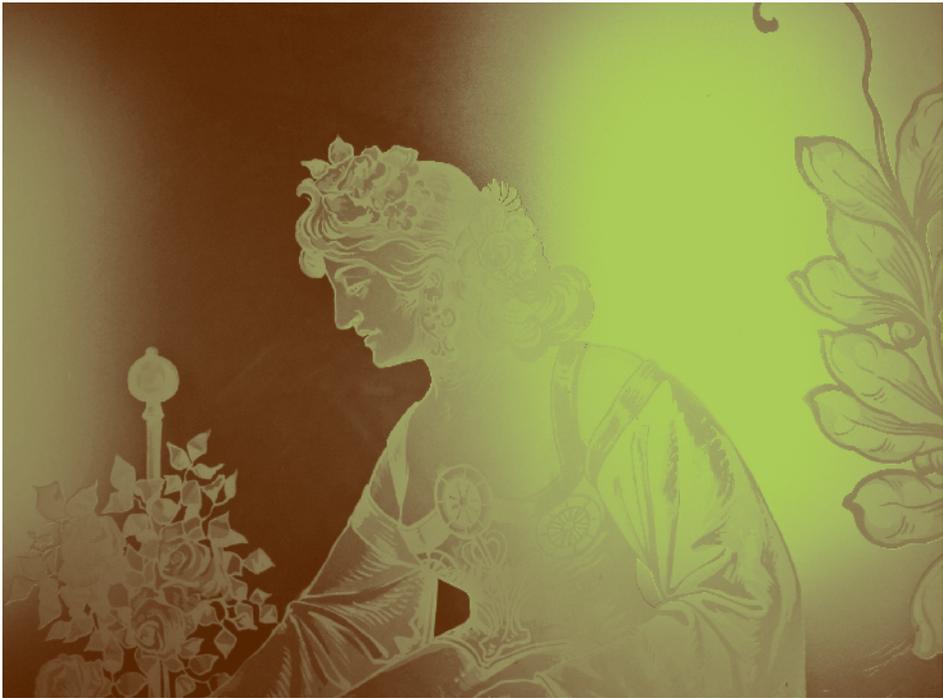
*You know that was the problem, because the people didn't understand democracy. They thought democracy was anarchy — they can do whatever they want — you know. They though democracy was ok if I start to now hate my neighbor just because he is Croatian — you know. It's not! — I think they really had a different — they did not understand what's democracy or not. They — I mean like it's — all this fear — I don't know — like they kept inside — that they are frustrated they cannot be proud to be Serbian or Croatian or something — you know. Like it was this pressure — suddenly we are very nationalistic.*

*I never had that you know. I never had this feeling and it was like — for me was — But economically was good, but politically was bad — and I am talking about — because when I left it was still amazing — you know — life. This bubble stayed — they kept having a great parties — they kept like having these art things and everything — you know — was like amazing because like the war was still not. And then I left after that moment.*

[47.48]

Expodium is a collective dedicated to investigating, understanding and working with challenges that surface in transitional urban areas by initiating and facilitating interventions in public space. Their practice does not follow the general norm of knowledge production, but revolves around operations that gain vital information about the area and at the same time cause a direct effect in it.

For Expodium, translating and applying knowledge that emerges from diverse social contexts is an evolving series of abstractions — a process of trial and error. Expodium is Bart Witte (NL), Nikos Doulos (GR) and Luc Janssens (NL). ►



# DUBRAVKA SEKULIĆ

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## OLD GAL

**WHEN ONE APPROACHES ME, ONE IS CONFRONTED** with broken windows, and starts wondering... is this really the most beautiful house in the city? How can this be... It is difficult to understand what I am. One might say that I have something like an identity crisis. It's been a while since things actually made sense... See, I was created for a completely different time and position in society... Sometimes I feel like I'm a character in one of those films that deal with the 10th high school graduation anniversary, or thereabouts, and I am the stereotype — full of potential, stuck inside a moment.

But I must admit, memory does not serve me well, so I am not sure if some things actually happened or whether I dreamt they happened. One has a lot of time when one is left aside. Also, in films I was asked to play the part of spaces other than I am — and who knows if what I think really happened, hasn't happened only as 'make-believe'.

But let me tell you my story from the beginning...

This neighbourhood was of the utmost importance when I was erected. I stood tall and I shone, I was the promise of a future prosperous society that was being built across the river from the great empire. I was sending a message — what you across the street can do, I can do also. I was built to perform an important function in that society, to be the centre of its future finances, right there, on the border. What an illusion of grandeur, what a decoration it was... but I will tell you about this later.

I was always proud, at least in the first decades of my life, of the fact that I was built as an act of generosity, as a gift of a wealthy person with a vision to society. I felt special. Of the few that were created in the same manner, I was the most beautiful and luxurious. But — and here I risk sounding like my good old pal Wooster — what was more important than decoration was the sense of importance. I was built to be the centre of economy and future finances. The heart of an important capitalist country. In an affluent neighbourhood. One look from across the street, from the Bristol Hotel, would make my body shiver with anticipation of the good life that was to come.

Well, that was a mistake. In my, hm, hm, years, one thing I was repeatedly convinced of was that plans usually are made for one direction, and reality goes the other way. Nothing expresses that better than the current broken windows.

Rather soon after I was erected, my first war broke out. Oh what terror it was, to be right on the border and see all your pals being damaged. To make it worse, that was the

moment when I realized that, when you are a house, it is difficult to change crowds. One can't really, at least not easily, pick up one's things and go somewhere else. No matter how affluent the building is, or how well designed to appear affluent it may be, it can't escape the destiny of its neighbourhood. After the first war, the conditions of my existence changed. The river I was so close to had ceased to be the borderline, as the territory across the river became part of the same country. All of the sudden, I started witnessing the construction of a whole new set of buildings on the hill above me. Large, with every new brick layered, they spelled power. With every new brick layered at the top of the hill, one brick of power moved away from my neighbourhood. Instead of high-class capitalists, small-time crooks and ladies of the night. The more hazardous part of speculation slowly became my reality. There was one lucky circumstance — I was built as an endowment, and no one could divest me of my public status. Well, almost no one — the bombs of 1941 almost did. If the first war was sheer terror, the second one was Armageddon. All those planes flying and dropping bombs without any consideration...

Fortunately, I was built of reinforced concrete, but many buildings in my vicinity were not as lucky. Buildings of small traders and craftsmen, for example. The whole neighbourhood ended up looking like the teeth of a 5-year old... The proximity of the train station didn't help. Come to think of it, the train station was always both the beginning and the end of the neighbourhood. Mahala. And me as the most prominent building in it. If I were religious, I'd say it was both a blessing and a curse.

