#### Nothing's guaranteed: exhibition of Bosnofuturism. [Exhibition]

Currated by Blackwood, J.



























NOTHING'S GUARANTEED



Exhibition of Bosno-Futurism

SUMMERHALL Open Minds Open Doors

KRAK



## NOTHING'S GUARANTEED

Exhibition of Bosno-Futurism



KRAK



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

5	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
6	BOSNO-FUTURISM: NOTHING'S GUARANTEED
	Jon Blackwood
19	EXHIBITING ARTISTS
	Igor Bošnjak
	Mladen Bundalo
	Lana Čmajčanin
	Lala Raščić
	Saša Tatić
	Maja Zećo
45	CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS AND THE ISSUE OF CRISIS IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA 1995-2020
	Irfan Hošić
62	Bibliography

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

It was a stiff challenge to mount an exhibition of Bosnian art in the UK, even before Brexit (which actually didn't change anything in cultural relations between Bosnia and Scotland) and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The original concept of the exhibition was rather different to what you see before you now, but what we have is perhaps fresher and more provocative that what was planned before March 2020. "Disaster curation"- seeing opportunities even in the most difficult of circumstances, is a concept that may need drawing out in future projects, that were not planted in pre-Covid soil.

Many people need to be thanked for their help in realising this first group showing of contemporary Bosnian art in Edinburgh since the country's independence. Sam Chapman at Summerhall has been a great help in preparing the space and talking through the practicalities of the exhibition. Her predecessor, the former Summerhall curator Kasia Jackowska, commissioned the original show in 2018/19 and helped in its early development. I also acknowledge Gray's School of Art, Robert Gordon University for its support in realising the project.

I also thank Richard Demarco and Robert McDowell for the environment of openness and experiment that they have created in this place. Richard in particular spent considerable time in Yugoslav Bosnia-Herzegovina in the 1970s, meeting curators such as the late Azra Begić in Sarajevo, and bringing artists such as Braco Dimitrijević (1970s) and Jusuf Hadžifejzović (late 1980s) to Edinburgh, so in some ways this show is a very faint echo of his pioneering work from that time.

It remains to thank not only all the artists who have taken part in our show but also a wider group of artists and friends whose support of and interest in this project had been critical, since I first moved to Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2011. In this regards I must thank Pierre Courtin, Jusuf Hadžifejzović, Irfan Hošić, Adela Jušić, Jim Marshall, Mladen Miljanović, Borjana Mrdja . Beyond Bosnia, colleagues who have really encouraged me and whose example has been important include Dr. Jasmina Tumbas, and Janka Vukmir.

Thank you for coming, and enjoy the show.

Jon Blackwood Aberdeen. June 2022

## ORIGINS OF THE SHOW

#### Jon Blackwood

The thinking for this exhibition began in the last years before the coronavirus pandemica past that we are already rapidly forgetting.

Having lived in Bosnia-Herzegovina between 2011-14 and having met and got to understand the practices of the artists in this show, one of the factors that artists active in the Bosnian space raised often back then, was a frustration that their work was expected to relate to the events of the Bosnian war of 1992/95. In Bosnia, it is simply not possible to make a living as an artist in the way that is still (just about) possible for a few in Scotland; what marketplace there is, is shaped by international buyers and funding from a small group of embassies and NGOs.

The effort to commemorate and memorialise the conflict of the 1990s impacts significantly on the art production of Bosnia-Herzegovina and its reception internationally. It is fair to say that Bosnian art has been dominated by work which reflected upon and processed the traumatic experiences of the conflict, yet left artists feeling that they were unable to make or sell work which did not relate in some way to that period of time.

Frustration was expressed by many working in contemporary arts practice in the time when I was living there, that they wanted to move beyond the war and its ongoing traumatic impact as a subject, but patterns of commission and patronage left them unable to do so. As Irfan Hošić shows in his analysis of Bosnia's cultural ecology, only a few active institutions in the last decade sought to engage meaningfully with contemporary artists talking about contemporary thematics *after* the experience of war- the contemporary art spaces duplex 100m2 (2004-18) and Čarlama in Sarajevo, key amongst those efforts.

The original plan of the exhibition was to have a show of contemporary art from Bosnia-Herzegovina that did not really mention the war but sought to engage a Scottish audience with reflections on the contemporary lived realities of the country. Presenting the work of artists from a highly layered and specific set of interlinked contexts in Bosnia-Herzegovina, to a Scottish audience, necessarily involves a very careful act of translation.

What commonalities between the two very different spaces can be found? What struggles do Scots and Bosnian artists have in common and how could they work together? Of course the ongoing payload of the war; a corrupted, divided series of squabbling ethnically-defined kleptocracies; the ongoing legacy of physical and profound mental illness and trauma caused by the experience of living in war; the gangster privatisations of the late nineties and early noughties, and state-sponsored theft of public assets, has no ready equivalent in Scotland. However, issues relating to precarity, the cost of living, the value (or lack of value) attached to contemporary art by political authorities, contemporary debates surrounding gender, race, technology, hauntology and nostalgia, all map out in very specific ways between the two territories.

Unfortunately, this first conception of the exhibition was rendered obsolete by the coronavirus pandemic and lockdowns of 2020/21 in Scotland. The realities that we had hoped to speak about in our show were upturned and shattered by Covid. Events in Ukraine following the Russian aggression beginning on 24 February 2022, with daily footage of the shelling of civilian infrastructure, and frightened Ukrainian citizens sheltering in basements and underground stations, brought back many disturbing memories and experiences for people across Bosnia-Herzegovina, and stoked fears amongst the population of a renewed conflict on the territory.

In Bosnia, one of the most common phrases you will hear in conversation is *Ko zna?* or the longer *Ko zna šta koga čeka?* (Who knows? Or Who Knows what is waiting for anyone?) Whilst in Scotland we like to talk about our plans for the future and have every expectation that they will largely come to fruition, barring the unexpected, in Bosnia it is exactly the opposite.

Perhaps as a result of the experience of war, perhaps from a political or religious muscle memory that individual fate (sudbina) is largely mapped out and can't really be altered by individual action, it is seen as almost presumptuous to assume that you will be around in six months, let alone that your grand plans have any right to fulfilment. Discussions focusing on a detailed individual plan for the future are almost always met with a slight tang of disapproval, or an arched eyebrow of scepticism, that you have any control over what may be coming next. Otom potom is often the dismissive ending of such a discussion, meaning "we'll see".

The dynamic and intense pace of contemporary events since March 2020 has perhaps given Scottish audiences a taste of what it is like to let any future that we may have, take care of itself. The fear caused by the unknown pathogen and the headlong descent into restricted isolation provided moments of fearful limbo, of getting by day by day and hoping to avoid infection. The arbitrariness of the virus, the loss of people close to us or their falling prey to chronic long term illness, stripped away much of the activities and impetus of art production immediately prior to Covid, forcing us to focus again on the new topics that the pandemic revealed and indulging in some Utopian projects as to what the world may look like once the virus had run its course.

Utopianism, decidedly out of fashion in the first decades of the neoliberal century, reemerged as writers from Arundhati Roy<sup>1</sup> to Andreas Mälm<sup>2</sup> took the opportunity in long texts to imagine how the worst practices of the pre-covid world could be set aside and re-made with the needs of humans rather than capital at the forefront. These texts rather assumed, from the vantage point of the early weeks of the pandemic, that there would be a "victory over Covid" day at some point in the next three to five years, and that all that was required to reach our ideal order of things was to walk through the pandemic's portal without looking back, to unburden ourselves from the ever quickening pace of life in late capitalism, to slow down, as though these were actions that were within any individual's gift.

Otom potom, indeed. Whilst these texts can now be read from the vantage point of summer 2022 as expressing the need for hope, optimism, a belief that we could all come through an existential challenge and look forward to something better, lived reality has proven to be rather different. The pandemic time has led to an intensification of the socio-economic factors that were becoming ever more pressing before March 2020; an abrupt bringing of latent socio-economic tensions to the surface, leaving us all with the bends.