Religion... Been thinking a lot about it lately. Time has passed slowly in the last few decades. While I started decaying, and the world started changing again, I had a lot of time to reflect. Capital knows no God, though it can commodify Him and utilize Him 'for its own cause' rather efficiently. I was built as a palace of capital, for a bankers' cooperative. It would be stupid to think that this fact didn't influence my view of the world. Though there was always that glitch about simultaneously being an endowment and a bankers' cooperative.

The attitude radically changed after 1945 and the liberation of the country from the Nazis. It is still too painful to think about that war... Just imagine, living among the ruins left after the bombings, looking at the actions of resistance fighters in the area around the train station, and the most horrific thing of all, being across the river from the concentration camp. Oh, that is ironic, I was so proud when the Fairground was constructed and opened. The festivities, finally something happening on the other side (ok, there was that land speculation with holiday houses next to it)... I didn't quite understand the architecture, it had seemed so bare and understated for my taste and expectations, but I still loved the venue... I felt it shared the same optimism and sense of promise for the future that was crucial for my construction, which preceded it by 3 decades. I shivered at the thought that something built with so much optimism could become a place of murder.

But back to the period after the war... Or the period of red block capital letters and stars, which is how I like to think of it. It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.

As an endowment, I fit in well with the process of the establishment of a more just society and public property. For a while, I was even a part of Belgrade University (though I got traded for flats fast), and ultimately I became the Geological Institute... Oh, what joy, all those stones, I had thought. But let me tell you, life was dull and dusty. Also, the neighbourhood... The bus station was added to the train station. The heavy traffic, trucks and buses, it changed the nature of the place... In the 1960s, we even got a reputation as a dangerous part of the city! Imagine that, me, the most beautiful building, with all this decoration... wasting my time and life. 30 years ago, there was a brief moment of hope. The construction of a new train station meant that these two around the corner would move soon... A new highway roundabout was supposed to remove heavy traffic from the area... But 30 years later, we are still waiting for that to happen, and unblock the area.

Yes, there was that other bombing... What a silly old bat I am, I've almost forgotten it. Though what is more memorable are the people, large groups of destitute people who were coming from what used to be our country. The third war is something you just want to sleep through. Though this sleep was a long one, so I had to wake up from time to time... The feeling I had was a mixed one — at the beginning of the 1990s, there was almost a glint of entrepreneurial anticipation. The country was shrinking to the measure I was built for, and there was a glimpse of hope that I would become important again... But reality was too grim...

As I got older, I must admit, I stopped taking care of myself. And ever since the Geological Institute moved out, it has been getting worse... It became difficult to keep up appearances when there are no social functions being held. Well, at least since a few years ago, there have been more film crews doing something. But that is different, as most of the time I play the part of something other than me. Like a house in St. Petersburg for instance... What pleases me is that recently there have been some exhibitions taking place. This way, many more people get to see me from the inside, and then the label of “the most beautiful house in Belgrade” starts making sense. Now, it is just a burden... I wish something would change. In me and in the neighbourhood. We have been asleep for a long time. It is time to wake up.

Hopefully, it will be an awakening more meaningful than the gibberish of the “creative class”, but then ... There is a limit to what an old gal like me can hope for. ►



**GUD LAJF**

**LAJF GUD**

**LAJF LAJF**

**GUD GUD**













## A COUSINLY SLAP!

**“LO AND BEHOLD”, THUS SPOKE MY FIRST GRADE** elementary school teacher, providing advice on how to get yourself out of any sort of a bind when writing a literary assignment for school.

In such a critical situation it was, therefore, enough to simply write (and in real life, if I understood correctly, to simply say out loud) this magical yet simple incantation. Afterwards, you can write (and in real life, do) anything whatsoever. This sentence could, like a mantra, be successfully used an unlimited number of times. And I used it thus, easily.

That is why, some ten years later, I was unpleasantly surprised by my professor of film directing, when he jokingly — and with brutal precision — dismissed my year two final exam film “... like it was created by some kind of a salad-mind”. “Lo and behold, LO AND BEHOLD!...” I murmured my pocket prayer... But the film “THE VOICE OF LIFE” will stand in eternity as a bad film.

Another ten years had passed, and I was attending my master’s degree studies in Prague. There, I confessed my yet unresolved dilemmas to my professor of “multimedia animation”: that I have a notebook filled with ideas, details and pictures, but that I don’t know how to piece them together into wholes, how to find some damn sense in them...?

He gave me this advice, with a straight face: “Stačí, když na konci řeknete, že to všechno byl jenom sen. A je to!” I was angry at first, that sort of answer didn’t calm me down — I was supposed to just say “It was all a dream — and problem solved?”

I really needed a firm ground from which to make my jump. Something clear and solid, no more misunderstood surrealism which had for years been as exciting to me as those “rubber castles” in amusement parks are to my three-year old son. You can jump as much as you like, you can happily fall from up high and not suffer any harm. You can knock down and squeeze their soft towers and colourful spires — they simply and instantly pop back into shape.

...

“When are you going to make a real movie, something normal, sensible, honest...?” My mother had asked me countless times. Once, when I played a short movie of mine for my cousin, using the camera screen, afterwards he asked me only this:

“How much does such a camera cost?”

“... It’s expensive if you are only going to play with it. But it is worth a lot if you do something serious with it” was the answer my father would certainly give. It was him who had, after all, bought me that camera, filled with hope.

For years I have been dodging the issues of plot and meaning by finding exciting pictures, stolen, recorded scenes from life, unusual compositions whose meaning I did not need to explain.





While doing hand-held shooting, it was as if I heard when the camera simply “clicked” of its own volition, suspended in the air — just like when you firmly plant it onto the camera stand. That was a sign, I felt, that the moment, the angle and the composition were right. I would press the red button and simply record.

I still record, but for a while, I have felt my shots to be meaningless, “normal”, almost informative. If I am in my apartment, it’s always the same shots — the edge of the bed, the back of the chair, the electricity outlets, toys strewn around the room... I fare a little better in nature — it’s cleaner, at least. I usually flatten a figure across a background of grass, pavement or an old wall. Then I am content, at least there are no electricity outlets...

At times I hold the camera as if I were keeping someone else’s ice cream while its owner is peeing somewhere nearby, and when teaching my students, I speak with remarkable insight and fervour on topics such as inspiration, ideas, film and recording... All the things of which, in reality, when I am recording, I haven’t the slightest idea.

While I wriggle out my camera from its bag and turn it on, the thing that I want to record is gone. If someone was to go through my material, through all those tedious recordings, they would frequently hear my desperate voice fruitlessly trying to once again provoke the goings-on that were just there a moment ago. That happens to me on a daily basis. And when I attempt to record clandestinely, it becomes even worse. I am terrible at pretending to be nothing more than a discreet observer or an indifferent companion. The people I wish to secretly record instinctively get a feeling that something strange is going on, I suppose I emit the vibe of a pickpocket clumsily trying to rob them. I am always discovered and I ruin the magic of the moment. And the recording goes to waste.