The sure and steady dismantling of the welfare state, precarity, lack of access to housing, the retreat into a comforting, algorithmically determined version of reality however skewed; unfocused and incoherent anger as citizens were confronted with a panful lack of agency and voice in trying to shape whatever came next.

For those few who had the luxury of time to sit back and try to make sense through art and culture of what had happened to us, collectively, there was a chance to investigate what had become of the future, and how to escape the stuffy corridor between a loss of belief in that future and nostalgia for the unrealised visions of progress in the past. For the purposes of this project, the research questions and basis shifted fundamentally towards visions of the future, rather than a reflection on the present, as originally planned.

Through reading and discussion, the conception of the show began to draw on three main sources; the palpable sense of mourning for a lost future that had characterised over a decade's worth of writing from commentators such as the Italian autonomist Franco "Bifo" Berardi and the English cultural observer Mark Fisher; the decolonial impulse and the problematic status of a Balkan country such as Bosnia-Herzegovina within those debates; and, through this process, the remarkable parallels between what we define as "Bosno-futurism" and notions of Afrofuturism, and Afrofuturity.

<sup>1</sup> Arundhati Roy, "The pandemic is a portal", Finanical Times, 3 April 2020

<sup>2</sup> Andreas Malm (2020), Corona, Climate, Chronic Emergency: War Communism in the Twenty First Century, London: Verso Books

#### The Contours of BiH Contemporary Art

Before all that, we have to consider the space in which this exhibition is taking place-a basement that Summerhall has brought back into use specifically for this show. Basement spaces have a very particular resonance in Sarajevan popular culture from wartime onwards. The creaks, uncertain sounds and damp smells of a basement have very particular resonances for people who experienced the Sarajevo siege. Basements, in the early to mid 1990s, were where people hid from shelling during bombardment and, in some cases, lived for periods of time. Schoolchildren had up to three years of their education delivered in such spaces, in the context of the Bosnian capital.

Jim Marshall, a Scottish photographer who has been based in Sarajevo since the mid 1990s, has made a series of photographs, *Sklonište*, which were taken over a period of time in the 2010s.



**Figure 1** Jim Marshall, Sklonište, photograph. 2011-15

These illustrate the fading wartime signs that indicated to citizens where they could find shelter. The notion of a basement links not only to the precariousness of life and the future mentioned already, but also to the subterranean position of Bosnian contemporary art in international cartographies of cultural consumption, production and exchange. The very particular notion of "crisis" outlined in Irfan Hošić's essay underpins the marginal and peripheral status of Bosnian art and artists- particularly those artists who choose not to make wartime experiences or narratives central to their work.

We also have to understand that, although unified as a country on a map, Bosnia-Herzegovina is a fragmented and divided territory politically and culturally, as a result of the Dayton agreement signed at the end of the conflict in the 1990s. Although Dayton appears to have ensured peace and some notional stability, this view is much more common from outside the country's borders, than from within.

In fact, the Dayton accords froze the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina on the last day of the conflict, in perpetuity, assuring an internationally mandated peace but failing to allow for meaningful economic development, let alone political stability. The Dayton state is not a state that has an infrastructure capable of supporting contemporary art. As Irfan Hošić, Azra Akšamija<sup>3</sup> and others have argued, cultural institutions and contemporary cultural production were simply overlooked when the treaty was drafted, leaving both cultural memory and contemporary cultural practitioners in a funding limbo, as differing groups of politicians passed the responsibility for paying for culture to one another. Those artists who do make a living solely from art do so either with funds from abroad, or by living abroad. As the sculptor and academic Daniel Premec has said, "In Bosnia we are observers of the international art market, rather than participants in it"<sup>4</sup>.

The artists whose work you see in this exhibition, and the thirty or so other profiles that could have been selected, have artistic careers in spite of the conditions in their native country, rather than because of them. In putting together the selection for the exhibition, it was therefore important to reflect this fragmented and multi-perspectival understanding of contemporary art in Bosnia.

More Bosnians live abroad than live in their home country, and the experience of diaspora is also critically important to understand. Of the selected artists, four live primarily abroad, with two still based in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Beyond that, it was also necessary to ensure that the selection of artists reflected the different centres of art in the country. Visitors can often think that art in Bosnia is synonymous with what they may see in Sarajevo and the experiences of citizens in that city in the last three decades. However, this is to overlook the significant other centres of education and artistic production in

<<<<<<<<<<

<sup>3</sup> See Akšamija, (2018), *Museum Solidarity Lobby*, Ljubljana: Museum of Modern Art, and also her project "Culture Shutdown" available at <a href="https://www.azraaksamija.net/museum-solidarity/">www.azraaksamija.net/museum-solidarity/</a>

See interview with Daniel Premec, "BiH Artists Talking", Sarajevo Culture Bureau, July 2012. Accessible at: <a href="www.sarajlijacult.wordpress.com/scb-interviews/">www.sarajlijacult.wordpress.com/scb-interviews/</a>

the country, in particular Banja Luka, but also Trebinje, Bihać and Mostar. As you will see in the section introducing our artists, care has been taken to reflect almost all of the different perspectives within the spectrum of contemporary art production.

#### On Bosno- Futurism

Notions of "Afrofuturism" have been prominent in discussions of contemporary art in Europe and the United States in the past decade, as the subjects of post-colonialism, the decolonial, unlearning past histories, and racial justice have rapidly enmeshed themselves into a complex cat's cradle of concepts and ideas.

Ideas of Afrofuturism emerged in a critical context through Mark Dery's analyses of black science fiction writing in America in the 1990s, but intimations of the term were around from the late 1960s, in the astonishing performances and imagination of the avant-garde jazz musician Sun Ra (born Hermann Blount, 1914-93). Sun Ra claimed to have visited Saturn first in the 1930s and his mature performances, with his "Arkestra" backing band, featured an extraordinary fusion of Ancient Egyptian and "space" imagery, brought to a wide television audience in the 1972 film, *Space is the Place*. Ra's imaginative speculation on differing cultures and environments in the galaxy had to balance, carefully, the products of an unparalleled, visionary imagination, with impenetrable, solipsistic references.

Mark Dery defined "Afrofuturism" in 1994, in the following way:

"Speculative Fiction that treats African-American themes and addresses Afro-American concerns in the context of twentieth century technoculture...that appropriates images of technology and a prosthetically enhanced future- might, for want of a better term, be called 'afrofuturism' "<sup>5</sup>

Yet, as Dery goes on to develop, Afrofuturism is not something that can be defined so easily as work that engages with technology and a future imaginary. Rather, it is a strategy that has its roots in the colonial period and its erasure of African cultures, customs, histories and biographies.

"The notion of Afrofuturism gives rise to a troubling antimony: can a community whose past has been deliberately rubbed out, and whose energies have subsequently been consumed by the search for legible traces of its history, imagine possible futures? Furthermore, isn't the unreal estate of the future already owned by the technocrats,

<sup>5</sup> Mark Dery (1994), "Black to the Future: Interviews with Samuel R. Delany, Greg Tate and Tricia Rose", in Dery (ed.), *Flame Wars* "*The Discourse of Cyberculture*", Durham, N.C & London: Duke University Press.

futurologists, streamliners and set designers- white to a man-who have engineered our collective fantasies?" <sup>6</sup>

It is this notion of erasure and over-writing, introduced in this definition of Afrofuturism, that, sets up the parallel with the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In recent debates on colonial experiences and histories, the overwhelming focus has been on British and European colonial histories and the violence and trauma meted out to people of colour in Africa, the Caribbean, South America and South East Asia. The appalling factual chronicles of military subjugation, economic plunder, cultural appropriation and overwriting, physical enslavement, destruction of property, and enforced transportation, in the name of what was then called "civilisation", are not contested. It is a desire in part to imagine a future world where the deep stains of colonial crimes are not erased, but no longer significant, where black subjectivities are no longer impacted negatively by historical erasure, but have created a new technologically mediated reality, that has underpinned much recent Afrofuturist inspired work in a UK context<sup>7</sup>.