That is why I have called on my family for help, expecting a miracle. In the style of those trips down the family tree, I travel, get in touch with people I remember well from my childhood and ask them for advice on how to finally make that “real film”.

I would pick their brains and follow their ideas. Based on those, we would embark on making short films, pieces of THE FILM — together. I would attempt to be a courier, simply a delivery service for those ideas, and for once, not to show off. “Miloš tomić, mišo tomićmiloštoić”, my grandfather from Niš had tauntingly commented on the closing credits of my short film “Jam Session”, while he read the screenwriter, director and cast acknowledgments.

And of course, as the title of the film says, we would sometimes get in a fight for this film. A friendly — cousinly — fight. More of a slap fest, a wrestling match... Although many of them are past their prime, as opposed to back then, when I was a kid and my insolence was the cause of many, many slaps. Today, after all the thrashing, I usually sincerely hug them when we get together, I am hot, sweaty and strangely happy. Because all those things are good and very healthy for me, since I am rather cowardly when it comes to fights and brawls. I remember a remark from a soldier, when I was in the army and after I had finally gotten into a fight with my eyes closed, probably not breathing: “Look at that, he got beaten up and it’s fine by him!” ▶

# WE DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS, BUT IT IS CERTAINLY NOT WHAT YOU THINK IT IS

Nadežda Petrović /

AN EXHIBITION OF THE ART ASSOCIATION "LADA", 1909

If art were seen, in all social strata, a little more as an absolute need for raising the level of the national spirit, educating the people and enabling them to lead a more cultured, pleasant life, then our words would elicit the approval not only among the public so often talked about, criticised for its negligence, but would also gain the support of all those upon whom it rests to develop it and to raise it to a level worthy of being reached, so that it should become purely national and add to the education of the people. Our artists can become the apostles of their people, the way their counterparts in great Russia have done, who take their creations from one place to another, from one village to another, exhibit them under tents, letting people in well-to-do villages see their works for the admission fee of 10-20 kopecks; in poorer villages they let the poor in for free, their goal being solely the education of their people. This way of popularising art, cultivating the spirit of the people by means of art exhibitions, is indeed the most pleasing one there is; it would contribute to the spiritual development of our people, revive the sunken spirit of future freedom fighters. Let our peasant folk see that art is the property of all, that it is necessary not only to a citizen of Belgrade and to learned people, that it is not a luxury, according to the deep-rooted opinion of those working in cultural institutions. While village people are stuck in the mud up their carts' wheel hubs, it is unnatural to require of them to believe that it is better for them as well that Belgrade's streets should be asphalted, etc.

"Fine Arts Reviews", Nadežda Petrović

"Nadežda Petrović" Art Gallery, Čačak (Artera, Čačak) 2009, p. 89.



### Mandorory Happening

You will decide to read  
or not read this instruction.  
Having made your decision,  
the happening is over.

Ken Friedman, 1966

*Why didn't you make it larger, so that it would loom over the observer?*

– I was not making a monument.

*Then why didn't you make it smaller, so that the observer could see over the top?*

– I was not making an object.

Tony Smith, answering questions on his six-foot steel cube. ►



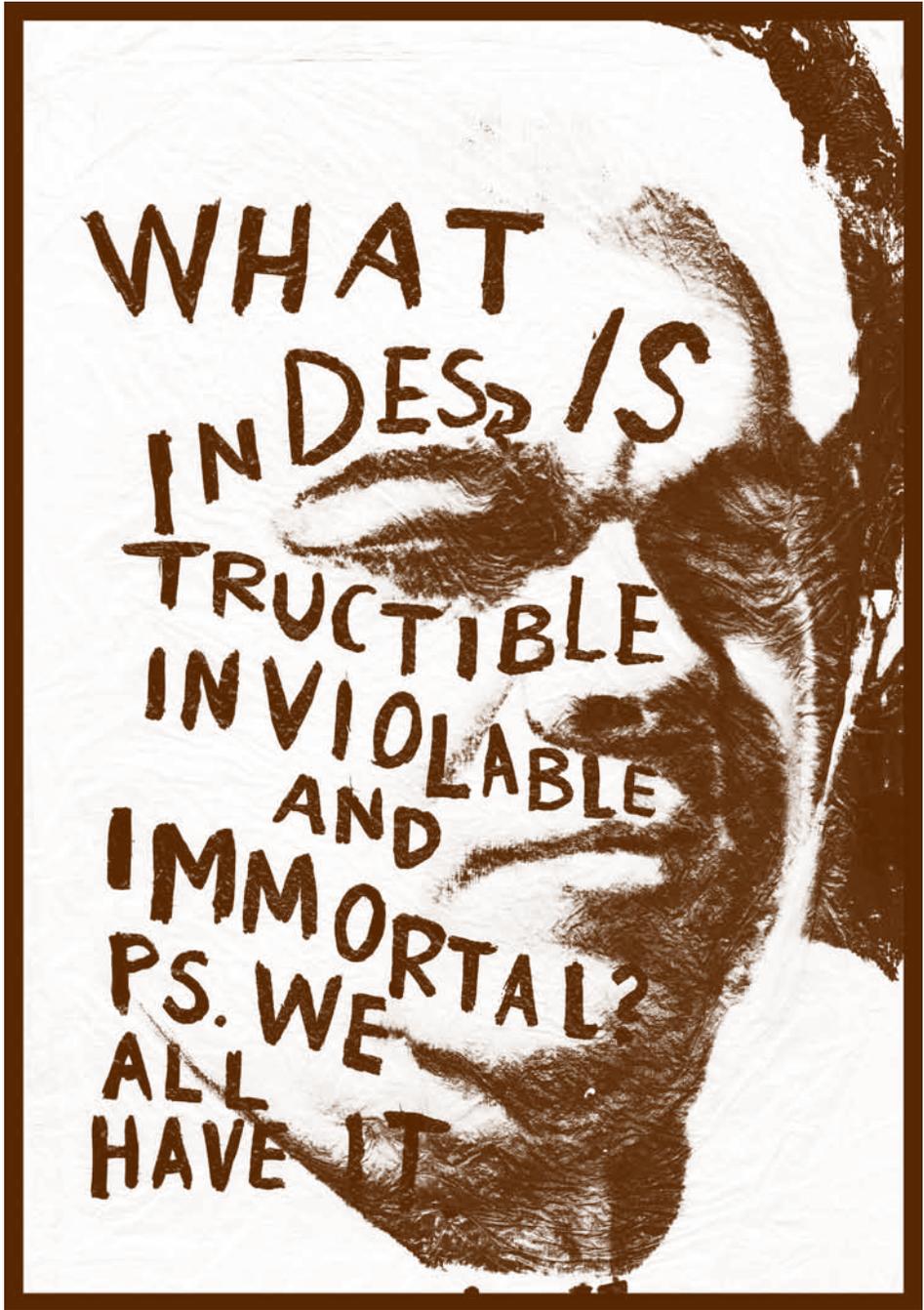


## BELGRADE STORY

**IN EARLY JUNE 2012, WHEN I FIRST VISITED BELGRADE,** I set out on a journey to find a spiritual adviser there. So, my idea was to find someone who would talk to the so-called dead and to use these pieces of information and advice that would be coming through the veil, as a platform or as a catalyst for a creative process, as a place where the actual work could start to grow. The mission was to prove more difficult than I anticipated at first. Apparently, there is no spiritualist union, nor are openly working mediums to be found in the whole of Belgrade, and this came as a surprise to me. All the stones were turned and possible detours were taken to find the suitable communicators for me. At first, there was just a wall that we faced with no clues to follow. Finally there were some loose threads. There was one trail that led us to the daughter of the notorious Radovan Karadzic, a.k.a. the bioenergy guy, which proved to be another dead end. Another lead took us to the local *Third Eye* magazine, whose editor said that there is only one guy in the whole of Belgrade who talks to the dead, and that is “Boran Stanbuck”. We managed to get his telephone number and tried to get him to meet me, but he was very hesitant and in the end he refused to meet me, because he spontaneously saw that I would be “blocking all his connections”, and at the end of our telephone conversation he said: “This guy who is looking for me, is a door without a knob that can only be opened from the other side.” After this retort, he said, this discussion is not going to be continued and he ended the conversation.

In the room, that we chose together with Branko, there happened to be many doors without knobs. Does every closed door signify a lost possibility, or is every lost door-knob a denied entry? When a door closes, another one opens. Even though I did not manage to get any spiritual guidance in Belgrade, I am still going to be doing something non-physical. In this locked time and space continuum of Geodetski zavod, I am trying to picture some alien ideas, glimpses from the corners of one’s eyes and inaudible echoes, which penetrate the permeable veil between the physical and spiritual worlds. ▶

Jukka Korkeila in August 2012, Helsinki



241 **JUKA KORKEILA** *What is Indestructible, Inviolable and Immortal? PS. We All Have It*, poster, 59.4 × 84.1 cm, 2012





**243 ANNIKA STRÖM** *old colour on a wall, Belgrade 2008 / watercolour which is dripping down on the paper below, 2012*



# EXIT TAXONOMY

**Storm out.** Used to express anger, disgust or disdain. A form of protest or denial. Refusal to participate in a task, a conversation or a game. An exit of choice for betrayed lovers, demanding and spoiled rulers and impatient communicators.

**Retreat.** An attempt to vanish unnoticed. A good way out for cowards, for spineless, skeptical or overly cautious types and for those consumed with fear.

**Sneak out.** An attempt to avoid getting caught, or involved in something you'd rather not be a part of. A good one for cheaters, teenage daughters, small-time criminals, squeamish medical students, prudish roommates and uncommitted lovers.

**Slip out.** Similar to sneak out, but much faster and not so much concerned with secrecy.

**Retrace.** An attempt to find something lost or misplaced; to orient oneself in space and time; to re-live or re-enact some important event so as to gain an understanding or find an explanation for something that has happened.

**Withdrawal.** A voluntary, yet reluctant exit, focused on protecting your back and limiting damage to “what has already been done.” Often comes after deciding that being there just isn’t worth it.

**Disappearance.** A move from presence to absence. Ceasing to exist; becoming invisible. Other than in escapology acts, disappearance most often exists as an unrealized wish and not as an actual way out.

**Delayed exit.** Long coming, long overdue. Intended to create suspense. Flirting with hope; waiting for a chance to be allowed to stay. Also: Overstaying one’s welcome.



Sudden exit. Entirely unexpected and often unplanned.  
Tends to produce a shock — whether following an argument,  
a spout of hysteria, a yelling or crying episode.

Prolonged exit. Stuck in the mode of leaving. Moment of leaving  
extended so it becomes an agonizing experience for the ones  
leaving and for the ones staying behind.

Swift and efficient exit. A clean exit of clarity and determination.  
Often a meticulously planned exit, or else simply an automatic,  
utilitarian exit that hides no additional agenda. A simple act  
of getting out the door.

Deferred exit. An exit being deferred *to* someone else,  
usually accompanied by words: After you. Or: No, after you.  
A form of power game between business associates,  
political rivals/nemeses, mafia types or estranged spouses.  
Also common for old-school gentlemen, slimeballs,  
snotty policemen, investigators or detention center officials,  
indignant or defiant women and posers.

Invisible exit. You leave, and no one notices. Or: You leave,  
you return, and no one notices. A type of a perfect exit.

A reluctant exit. You stand at the door and wait for someone  
to tell you to go.

A silent exit.

An exit while yelling at the top of your lungs. The word is often  
'No,' though other words expressing protest, rage or resistance  
are sometimes used. Also: yelling names, insults and threats.

An apologetic exit. An exit full of 'I'm sorry'.

An exit that doesn't come soon enough.

A triumphant exit.

An ashamed exit.

An exit that lacks the right words.

A hesitant exit. An exit unsure of everything.

A not-forever exit.

An exit that's 'not for real'. A manipulative exit, aiming to get  
something from those staying behind, to change the situation.



Can serve as a threat or a rehearsal for an actual exit.

A test exit.

Pretended exit. A theater-type exit where leaving is not about no longer being present, but about no longer being seen. Involves exiting behind doors, obstacles, curtains and fake walls, into boxes and contraptions, into hallways and stage wings and side alleys and trapdoors and other places where you continue to see and hear what is happening in your pretended absence.

A scripted exit.

An impulsive exit.

An exit that no one could see coming.

An automatic exit, oblivious to its possible consequences.

An exit aware of its every move, of the movement of the door, of the sound of the knob, of the squeak of the door, of the direction in which the key turns.

An exit in which the mind is preoccupied with something else.

A distracted exit.

A premature exit. It simply wasn't the right time yet.

An emotionally distressed exit.

An indifferent exit.

An exit so long awaited that its every step is relished and enjoyed.

An exit that takes guts.

An exit focused on return.

An orderly exit.

An organized exit.

A panicked exit.

A stampede.

An exit that cannot accommodate all those rushing out the door.

A potentially deadly exit.

An attempted-but-failed exit.

An exit through a collapsing or burning house.

An exit from a broken home or from a country that's falling apart.

An exit that leaves everything behind: documents and maps and notebooks and piles of trash.

An exit that leaves a broken heart.