In this focus on the responsibility of some countries for constructing the architecture of slavery and colonialism, others- colonisers and colonised- are overlooked. It is not widely known beyond specialist regional historians, writers, and interested travellers, that Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, North Macedonia, Kosova were all territories colonised by the Ottoman Empire, for four centuries in Bosnia's case. Bosnia came under Ottoman control in 1463, after nearly eighty years of struggle, with Herzegovina following twenty years later. The decline of the Ottoman empire and its steady retreat from Europe in the late nineteenth century saw Bosnia-Herzegovina become part of another fading supranational imperium- Austria-Hungary. The Hapsburgs took ownership of two territories in 1878 and held them until the end of the Great War and the foundation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, soon to become Yugoslavia.

For an exhibition focusing on speculative futures, we have spent an awful lot of time talking about the past. However, it is important for us to establish this parallel with Dery's discussion of notions of Afro-futurism, as the origins of our "Bosno-Futurism". Bosnia's is a history continually over-written, and a wearying inability for those living in the Bosnian present to agree how it has been shaped by the past. The popular and well-known novels of Ivo Andrić, such as *Bridge over the Drina* and *Travnik Chronicles* touch upon the lived experiences of Bosnians and Herzegovinians during the Ottoman Empire, particularly the abduction of young boys from their families, and their re-education as Ottoman functionaries or military officers.

<<<<<<<<<<

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180

See, for example, the works of Larry Achiampong in his *Relic Traveller* series (2017-20) and his recent *Wayfinder* (2022, Turner Contemporary, Margate); Keith Piper's *Robot Bodies* (2001) and exhibition *Jet Black Futures* (New Art Gallery, Walsall, 2021) and Elsa James' *Othered in a Region that has been Historically Othered*, (Focal Point Gallery, Southend-on-Sea, 2022).

More recently, the cyclical pattern of upheaval and change that has characterised the history of Bosnia-Herzegovina since 1878- on average every thirty years, through war and a linked violent upturning of established governments and systems of governance, has made it difficult to establish a coherent narrative on what happened in the country and who impacted on its history either positively or negatively. Nearly eighty years after the end of World War Two, people still argue over who did what to whom and which set of partisans- Communist or Royalist- were the real heroes of that time. In ethnically divided schooling between Catholic, Muslim, and Orthodox Christian children, different views on the same histories are taught, making it difficult to ever put a stop to, let alone reach a consensus on, the industry of continually over-writing past events from a particular ethnic or ideological point of view.

In parallel to Dery's observations on Afro-Futurism, what possible chance is there for artists from Bosnia-Herzegovina to imagine a future when so much of the past has been either erased or stuck in the centrifugal forces of continual contestation and overwriting?

One possible answer lies in the long history of the future in the Bosnian and wider regional context. As Bosnia-Herzegovina settled into the unfamiliar political jacket of Royal Yugoslavia in the early 1920s, in Zagreb and Belgrade Ljubomir Mičić, Branko Ve Poljanski, Dragan Alekšić and other involved themselves in the production of a periodical called *Zenit*, a magazine focused on the Utopian optimism of high modernism, looking in particular to the work of Russian Constructivist artists such as Vladimir Tatlin and Naum Gabo. Borrowing from the confrontational style of Italian Futurism, the Zenitists launched bold calls to "Balkanise Europe" and were openly sceptical of the cultural self-definitions and narratives of the Western world. It wasn't long before the strident radicalism of this periodical brought Mičić and his collaborators to the attention of the authorities, a period of bans and harassments and, ultimately, exile in France. Nonetheless, they represented a small island of Utopian and Futurist thinking in the earliest years of Yugoslavia.

Perhaps a more visible vision of the future-from-the-past can be found in the internet clickbait obsession with the socialist-era monuments, or *Spomenici*<sup>8</sup>. These are monuments to the sacrifice of the Communist partisans who fought for Yugoslavia's independence following its occupation by the Nazis in late April 1941. At their best-preserved, such as Miodrag Živković & Ranko Radović's astonishing Sutjeska memorial at Tjentište (1969-71), these works are still extraordinarily bold and inventive, redolent of a time of significant state investment in culture and a political narrative that had widespread support from the population. Sadly, far more monuments have either been destroyed (e.g. Drvar, 1996) existing now as only fragmentary ruins, or, in sad and neglected states, no longer fulfilling any common purpose in post-Yugoslav times.

<sup>8</sup> For more detailed information on *Spomeniki* in English, see the Spomenik Database: www.spomenikdatabase.org

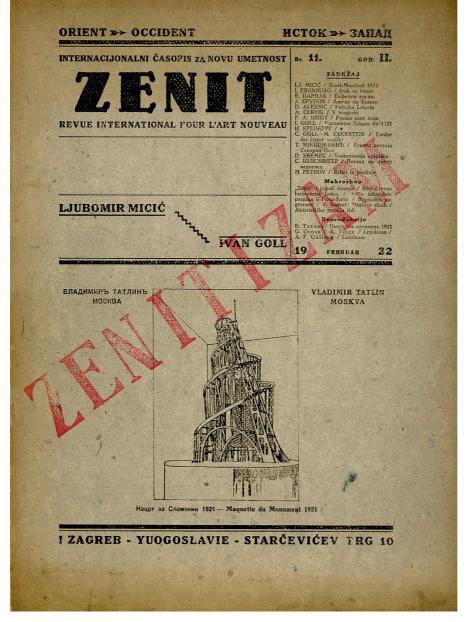


Figure 2
Zenit no.11, February
1922. Reproduced
under a Wikimedia
Creative Commons
licence 1.0,
original source:
https://digitalna.
nb.rs/sf/NBS/
Tematske\_kolekcije/
procvat\_pismenosti/
NBS6\_casopisi\_
avangarde/P\_4284

Photographs of the *spomenici* taken by the Belgian photographer Jan Kempenaers had become a viral sensation on the internet by 2011-12. Whilst Kempenaers' was an interesting project, it had unintended consequences. The photographer was interested in the visual forms of the monuments, rather than their contested commemorative significance, and this was quickly latched onto by users online. The presentations of the *spomenici* in our contemporary times was as briefly diverted clickbait; something weird, cool, space-ship like, decidedly *non-Western*.

This uncritical raking about in little-visited historical basements over-wrote passionate local debate on the purpose of these monuments after Yugoslavia, the human sacrifice and heroism that they still represent, and the political ideals from a previous time, causing a good deal of discomfort and irritation amongst Bosnian citizens. It was perhaps an unintended irony that Kempenaers' interesting journey and project facilitated a further smearing of the lens of the past through his presentation of the images of a fragmented and unrealised future. That these sites of commemoration still are the source of violent disagreement between different political factions was exemplified by the sickening destruction of a partisan cemetery, allegedly by local fascist sympathisers, in Mostar on the night of 15/16 June, as this catalogue was being finalised.



**Figure 3** 1980s Yugoslav postcard of Miodrag Živković & Ranko Radović Tjenište monument, Sutjeska, Bosnia-Herezgovina (built 1969-71).

A strong sense of mourning and loss accompanies these visions of the future. Writing about lost futures in the British context, Mark Fisher observes that:

"Haunting, then, can be construed as a failed mourning. It is about refusing to give up the ghost or – and this can sometimes amount to the same thing – the refusal of the ghost to give up on us. The spectre will not allow us to settle into/ for the mediocre satisfactions one can glean in a world governed by capitalist realism."

Whilst Fisher is talking of mourning for the unrealised futures envisaged during Britain's period of social welfarism, from 1945 to the later 1980s, when this quotation is applied in the Bosnian context, the first question has to be; *Haunting of what, and by whom? With What Consequences?* The fragmented, contested and insolubly different writings of history mean that the "haunting" of the Bosnian present by the Utopian dreams of a particular past is harder to quantify, and in any case seems insignificant set against the payload of injury and illness, physical and mental, brought about by conflict and the struggle to survive against a backdrop of what Fisher calls the "mediocre satisfactions" of late capitalism.

<sup>9</sup> Mark Fisher, Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology, Lost Futures, London: zero books, p. 38

Some older generations may still indulge in a nostalgia for the Yugoslavia of their younger years but will be vehemently opposed by those who recognise that the conditions which enabled the Titoist regime and its doctrine of self-managed socialism to thrive, no longer exist, and by still others who are vigorously opposed to the practice and legacies of Yugoslav socialism. Again, we find little forward traction through hauntology and nostalgia.

This leaves us, as a curatorial frame for the exhibition, with the notion of "Bosno-Futurism". The phrase is tongue in cheek, acknowledging the Utopian imaginations of past modernisms and recognising their emptiness and absurdity when applied to present circumstances. The phrase does not seek any appropriation of Afrofuturism, which relates to a different, parallel set of experiences. Rather it establishes a point of contact in experience parallel to the origin of Afrofuturism, concerned as we are with a territory that was also subject to colonisation and dealing with the consequences of historical amnesia, erasure and loss, a process re-set with every successive conflict or political uprising.

Bosno-Futurism recognises fully the lack of agency that artists have in "making change" at anything beyond a micro-community level in Bosnia, owing to the frozen and impenetrable formal political system established under Dayton piece agreement, yet it is not accurate to say that this is not a political show. An exhaustion with the inability of Bosnian politicians to provide a reasonable agenda for development, prosperity and social cohesion- as this is not in their interest- does not obviate thought on envisaging alternatives.

Bosno-Futurism, therefore, can be defined as "Imaginative Future Speculation, sometimes whimsical, built on the interlocking layers of the past, created in the limbo of the present." In the artists' profiles that follow, you will be able to read further on how in their very different ways, each of the selected works fall within this broad categorisation; although the show is focused on installation, performance and video, dissonances and tensions in these competing visions are celebrated, rather than suppressed.

<<<<<<<<<<

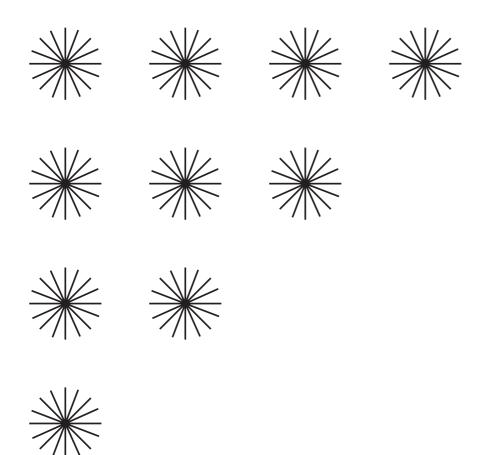
### Conclusion: Nothing's Guaranteed

"future events have been reduced to probability and predictability" (Bifo Berardi, Futurability, 2017)

Bifo Berardi's mournful observations on the last decade on the loss of not only belief in a future, but also that of any individual agency to change that situation for the better, socially or politically. He speaks widely of a profound sense of loss in belief in any kind of better future, and the consequent retreat into private life and private interests, algorithmically defined, in a perpetual present.

The curatorial framing and re-framing of this project offers one kind of way where, individually and collectively, we can begin to think about a different kind of future without indulging in the empty catastrophism or banal speculation, common in contemporary future projections.

The artists chosen here are deeply driven by research, by ideas and, most importantly, by provocative and witty ways of presenting them. In so doing, they reflect the conditions in which the work has been conceived and made; deeply aware of a past that will never be resolved through visions of a future that probably will never come. Moreover, these are artists who, in the Bosnian context, have long been familiar with a state that does not function or support them, and therefore have learned to promote and develop their work by themselves. What we have here, then, is a loose federation of future visions bound together by intellectual curiosity, generosity of spirit and vision but, most importantly, by the different experiences of being Bosnian, and a Bosnian artist.



## EXHIBITING ARTISTS





Trebinje, Bosnia-Herzegovina

www.igorbosnjak.com

Igor Bošnjak (b. 1981 in Sarajevo, Yugoslavia) lives and works in Trebinje (Bosnia & Herzegovina). He is mainly working within the fields of contemporary art: moving images, video, installation, objects, drawing & photography.

In 2005 he graduated from the Academy of Visual Arts (BA) in Trebinje, in the Department of Painting. From 2007 to 2008 he finished (MA) Interdisciplinary studies, at the Theory of Art & Media Department at the University of Arts in Belgrade, Serbia. From 2006 to 2016 he was founder and curator of namaTRE.ba project & biennial.

Since 2009 he has worked as a professor at the Academy of Visual Arts in Trebinje, and also teaches at the University of East Sarajevo, and, from 2019, works as visiting lecturer on Faculty of Fine Arts, Cetinje, University of Montenegro.

His works have been shown at: Whitechapel Gallery, London; Kunsthalle Wien; New Cinema & Contemporary Art, Rencontres Internationales, Gaîté Lyrique & Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen; Atopia Film & VideoKunst Gallery, Oslo; National Center for Contemporary Art Moscow & Museum of Modern Art, Moscow; Hong Kong Art Hall; CAM Casoria, Contemporary Art Museum, Naples; Kunst Museum, Bonn; Agnes B. Foundation, Galerie du Jour, Paris.

In 2010 Igor Bošnjak was a finalist of the ZVONO Young Visual Artist Award, organised by the Sarajevo Center for Contemporary Art & in 2018 he won the Zvono Award, organised by SKLOP. From 2009 to 2011 he was a finalist for B&H Henkel Art Award organised in Zagreb.



Figure 4 Igor Bošnjak, 1994-2004, Bregovi, Trebinje. Photograph

Igor Bošnjak is an artist whose whole career has been focused on how past memories fragment and re-assemble themselves with new significance in the present, with implications for the future. From his earliest work there was an interest in the forms of Yugoslav architecture in Trebinje, and the persistence of the Yugoslav past on the post-Yugoslav present.



Figure 5 Igor Bošnjak, Hotel Balkan, 2013

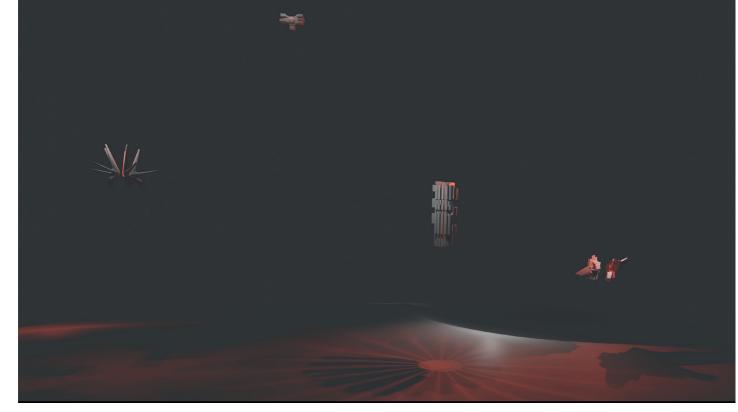


Figure 6 Igor Bošnjak, Sentience, 2021, screenshot

In later works, such as Yugoslav Space Programme or Hotel Balkan, he pushed these interests further, presenting a humorous alternative version of the past and attempting to jam and subvert the continuous over-writing of history for ideological or political reasons; and by using the power of absence, memory and loss in the canonical Hotel Balkan of 2013, which focused on Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito's (1892-1980) former nuclear retreat at Konjić, on an army base about fifty kilometres south of Sarajevo.