An exit in the middle of the night. An exit through a window, a balcony, a secret tunnel in the basement.



An exit that inspires tears.  
An exit that prompts rage or relief or joy.  
A grandiose exit.  
An exit that causes confusion.  
An exit comparable to the end of the world.  
An exit against everyone's will.

Impossible exit. The right key cannot be found. The opening is too small. The door jammed. Something difficult to describe is holding you back.  
Nonnegotiable exit. Things have gone too far to turn back.

Expulsion / Eviction / Removal / Ejection / Deportation.  
All involuntary types of exit. The one leaving has a limited or no say in the matter, but is being made to go by someone stronger, richer, more beautiful, more powerful, more confident, more aggressive, better connected, more popular or more clever.

Escape. Guided by the strongest desire, need and eagerness to leave. Good reasons for attempting escape: imprisonment and captivity – physical or perceived; feelings of entrapment, insecurity or fear; boredom.

An exit in rage.  
A forceful exit.  
A cowardly exit.

A choreographed exit. A timed and well-executed curtain call.  
Or: an exit planned by damage control specialists, military strategists and foreign policy advisors.  
A sloppy exit.  
An exit followed by clapping, yelling, whistling, by accolades, by obscene gestures, by rowdy and suggestive noises.  
An exit followed by a slap on the ass.  
An exit followed by a bundle of money being tucked into your panties.  
An exit that leaves a big unfixable mess behind.  
An I-want-my-money-back-type of exit.  
An exit full of 'Don't go'.  
An exit full of 'Can't wait'.



An exit followed by relief.

An exit filled with a promise of a new beginning, a fresh start, another chance.

A desperate exit.

A pissed-of exit. An exit full of 'Fuck you.'

A self-righteous exit.

A botched exit. Lacking a previous exit strategy or a plan for getting out.

A muddled exit. No one is certain whether your leaving is temporary or final, or whether you are actually leaving at all.

A refused exit. All the signs that read 'Go home' are systematically being ignored.

An exit-on-demand. 'You want me to go?'

A my-assistant-will-show-you-the-way-out-type of exit.

A carefree or cheerful exit. 'See ya...' 'Lat'a!' 'Ciao, ciao.'

An exit with a door slam that drowns out the 'Don't be long.'

An exit that leaves someone behind.

An exit that leaves nothing behind.

An exit full of questions.

An exit full of regret.

An exit full of spite.

A smooth exit. Where no one knows and there is no fuss.

Also: dying in one's sleep.

A graceful exit.

A clumsy exit.

An awkward exit.

An exit that contains a promise of return.

An exit without promises or plans.

An exit that's all goodbye and no coming back.

An easily forgotten exit. You leave and are quickly replaced.

An exit with a heavy heart that is hard to describe or fake.

An impromptu exit that surprises everyone, including the one leaving.

An assisted exit.

A disabled exit.

An emergency exit.

A total exit. All leave. Places stay empty. Rooms stay empty. Beds.

Chairs. And streets. Cities. Everyone goes away and everything stays empty.





**VLADIMIR ARSENIJEVIĆ** (Pula, 1965)

His first novel, *In the Hold* (the first part of a planned tetralogy *Cloaca Maxima*) was published in 1994. The book received the NIN Award for novel of the year. *In the Hold* was translated into twenty languages, while the theatre play of the same name, based on this cult novel of 1990s Serbia, received the Sterija Award in 1997. His next novel *Angela*, the second installment in the *Cloaca Maxima* cycle, was published in 1997. From 2000 to 2007 Arsenijević was the director of the Belgrade-based publisher Rende. Afterwards, he was employed as the editor of the Belgrade department of the Zagreb-based publisher VBZ, a position he held until spring of 2011. He is the founder of the regional literary festival *Krokodil* and the editor of the publishing project *Reflector – Books to Listen To*. He is a regular columnist and has contributed essays to many regional printed and electronic media. Lives in Belgrade.

**MLADEN BIZUMIĆ**

Mladen Bizumic's projects in sculpture, photography or video, show an ongoing formal exploration into complexity of human relationships to their surroundings. By working in various media, Bizumic makes installations that appear like sites and scene that await the event of their occurrence. Bizumic sets up displays of works that are always 'works' plus their x value. The x value stands for a number of contextual factors that constitute any exhibition (location, architecture, exhibition duration, institution etc.) There is a constant tension between the works and their display, the content and the context. Bizumic's oeuvre is not about choosing one or

the other but about the permanent, precise and playful change of attention values. This fills space with time, opens up potentialities and creates new points of perception.

**CARIČIĆ / PEŠIĆ**

**VLADAN CARIČIĆ** is the founder and director of Talent Box, a production company geared towards facilitating and promoting unusual art, music and film projects throughout Europe.

He has dedicated different periods in his personal and professional life to explorations of possibilities for transmitting visual information and illusion to viewers, as a TV reporter and Balkans correspondent for the Finnish Broadcasting Company in 1980s, as a production designer, and as an author that reconstructs and evokes different periods in history.

Highlights of his rich production and set design portfolio include some of the most-viewed shows ever broadcast in the region, such as the puppet TV show *Never Sorry* (Nikad izvini). In the film *The Harms Case* (Slučaj Harms) he sought to make the run-down and grey city of Belgrade into a fantasy of a revolutionary red Leningrad in the time of the Russian avant-garde, that period that had appeared and disappeared in an eye blink.

**SLOBODAN D. PEŠIĆ** was born in 1956 in Novi Sad, Yugoslavia. He graduated film directing at The American University, Washington D.C. in 1980. He has been working for thirty years as an independent writer and director for TV stations and film production companies in the USA, UK, Germany and Yugoslavia.

His first feature film *The Harms Case*, which he directed and wrote the screenplay for, was chosen for the official selection at the 1988 Cannes Film Festival, and it received awards at the Berlin, Mannheim, Jerusalem, Montreal, Toronto, San Francisco, Chicago and Hong Kong film festivals.

Pešić wrote two books: *The Cube* (Harper-Collins — San Francisco, 1995) as well as *The Secrets of The Cube* (Hyperion/Disney, 1998). The books were translated into German, Italian, Spanish, French, Dutch, Japanese, Chinese and Serbian.