Bošnjak was one of the earliest adopters of drone technology in Bosnian art, using drone footage in films from c. 2016. This early use of drone footage and considering ideas of flight are probably the earliest roots of the work he shows at Summerhall, a half hour animated film entitled *Sentience*. This film is part of a broader cycle of works completed over the last four years, under the title *The Future Repeats Itself More than History Used To*.

Sentience addresses the topics of the role and purpose of Yugoslav monuments in the future, beyond our own present. It is a science fiction film, where the recognisable forms of six of the best known Yugoslav *spomenici* – by Dušan Džamonja, Miodrag Živković, Ranko Radović, Vojin Stojić, Vladimir Veličković, and Gradimir Medaković, are animated and take flight in a dark, barren landscape. In this sense, the film suggests that ideological over-writing and re-interpretation of these monuments from a past time is a process that will continue long after this present moment.

In some ways, Sentience also touches upon the ideas of Russian Cosmism- notions developed firstly by Nikolai Fedorov in the nineteenth century, and later by Konstantin Tsiolkovsky in the following century. Cosmism was the belief that technological progress will one day make it possible to bring all the dead back to life, and to bring into use all the planets of the solar system so that all those resurrected can live. Sentience displays some of the Utopian nature of these ideas, in a very self aware manner.

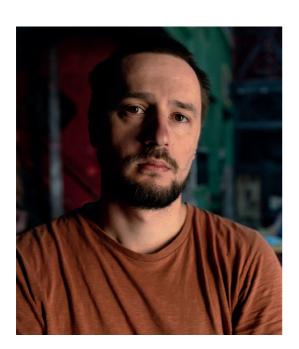
Bošnjak himself says of the film:

"Sentience is a hybrid cyberpunk animation movie about opposing ideologies. The movie recreates historical references about the architecture of Yugoslavian socialist modernism confronted with the symbols of western capitalism.. It is a science fiction sentient movie. The reason for creating this movie is because ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence".

Sentience was shown for the first time in the exhibition *The Future Repeats Itself More than History Used To* at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Republika Srpska in Banja Luka in May 2022, and is being shown simultaneously to this exhibition, in the Centre for Contemporary Art in Podgorica, Montenegro.



Figure 7 Igor Bošnjak, Sentience, 2021, screenshot





Brussels, Belgium | Prijedor, Bosnia-Herzegovina

www.mladenbundalo.com

Mladen Bundalo was born in 1986 in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Graduated visual arts in Banja Luka and video-multimedia-performing arts in Brno. An interdisciplinary artist working on a visual, dialogical, and auto-ethnographical system addressing movement, exchange, value, inflation, temporality and uncertainty, as nodal categories in the experience of modern society.

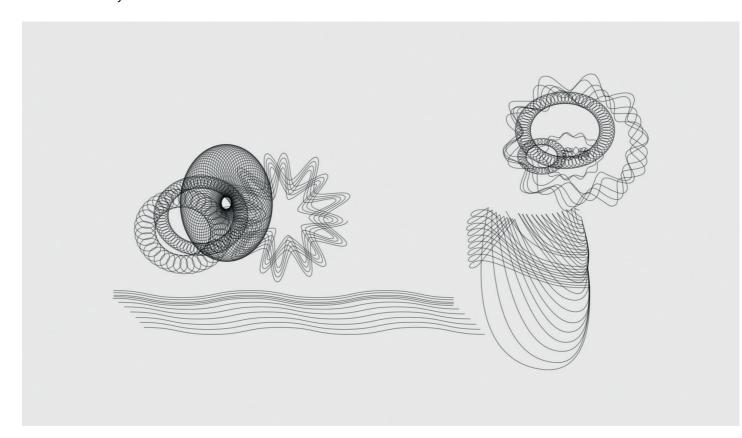
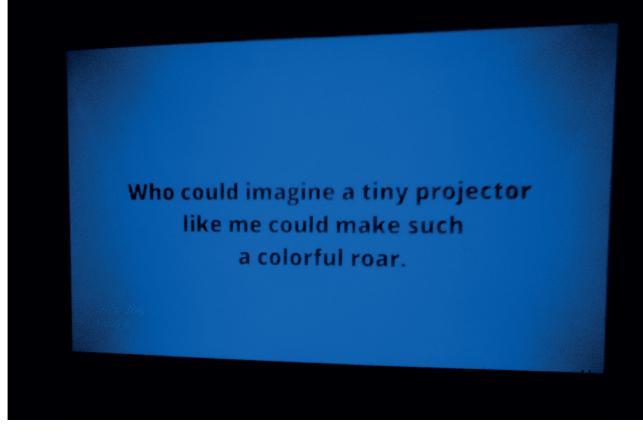


Figure 8 Mladen Bundalo, Hyperinflation, 2018



**Figure 9** Mladen Bundalo, The Uncertainty Principle : BYINTEK Projector, Hectolitre Art Space, Brussels, 2019. Photo: The Artist

Mladen's work has been shown internationally, including Remont Gallery, Belgrade, Serbia (2017), Cetinje, National Gallery of Montenegro (2018), 9<sup>th</sup> Cairo Video Festival, Cairo, Egypt (2019), and, in the last two years, at film festivals and competitions in Paris, Sarajevo, Amsterdam, Nijmegen, Split, Palić and Ljubljana.

Mladen Bundalo writes the following on his position as a Bosnian artist:

"As someone who grew up in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the 1990s, I had no choice but to witness what it means to live through a social disaster and economic breakdown. This experience of a feral, never-ending transition and cultural disappearance became a part of my intrinsic spacetime, a mechanism which is constantly ticking out critical questions. From the other side, as an artist-migrant, having lived in five European countries within the last 13 years, I am trying to understand how my homeland memories define the way I walk and act in my new living spaces and interact with diverge offsets of European bureaucracy and adhocracy. The choice to address these questions means to me much more than an occasion to make an "art" - it brings me the happiness of exploring and understanding a geometry of our inner universes and their fragility to cultural patterns, technological flows, and social frictions. Therefore, one can say that the work is focused to explore the phenomenology of cultural experience."



Figure 10 Mladen Bundalo, NENAD, film still, 2020

Mladen Bundalo was strongly associated with the artist's group  $ta\check{c}.ka^1$  in his early career. Tac.ka, intervened in a number of exhibitions in Bosnia and the wider ex-Yugoslav region and was most closely associated with ARS KOZARA, the first land art exhibition in the country organized on Mount Kozara, which ran from 2007-15.

Bundalo's work is most closely associated with drawing, installation and, most recently, video and film. He is particularly concerned with ruptures in identity and diaspora, as well as the intersections between art, economics and science. His project *Hyperinflation* (2018) dealt with the collapse in value of the Yugoslav *dinar* between 1992-94, working through the trauma of this via logic, economics and aesthetics.

More recently Mladen has been working between Belgium and Bosnia-Herzegovina in the production of the short film *NENAD* (2020) which charts the problems of a young man seeking to leave Bosnia for a better life elsewhere. In so doing, he recalls earlier visual art works dealing with his own experience of diaspora, rupture, identity mutation and perpetual uncertainty, in the *Moving Chronotopes* series, running from 2010 to the present.

Tač.ka comprised of Mladen Bundalo, Nemanja Čađo, Boris Eremić, Dragan Inđić, Milijana Grabovica, Igor Sovilj and Dajan Špirić

For Nothing's Guaranteed Mladen contributes The Uncertainty Principle: BYINTEK Projector, part of an an ongoing project which began in 2018. The artist writes:

"Uncertainty principle" is a cluster of reflections which explore the phenomenology of general and personal feelings of indeterminacy when it comes to the modern financial economy, as well as the problems of locating, employing and manipulating values. In particular, we delve into the focal concepts and experiences of the financial economy, such as the idea of financial asset, GDP, or globalized online markets. They are de-totemized and stripped of their practical economic function, becoming critical statements, arte povera, cyber video essays, artistic currencies.... This work examines an idea of hyperinflation as a cultural and industrial process, in a video-installation ventriloquizing a cheap video-projector bought on Aliexpress.com"

>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>





Vienna, Austria | Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina

www.lanacmajcanin.com

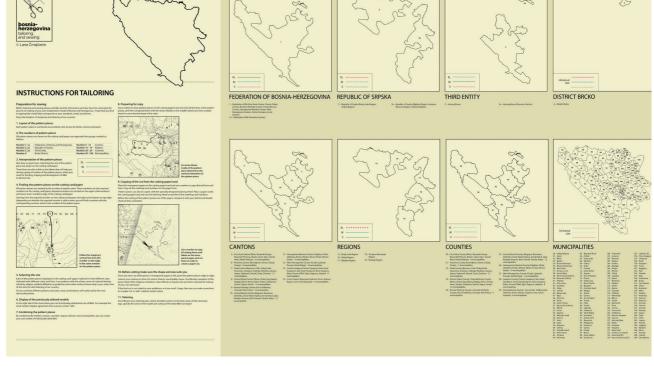
Photograph by Albe Hamiti

Lana Čmajčanin was born in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1983 and for four last years she is based in Vienna. She holds an MFA in Sculpture from the Academy of Fine Arts at the University of Sarajevo and is currently a PhD scholar at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. Čmajčanin is engaged in an art practice that has a strong reference to a specific place, addresses the issues of geopolitical mapping, the political framework and distinctly includes the role of women and the female body. Furthermore, in her work, Lana explores the impact of political and social power structures and control mechanisms and question the issues of responsibility and manipulation.

She explores the geopolitical and structural violence, the politics of memory, the practices ofnationalist politics and neoliberal management of trauma. Her cross-disciplinary practise encompasses installations, video works, objects, photography, performances, and sound installations.

Lana Čmajčanin has participated in numerous international exhibitions and festivals and exhibited in many galleries and museums across the world. Selected solo and group exhibitions include: Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris; MAXXI - The National centre for the Contemporary

Art and Architecture Rome, Rome; Museum of Contemporary Art (MSUV), Novi Sad; Künstlerhaus Wien, Vienna; Framer Framed, Amsterdam; Weltmuseum Wien, Vienna; New York Foundation for the Arts, New York; Zhejiang Art Museum, Hangzhou; Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou; Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana; Pera Museum, Istanbul; Kunstraum Niederoesterreich, Vienna; Good Children Gallery, New Orleans; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow; Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Rijeka; Galerie du Jour agnès b, Paris; Künstlerhaus Graz; Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (KGLU), Slovenj Gradec; Centre for



**Figure 11** Lana Čmajčanin, Tailoring and Sewing (detail), multimedia installation, 2011

Contemporary Art, Architecture, Society, Stockholm; NGBK- Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst, Berlin; CCA-The Center for Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv, Israel.

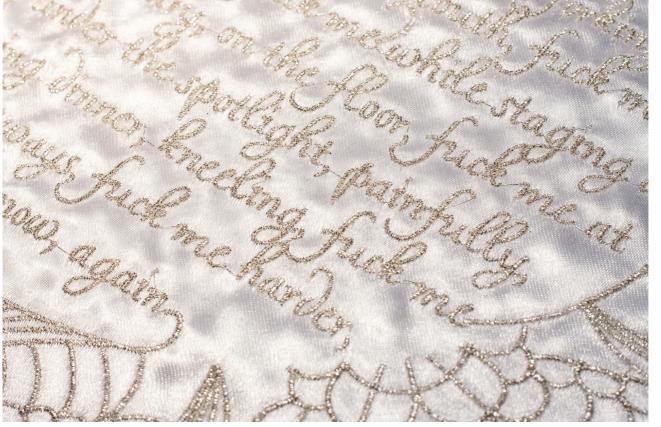
Her work was presented at the Venice Biennale, Autostrada Biennale, Moscow International Biennale, D-O ARK - Biennial of Contemporary Art.

Čmajčanin has won several awards and scholarships, including the Special Award of the 54th October Salon and participated in many Artists-in-Residence Programmes, panels, workshops and conferences.

She was twice nominated for the Keith Haring Fellowship in Art and Activism at Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York.

Lana Čmajčanin's practice is challenging and driven by deep research into contemporary problematics such as gender, national identity, patterns of migration, community memory and (in)justice. She has worked extensively in installation, video and performance.

Her work *Tailoring & Sewing* was shown internationally in 2011-12 and is based on the bewildering, overlapping divides between differing units of political organisation in Bosnia-Herzegovina; entities, kantons, *općinas* (local authorities). Using the conceit of a dressmaking pattern, the audience is invited to construct their own version of Bosnia-Herzegovina, based on their own senses of identity. In the framework of contemporary art this is a piece that can be described as "relational"- in other words, continually mutated by audience interaction, and never finished, but of course the implications go far beyond the gallery audience. Lana encourages the audience to think about the constituents of their identity and how it changes, day by day, and with what consequences. It is an unlikely parallel to the writing of the Welsh historian Gwyn Alf Williams and his musings on Welsh identity as follows:



**Figure 12** Lana Čmajčanin, 166987 Pricks, 2013. Embroidery. Photograph: Joana Teresa De Almeida Dias de Souza

"Wales is a process. Wales is an artefact which the Welsh produce; the Welsh make and re-make Wales day by day and year after year. If they want to."

Substitute "Wales" for Bosnia-Herzegovina in this famous quotation and we can begin to have a greater understanding of this provocative project.

Lana's work 166987 Pricks continues to use the forms of gendered craft, in this case embroidery, to convey a shocking message of sexualised violence and intimidation. The deafeningly silent dissonance between delicate needlework and the crude intonations of sexual subjugation and humiliation- with agency and individuality removed from the female subjectivity- is perhaps something that makes a seemingly small and gentle work live so long in the mind. The artist seeks to throw a light into unequal gender relations within contemporary art, unreasonable and increasingly algorithmically determined demands made upon women, and the unspoken legacies of sexual trauma and violence visited upon women during the wartime period and the patriarchal expectations of peacetime.

In more recent years Lana has moved towards a close consideration of patterns of migration and the violent disruption of ordinary lives by climate change, famine and war, sometimes a combination of all three. *Is There Beauty after Aleppo?*, shown in Vienna in 2016, raises the uncomfortable disjunct between comfortable European lives and the unbearable suffering of ordinary people in the complex nexus of local

<sup>1</sup> Gwyn Alf Williams, *When Was Wales*? BBC Wales & BBC Radio Cymru lecture, 12 November 1979, p. 23. London: British Broadcasting Corporation.

and geopolitical interests in Syria. The artist took the colourful branding of a Vienna art festival and re-imagined it in a different way, as subject to the sorts of attacks that the city of Aleppo was undergoing at this time. This is a discomfort that has a long history; Vienna newspapers in the Great War often juxtaposed reviews of nice new restaurants or music halls, with articles detailing heavy military casualties for the Hapsburg army in Galicia. It is also a very contemporary feeling too, as life in Western and Central Europe carries on more or less as normal whilst daily horrors and death from Ukraine flicker and are hurriedly scrolled past on screens all around us.

In this show Lana is represented by the video-installation *Anatomy of Speech*, which returns to the themes of Western Balkan identities and their possible futures, in addition to touching on some of the absurd posturing around "separation" of languages that should be readily comprehensible, across the region. The artist makes the following statement about this work:

"The installation Anatomy of Speech refers to the long-term debate about the relation between language and identity and ethno-nationalist diversification of languages, especially in the (post) Yugoslav space during and after the wars of the 90s. This violent diversification of languages through the diverse processes of purification, domination, or alienation was designed to disable and expunge communication between the peoples who spoke and still speak the same language.



**Figure 13** Lana Čmajčanin, Is There Beauty after Aleppo?, 2016, Photograph: P.Schmid-Fellerer

Adding symbolic and territorial values to the new language names (Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin and Serbian) this ethno-national diversification of the same linguistically and communicatively language has become artificial, violent, and absurd.