**BRANISLAV DIMITRIJEVIĆ** is a professor of art history and theory at the School for Visual and Applied Arts at the New Academy in Belgrade. He is active as a writer and a curator and is a regular associate of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade (MCAB), where he teaches the course “Art and Culture in Socialist Yugoslavia”. He has published essays on modern art, film and visual culture theory, while editing several publications and catalogues, including *On Normalcy: Art in Serbia 1989-2001*. Selected curatorial works: *Murder 1* (CKZD, Belgrade 1997), *Conversations* (MCAB, 2001), *Situated Self: Confused, Compassionate, Conflicted* (Helsinki City Museum; MCAB, 2005), *Breaking Step — Displacement, Compassion and Humor in Recent Art from Britain*, (MCAB, 2007), *FAQ Serbia* (ACF, New York 2010), *No Network* (Time Machine, Konjic atomic shelter, Bosnia and Herzegovina). He was the curator of the Yugoslav/Serbian pavilion at the Venice Biennale twice, in 2003 and 2009. He has a master degree in art history and theory from the University

of Kent in England in 1995, and his doctoral dissertation on “Consumer Culture in Socialist Yugoslavia” from the Belgrade University of Art in 2012.

#### ANDREJ DOLINKA

Born in 1974. Graduated from the Faculty of Architecture in Belgrade. Currently employed as a graphic designer at the Belgrade Museum of Contemporary Art.

#### BILJANA DJURDJEVIĆ

Graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Belgrade. Painter. Lives and works in Belgrade.

**MIRJANA DJURDJEVIĆ** (1956), B.Sc. C.E. Ph. D. in urban planning. Professor at Civil Engineering College, Belgrade. She has written a series of six crime novel parodies featuring a female detective Harriett as the main character: *A Murder at The Academy of Science*, *The Parking Lot of St. Savatije*, *Old Man Ranko's Musings About Women* — awarded with Female Pen 2004, *A Corpse in the Warehouse*, *The Jacuzzi in the Elevator*, *Serbian Legends* and *As Soon as I Survive*. Also non-fiction *Anatomy Class at the Civil Engineering Faculty* and novels *In Transition*, *On Her Own*, *The Dragoness' Smile*, historical metafiction *Keepers of the Sacrament; Kaya, Belgrade and the Good American* — awarded with “Mesa Selimovic” for the best novel published in 2009 in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Hercegovina and Montenegro, and *Bremasons*. She lives and writes in Belgrade, Serbia

## EXPEDIUM

**BART WITTE** (NL) got his art education in Genk/Belgium, Melbourne/Australia and Utrecht/The Netherlands. Since 2003, he has been the director of Expodium, dealing with the international network, commissions and all involved projects and developed systems for specific local situations research.

**NIKOS DOULOS** (GR) obtained his BA in the Athens School Of Fine Arts/ Greece, an MFA in the Dutch Art Institute/The Netherlands and has been awarded with a scholarship in photography from the State Scholarship Institute (IKY)/Greece. Since 2009, he's been actively involved with Expodium, in which he currently deals with the initiation and coordination of projects, artists' relations and artistic development in systems of research.

**MIKA HANNULA** is a professor of artistic research at the Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts, University of Gothenburg, Sweden. He has worked as a professor of art in public spaces at the Helsinki Academy of Fine Arts and he was the director of the Academy from 2000 to 2005 as well as the chairman of KUNO, Nordic Network of Art Academies. Selected published works: *Rock the Boat: Localized Ethics, the Situated Self, and Particularism in Contemporary Art* (Salon Verlag, 2003); *Artistic Research: Theories, Methods and Practices* (Kuvataideakatemia and Göteborg Universitet, 2005); *Politics of Small Gestures: Chances and Challenges for Contemporary Art* (Art-ist Publishing, 2006) and *Politics, Identity and Public Space*

— *Critical Reflections In and Through the Practices of Contemporary Art*. He was also the editor of the book *Self-Organization: Counter-Economic Strategies* (Sternberg Press, 2006). He was the curator of numerous exhibitions, including *Songs of Freedom and Love* (Platform Garanti Contemporary Art Center, Istanbul) and the Estonian pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2007. Hannula was born in Turku (Finland). He has a Ph.D. in political sciences and lives in Berlin.

**ANNIKA VON HAUSSWOLFF** is a Swedish artist who was born in 1967 and completed her formal art studies in the mid nineties. Exploring different visual strategies within the field of photography she has participated in numerous group shows and done many solo shows in Europe and North America. Her work revolves around existential and spatial issues in a conceptual yet formal manner. For the past five years she was professor for the master students in photography at Gothenburg University in Sweden.

**VLATKA HORVAT** is an artist working in sculpture, performance, photography, video and works on paper. Recent solo exhibitions include Rachel Uffner Gallery (New York), Zak|Branicka Gallery (Berlin), Bergen Kunsthall (Bergen), annex14 (Bern) and the Kitchen (New York). Recent commissioned projects include *artissima 18* (Torino), "Greater New York" at MoMA PS1 (New York), Aichi Triennale (Nagoya, Japan, a collaboration with Tim Etchells), Galerija Skuc (Ljubljana) and Istanbul Biennale 11. Upcoming projects in 2012 include a solo exhibition at Boston University

Art Gallery and a commissioned project at Stroom (the Hague). Vlatka is a recipient of the Rema Hort Mann Foundation visual art award (New York, 2010). In Europe she is represented by Zak| Branicka Gallery and annex14 and in New York by Rachel Uffner Gallery. She lives in London and New York.

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**ANA HUŠMAN** was born in 1977 in Zagreb. She graduated in 2002 in Multimedia and teaching at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb. She works in experimental film in order to explore and examine the possibilities of animation, documentary elements in a film, working with self-taught actors, the possibilities of voice articulation... She has received a multitude of local and international awards for her latest works.

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#### **VILLU JAANISOO**

I am a sculptor in the most classic sense. I work with sculpture, expanding my practice to the border where it transforms to something else. I work simultaneously on public monumental and exhibition work, also as a professor and the head of the Sculpture Department in the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts.

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**ALEKSANDAR JESTROVIĆ** a.k.a. **JAMESDIN** was born in 1972 in Zagreb (SFRY). Graduated from the Belgrade Faculty of Fine Arts in 2000, majoring in painting in the class of professor Čedomir Vasić. Currently attending master studies at UDK-Berlin. Lives and works in Berlin and Belgrade.

[<http://jamesdin.wordpress.com>]

Hello! I'm **ANSSI KASITONNI** from Finland. I'm a filmmaker/sculptor/musician and I deal mostly with issues like love, fun, machines and religion. I don't think all of my works are total masterpieces but sometimes they are.

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#### **KARSTEN KONRAD**

Born 1962 in Würzburg. Lives in Berlin. Studium Free sculpture at the HdK Berlin with David Evison and Marina Abramovic. Attended Royal College of Art, London. Since 2010 guest-professor for sculpture at UdK Berlin.