Starting with this particular case of language, the work extends even beyond the problem of the ethno-nationalist conditioning of language, territory and identity. It faces communication disorders and all the problems caused by glitches and errors of the speech apparatus while exploring the logopedic methods for its correction. Furthermore, the work Anatomy of Speech identifies the absurdity of enforced language diversification and plays with the juxtaposition and the paradox between language, speech, and voice."

The installation is composed of three elements: a single-shot video work featuring a soprano performing a unique phonopoetic song; the poem which leans on speech-language pathology exercises, emanates arrhythmically and displays the characteristics of concrete poetry with a Dadaist repetitive tone; and the large-scale drapery with motifs illustrating the postures of the mouths for a recommended logopedic elocution and articulation.

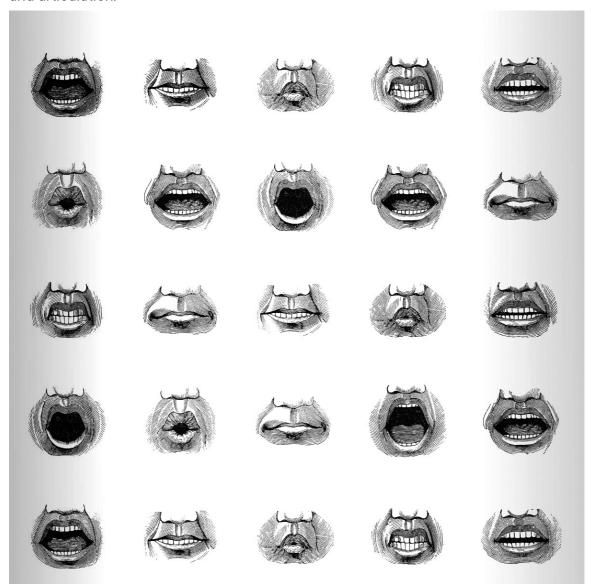


Figure 14 Lana Čmajčanin, Anatomy of Speech, textile (detail), 2021





Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina | Zagreb, Croatia

www.lalarascic.com

Photogrpah: Ivan Hrkaš

Lala Raščić (b. 1977, Sarajevo), currently living and working in Sarajevo and Zagreb, and until recently, in New Orleans. She has studied at the Academy of Fine Arts, Zagreb and Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam. Raščić has exhibited internationally since 1998 in solo and group exhibitions. Amongst others, Raščić had attended artist-in-residence programs at the Museums Quartier, Q21, Vienna; Platform Garanti, Istanbul; and Cite des Arts, Paris, amongst others. Raščić is the recipient of several awards including ZVONO, the Future of Europe Award and the Henkel Art Award shortlist. She is a member of artists' associations in Croatia and the Sarajevo feminist organization CRVENA. From 2011 to 2018 she was an active member of the New Orleans artist-run Good Children Gallery. As of 2017, with CRVENA, Raščić administers and organizes the Nona Residency in her studio in Sarajevo, a retreat-themed residency program for women artists.

Lala Raščić is a multimedia artist exploring tangible and immaterial cultural forms to build narratives that are manifested through video, live performances, installation environments, objects and drawings. She studied in Zagreb and in Amsterdam, and spent many years in New Orleans, where she was involved in curatorial and exhibition work with the Good Children Gallery. She now divides her time between her native Sarajevo and Zagreb.

Lala's practice is one that is based on profound research and a naturally performative presentation of alternative realities and speculative futures. Her spoken word performance *The Damned Dam* draws on a profound awareness of the Western Balkan oral tradition, of the expansion and development of epic narratives passed on from generation to generation. *The Damned Dam*, a mixture of dystopian post-apocalyptic landscape, a narrative of travel, and the unlikely growing together of the two main protagonists- Tarik and Merima- is a performance piece suggesting at an unpleasant future but very firmly rooted in a local past.



**Figure 15** Lala Raščić performing the Damned Dam, 15 November 2013, Oktobarksi Salon, Belgrade. Jusuf Brkić plays the saz behind. Photo: Vladimir Jerić-Vlidi

This poem, set in the late 2020s, portrays Bosnia as a colonised and devastated land, ruled by remote-control EU commissioners, with the local population reduced to the status of overworked, anonymous vassals, tasked with meeting energy targets set in Brussels. It is a land subject to frequent flooding and turbulence, natural events watched over by a weak and supine administration. Neighbouring Serbia, it seems, has disappeared under successive waves of floodwaters, with all but a tiny part of Belgrade lost forever. Part apocalyptic vision, part conscience pricking, an analysis of the words spoken reveal a subtle critique of the dehumanising aspects of neoliberalism and a dark imagining of what may lie ahead in the future.



**Figure 16** Lala Raščić, GORGO, Cinematography still: Ivan Slipčević, courtesy of the artist and KADIST

Her most recent series of performances is *GORGO* (2019-21) This work focuses on the Medusa myth, and their decapitation. GORGO focuses on the re-animation of the character through performance, wearing copper armour fitted with contact microphones, that convey the performers' movement and associated sounds. A critical element in this work is the making of the copper armour by Nermina Beba Alić, the lone working female coppersmith in Bosnia-Herzegovina; coppersmithing is a skilled craft reserved in the country almost entirely to men. Commenting on and symbolically overcoming patriarchal violence through the re-animation of the Medusa, Raščić reaches deep into European mythology to begin to confront both our present and speculate on our future. As Jasna Jakšić writes in her essay on the piece:

"Incarnated in Raščić's performance and display, Medusa, reviving her ancient and terrifying omni-gendered traits, takes over the mask of the king and the armor of the hero. Woman and beast, witch and victim, obscene in her appearance, an inhabitant of distant islands and bandits' plunder, both loud and mute, as well as dead and alive – Medusa – Gorgo steps onto the stage and performs." 1

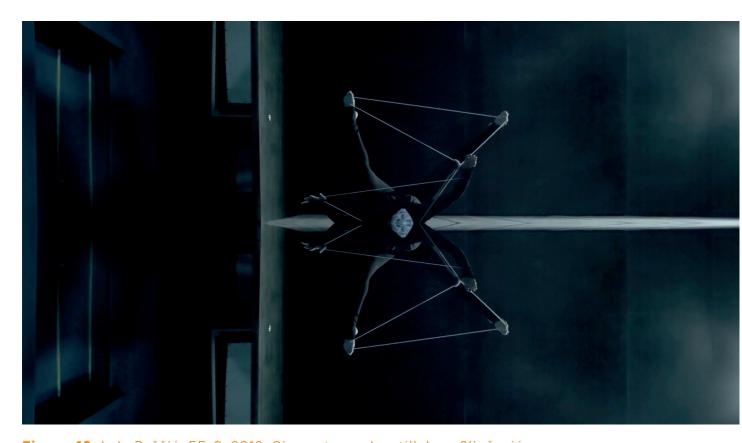


**Figure 17** Lala Raščić, EE-O work from 2018 (conceived in collaboration with Andreja Dugandžić and Jelena Petrović and produced by KADIST, Paris and Lumbardhi, Prizren)

Jasna Jakšić, "Staging Gorgo", p. 6. Avaialble on www.lalarascic.com/GORGO/

In *Nothing's* Guaranteed, Lala is represented by the video work *EE-0* from 2018. Lala writes about this work:

In the EE-O video, the Greek myth of Arachne is re-contextualized in a poetic script, taking an imaginative leap from antiquity into science fiction. Storylines from classic mythology are skewed and combined with anecdotal episodes found through field research in and around Prizren, Kosovo. Ideas of repressed ancient female knowledge and power is probed by story-ing of local urban myths, customs, and current sociological, ecological, and cultural phenomena. The video is carried by the performer, who is seen enacting text in a theatrical setting, and her gradual transformation into the spider-character of Arachne, and her recession into an abstract space of darkness from which she emerges as a post human entity, denominated by a face decorated in the style of the Kosovo bridal make-up tradition. These striking Arachne-esque visuals are folkloric forms are overlaid on a neo-myth. Reacting to the specific site of production of EE-O: Kosovo, Europe's youngest nation-state, the idea of becoming is explored through the idea of genesis, transformation, and metamorphosis communicated by Arachne's transformation.