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**JUKKA KORKEILA**, b. 1968 in Hämeenlinna Lives and works in Helsinki and in Berlin. 2003 & 2007: Prague biennial, 2004: São Paulo biennial, 2005: SITUATED SELF, Belgrade Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade, 2006: El Superhombre, The 1st at Moderna, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, 2007: Bacchus Vortex, Nordic Watercolour museum, Skärhamn

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#### **KRAUSE/LORENZ**

**WOLFGANG KRAUSE**: studies in sculpture, Dresden Academy for Fine Arts, since 1991 Art projects in open space, inter alia in Berlin, Görlitz, Helsinki, Africa

**SILVIA LORENZ**: studies in free art/sculpture, Art College Berlin – Weissensee

**ANA KRSTIĆ** (1978) Graduated sculpting in 2009 at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Belgrade. Since 2006 she has exhibited her works both in Serbia and abroad (Ireland, Austria, Greece, Romania). Lives in Serbia.

**SVEBOR MIDŽIĆ** (1974). Graduated from the School of Art History and Theory at the Center for Modern Art in Belgrade. Member of the editorial staff of the *Prelom* magazine for modern art and theory (up to 2004). Deputy director and later director of Center for Modern Art in Belgrade (up to 2005). Deputy director of the Film Center of Serbia (up to 2007). Director of the Talks Program at Cultural Center Dom Omladine Belgrade (up to 2008). Member of the Culture and Art in Socialist Yugoslavia project board. Engaged in artistic and research work.

**VLADIMIR MILADINOVIĆ** was born in 1981 in Belgrade. He graduated at the Faculty of Applied Arts and earned his Ph.D. at the University of Arts in Belgrade at the Center for Interdisciplinary Doctoral Studies. He works as a part of an artistic and theoretical group „Four Faces of Omarska” and he is one of the founders of the Initiative for Contemporary Art and Theory in Belgrade. Since 2009 he has been focusing on scientific research.

[[www.vladimirmiladinovic.blogspot.com](http://www.vladimirmiladinovic.blogspot.com)]

**NEBOJŠA MILIKIĆ** (Belgrade, 1964). Cultural worker and independent researcher. Involved in cultural production,

independent research, art criticism and social activism since 1996. He was the author, co-author and co-producer of numerous exhibition and research projects in Serbia and abroad. Since 2001 he has been the programme director and coordinator at the Rex Cultural Center. He has initiated and/or coordinated projects such as KEF, Flux, Kvasac as well as the series of Talk programmes and Programmes for Democratization and Decentralization of Culture at the Rex Cultural Center.

**AHMET ÖĞÜT** born in Diyarbakir Turkey. He currently resides in Amsterdam and Istanbul. Winner of the Volkskrant Art Prize 2011, Ahmet's recent solo exhibitions include *Modern Essays 1: Across the Slope*, SALT, Istanbul, 2011; *Once upon a time a clock-watcher during overtime hours*, Fondazione Giuliani, Rome; *Exploded City / MATRIX 231*, The MATRIX Program at the UC Berkeley Art Museum; *Speculative Social Fantasies*, Artspace Visual Arts Centre in Sydney; *Europas Zukunft 2010*, Museum of Contemporary Art (GfZK) Leipzig; and *Mutual Issues*, Inventive Acts, Kunsthalle Basel. Selected group exhibitions include *Liverpool Biennial 2012*; *12th and 9th Istanbul Biennials*; *4th Moscow Biennial*; *2011 Asian Art Biennial*, Taichung; *Trickster Makes This World*, Nam June Paik Art Center; *Performa 09*, New York; *5th Berlin Biennial for Contemporary Art and Stalking with Stories*, Apexart, New York. In 2009 he co-represented Turkey at the 53rd Venice Biennale together with Banu Cennetoğlu.

**DUBRAVKA SEKULIĆ** (born in Niš, Serbia in 1980) is an architect-researcher, considering architecture as cultural practice that can motivate and guide changes in future. From 2003 she is working at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade with teacher Ivan Kucina, as a teaching assistant on various programs, most of them cooperation with different schools of architecture from the world (KTH, Sweden, Parsons, NY, USA, TU Wien, Austria...). From 2007 she is also working as an executive editor of *Anchor*, newly established school magazine. In 2007 she was collaborating with Platforma 9.81 from Zagreb, Croatia on the project *New spatial strategy for city of Zagreb*. In 2004–2005 she was part of the group that was running alternative cultural space in former printing factory BIGZ, in Belgrade.

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**BRANISLAVA STEFANOVIĆ**

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**MLADEN STILINOVIĆ** (born 1947 in Belgrade, Serbia) is a conceptual artist and one of the leading figures of the so-called “New Art Practice” in Croatia. He lives and works in Zagreb, Croatia. Stilinović’s works are based on the idea of social and art critique. They are often witty, and come with a dose of irony and cynicism illustrated for example in his work, *Money is Money, Art is Art*. He was one of the founding members of the informal neo-avantgarde, *Grupa šestorice autora* (Group of Six Authors), together with Vladimir Martek, Boris Demur, Željko Jerman, Sven Stilinović and Fedomir Vučemilović. The group was active in Zagreb from 1975 to 1979. In addition to his artistic

creative output, he also managed the Extended Media Gallery (1981–1991), and was one of the co-founders of the Podroom Gallery (1978–1980). From 1969 to 1976 he was dedicated to experimental film. He collaborated with the group IRWIN on the project *Retroavangarde* (1994). He is especially famous for his *Exploitation of the Dead* series (1984–1990) which has been exhibited at many shows, such as *documenta* in Kassel (2007). His works belong to many museum and gallery collections, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York and Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, museums of modern art collections in Stockholm, Vienna, Ljubljana, Zagreb and Banja Luka and in private collections such as the Filip Trade Collection, Zagreb.

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**SAMUIL STOYANOV** is freelance artist and culture activist who lives and works in Dobrich, Bulgaria. In 2001 he graduated from the National Art Academy, Sofia and in 2010 he was resident in International Studio and Curatorial Program (ISCP), New York. Samuil Stoyanov won the RUF Award, 2011 and BAZA Award, 2009.

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**DUBRAVKA STOJANOVIĆ** was born in 1963 in Belgrade. She received her master’s degree in 1992 from the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, for her thesis “Serbian Social-democratic Party and the War Program of Serbia 1912–1918”. She received her Ph. D. in 2012 at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, for her dissertation “European Democratic Ideals in Serbian Political and Intellectual Elite 1903–1914”. Since that year, she has

been working as an assistant professor at the History Department, Section for General and Contemporary History. She has been elected as an associate professor in 2008. She has participated in numerous scientific conferences both in Serbia and abroad. Together with Milan Ristović and Miroslav Jovanović she is the editor of the *Annual of Social History*. She was a member of the editorial staff of the *Serbia in 20th Century Modernization Processes* (1996) and *Serbia in Modernization Processes: the Role of Elites* (2003) anthologies. She was course coordinator at Women's and Peace Studies, as well as the Alternative Education Network in Serbia. She deals in issues of democracy in Serbia and the Balkans at the end of the 19th and the beginning of 20th century, the interpretation of history in contemporary Serbian schoolbooks (she is the vice-president of the Balkan History Education Committee), social history, modernization processes and women's history in Serbia. She has received the 2003 City of Belgrade Award for social sciences and humanities, for her work *Serbia and Democracy: 1903–1914*.

Originally from Sweden, born in 1964, **ANNIKA STRÖM** lives and works between the UK and Berlin. Her work evolves around text, film and performances, often with topics such as failure. Recent exhibitions include performances as *The Inept Five*, at Corner House, Manchester (June 2012), *Seven Women Standing In The Way* at Das Weisse haus, Vienna, *The Swede* at Gerhardsen Gerner in Berlin, *The Upset Man* at Temple Bar/Studios in Dublin and the *Ten Embarrassed Men* at Frieze Art Fair in London. She will show 3 new films at the 53rd October Salon.

**PILVI TAKALA** was born 1981 in Helsinki, graduated from the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts in 2006 (MFA), was artist-in-residence at Rijksakademie, Amsterdam 2009-2010 and won the Dutch Prix de Rome 2011. Her work has been shown widely, most recently in New Museum, New York; S.M.A.K., Ghent, Belgium and Kunsthalle Basel.

**BERIT TALPSEPP** is an Estonian artist who lives and works in Finland. She received her Master's degree from the Glasgow School of Art last year. Berit's latest research interests have been cultural and individual memory in conjunction with time, death and personal memories. Her practice is mostly in sculpture, video and photography.

#### **DRAGOLJUB RAŠA TODOSIJEVIĆ**

Born in Beograd, Serbia, 09. 02. 1945. Lives and works in Beograd as freelance artist. Graduate from the Academy of Fine Art, Belgrade 1969.

#### **MILOŠ TOMIĆ**

Born 1976 in Belgrade. Film maker, jack of all trades. More at [www.milostomic.com](http://www.milostomic.com)

**SRETEN UGRIČIĆ** was born in Herceg Novi, Montenegro in 1961. He completed his primary and secondary education in Belgrade, as well as graduating in philosophy from the Belgrade University. He was an assistant professor at the Faculty of Philosophy in Priština, teaching Aesthetics and Ethics from 1992 to 1997. He has published several books

and was the editor-in-chief of the magazines “Pismo” (Zemun, 1989-1991) and “Univerzitetna misao” (Priština, 1993-1996). In 2001 he became the director of the National Library of Serbia, a position he held until January 20th 2012, when he was dismissed by the Government of the Republic of Serbia.

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## XYZ GROUP

**MILAN TITTEL** (tittel@e-net.sk)

Born: 2. 10. 1966, Litomyšl, Czechoslovakia  
Adress: Svätopluková 29, 903 01, Senec, Slovakia

Phone: 00421 905 968 239

Study: 1980–84, Secondary school of applied arts, Bratislava.

1987–93, Academy of fine Arts and Design, Bratislava, department of Sculpture  
Lives and works in Senkvice and Bratislava as a free lance artist.

Works as a member of the “xyz” and solo.  
Fields of art: object, sculpture, installation, video, photography, performance.

**MATEJ GAVULA** (matejgavula@yahoo.com)

Born: 14. 4. 1972, Bratislava, Czechoslovakia  
Adress: Súľovská 41

821 05, Bratislava, Slovakia

Phone: 00421 905 793 598

Study: 1986–90, Secondary school of applied arts, Bratislava.

1990–96, Academy of fine Arts and Design, Bratislava, department of Glass  
Lives and works in Bratislava as a free lance artist.

Works as a member of the “xyz” and solo.  
Fields of art: object, sculpture, installation, video, photography, performance.

**ALEKSANDAR ZOGRAF** started making comics in mid 1980s in the so called “youth press”. He emerged on the international scene at the beginning of 1990s. First american publisher to offer his comic collections was Fantagraphics Books and later on, as 1990s drew to a close, his work began to be featured in European magazines, mostly in Italy and France. His comics were displayed at solo exhibitions in San Francisco (Cartoon Art Museum), Rome (Galleria Mondo Bizarro), Paris (Un Regard Moderne), Belgrade (Remont). Since 2003 he has regularly been publishing comics in the Belgrade weekly *Vreme*.

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**MARKO ŽIVKOVIĆ** teaches anthropology at the University of Alberta in Canada. He graduated clinical psychology from the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade and obtained his master’s degree in anthropology from the University of Chicago. Besides specializing in Ex-Yugoslavia, South East and East Europe and problems of post-socialism, he studies various subjects such as Japan, interdisciplinary research of dreams, anthropology of space and time, as well as social theory. His latest interests have led him into an area where sociology of science meets anthropology of art. He is currently exploring the influence of modern neuroscience on changes in our understanding of consciousness, subjectivity and society. ▶

- 75–90 VLADIMIR ARSENIJEVIĆ  
91–95 MLADEN BIZUMIĆ  
2–3 / 115 / 118 / 121 / 254–255 / 270–271 VLADAN CARIČIĆ &  
SLOBODAN D. PEŠIĆ  
11–13 / 25–35 BRANISLAV DIMITRIJEVIĆ  
K1 ANDREJ DOLINKA  
126 / 130–131 BILJANA DJURDJEVIĆ  
57–70 MIRJANA DJURDJEVIĆ  
216–219 EXPODIUM (BART WITTE & NIKOS DOULOS)  
11–13 / 15–22 MIKA HANNULA  
63 / 71 / 102–107 ANNIKA VON HAUSWOLFF  
9 / 55 / 139 / 225 / 244–253 VLATKA HORVAT  
150–153 ANA HUŠMAN  
85 VILLU JAANISOO  
78–79 / 159 JAMESDIN (ALEKSANDAR JESTROVIĆ)  
100–101 ANSSI KASITONNI  
53 / 72–74 / 137 KARSTEN KONRAD  
240–241 JUKKA KORKEILA  
198–215 WOLFGANG KRAUSE & SILVIA LORENZ

**ANA KRSTIĆ** 236–237  
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# THE OPTICAL ILLUSION

Semyon Semyonovich, with his glasses on, looks at a pine tree and he sees:  
in the pine tree sits a peasant showing him his fist.

Semyon Semyonovich, with his glasses off, looks at the pine tree and sees  
that there is no one sitting in the pine tree.

Semyon Semyonovich, with his glasses on, looks at the pine tree and again  
sees that in the pine tree sits a peasant showing him his fist.

Semyon Semyonovich, with his glasses off, again sees that there is no one  
sitting in the pine tree.

Semyon Semyonovich, with his glasses on again, looks at the pine tree and again  
sees that in the pine tree sits a peasant showing him his fist.

Semyon Semyonovich doesn't wish to believe in this phenomenon  
and considers this phenomenon an optical illusion.