**Figure 18** Lala Raščić, EE-0, 2018. Cinematography still: Ivan Slipčević, courtesy of the artist and KADIST





Berlin, Germany | Srbac, Bosnia-Herzegovina

www.sasatatic.com

Sasa Tatić (1991) is a Bosnian born artist, researcher and aspiring cultural influencer acting as a virtual ghost mediator for institutions and non-profit organisations.

Co-founder of the Fully Funded Residencies association and online platform that serves for disseminating open calls, assisting artists with residency opportunities and for sharing experiences and critical reflection on the AiR programme.

The artist is in the process of continuously dealing with the fact that her identity is evolving, while her origins are left behind. She searches for the appropriate ways of addressing the challenges of living a fully embraced life as a foreigner, with refined attachments to the values of family heritage.

Saša divides her time between Germany and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Recent solo exhibitions have included Izmedu Redovi / In Between Lines, Galerija AŽ, Zagreb, 2022, Wärme / Warmth, Galerie Bernau, Berlin, 2021; and Domestic Wall / Domaći Zid, Galerija UVUU, Užice, Serbia, 2021. She has participated in many group exhibitions, most recently, Ne Sporazum, Historical Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo; ALLES MUSS RAUS, Centre for Peripheries, Open Tiny, Berlin, both in 2021. Saša was a finalist in the 2018 and 2022 ZVONO award for young contemporary artists from Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Saša Tatić is an emerging artist currently based in Berlin, whose works focuses on diaspora, identity, belonging, and narratives of uncertainty connected to these thematics. She was part of a cohort of art students from the Faculty of Fine Art at the University of Banja Luka, under the charge of Mladen Miljanović, who have gone on to develop significant profiles in contemporary art- the others being Selma Selman, and Mila Panić.



Figure 19 Saša Tatić, Ne Prodajem Kuću, 2020

Saša's recent projects include *Ne Prodajem Kuću* (This House is Not For Sale). In travelling around Bosnia-Herzegovina signs hand-written in cardboard or plasterboard can often be seen, advertising the sale of either a half built or ruined house, and a contact telephone number. Saša inverts this in her project, focused on her family home and her family's sense of belonging and attachment to a house slowly built and the surrounding area. This is perhaps a counter-intuitive move in areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina that are rapidly losing their populations either to cities or abroad, owing to the lack of economic opportunity and a narrowing social life. The complex range of emotions produced by leaving Bosnia to live abroad bring about an intensified relationship with an idea of home and family.

More recently, Saša has been engaged in a body of work based around her inhabiting diasporic scripts, loosely grouped in the project *Između Redova (In Between the Lines)*. These see the artist photographed with handwritten statements about her diaspora life as perceived from home, and vice versa written as awkward scripts over her clothing. The limbo between the very differing expectations of a wide family at home, and those of a metropolitan art world abroad, are very different, and a diaspora artist is often trapped in an awkward and sometimes humorous crack between the two perspectives, unable to extract themselves from the differing expectations that shape a present and occlude any grasp of a future acceptable to differing important voices in the background. This then sets up a set of relations with other diaspora artists working through the same personal challenges as they feel towards some sort of vision of what may lie ahead.



**Figure 20** Saša Tatić, The Urge to Migrate is No Less Than The Urge Not To, 2022



Figure 21 Saša Tatić, Hestia's Heart, Object in Glass Box, 2022

Saša presents the new photographic triptych and sculptural installation *Hestia's Heart* and makes the following comment on it:

"Hestia's heart is a tribute to home, family and domesticity condensed into a human heart-shaped piece of clay brick. Attributing her personal relic to the specific plasticity of orange clay enhances the degree of association to the habitat within the local context. The sentimental symbolism is depicted in obscuring the tangible differences through a delicate merging of a raw-material heart tenderly positioned to the close proximity of a real one."



Figure 22 Saša Tatić, Hestia's Heart, photograph, 2022





Aberdeen, Scotland | Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina

www.majazeco.com

Maja Zećo is an interdisciplinary artist whose practice spans performance art, sound, video and installation. As she works in different geographic and institutional contexts, her works are often site-specific and relational, negotiating personal and group narratives of identity and history. In 2019 Maja obtained a PhD in fine art, on sound and performance art practice, based at Gray's School of Art (RGU) with the support of the Sonic Arts Programme at the University of Aberdeen. She has exhibited internationally. Major recent works include "In Search of the Sun" (2021-22), a performance and video work commissioned by Aberdeen Art Gallery, and subsequently shown at the RSA (Edinburgh,



Figure 23 Maja Zećo, Silencer, performed at UK New Artists, Leicester, February 2022. Photograph: Matt Cawrey



Figure 24 Maja Zećo, In Search of the Sun, 2021. Video Still: Elodié Baldwin

2022) and Reihe Neu-Oerlikon, Zürich, Switzerland; and the performance "Silencer" (2018-22), variously at CRISAP, London, UK New Artists, Leicester, and Fermynwoods Contemporary Art, Corby (forthcoming, September 2022).

Maja Zećo has lived and worked between Scotland and Bosnia-Herzegovina since 2015. Originally her background was in design and VJing, but since moving to Aberdeen, she has focused intensively on the intersections between performance art, sound and video.

Two major recent performance cycles have been shown around the UK. Her work *Silencer*, first performed at CRISAP in London in February 2018, is a sensory-deprivation suit made of sound absorbing foam. In the suit, the artist is unable to hear and has her movements softened, whilst to the observer her voice, face and gender are all obscured. Maja's performances see her inhabit parallel and otherworldly creative spaces whilst still having a presence in everyday reality.

In Search of the Sun grew out of a residency at Aberdeen Art Galleries and Museums. With her work strongly influenced by decolonial impulses, the artist was invited to respond to the gallery's collection, and devised this performance and video documentation in response to Eastre, Hymn to the Sun, a modernist portrait bust by J.D. Fergusson (1874-1961). In Fergusson's sculpture, the impetus was the "Saxon goddess" Eastre; the artist's research on this mythical figure enabled her to trace Eastre back to Mesopotamia and

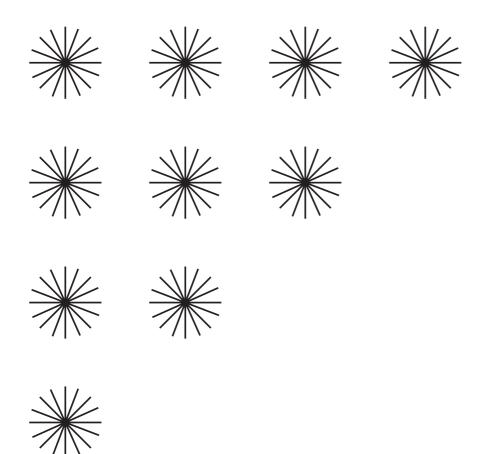
the goddess Oshtara. This journey from the Middle East at the beginning of history to appropriation in modernist culture allowed the artist to map the goddess' journey through time and space onto contemporary patterns of migration, displacement and diaspora.

The as-yet untitled performance that will be shown in *Nothing's Guaranteed* features and entirely new costume consisting variously of a traditional Turkish fez, a red catsuit, and lace donated from around the former Yugoslavia. During the performance, the artist will interact with a *saz*, a traditional long-necked lute style instrument that has it's origins in the Ottoman empire, and is today strongly associated with *sevdah* an intensely emotional and passionate folk music form. Through the use of props and lights, Maja will attempt to re-create the ongoing intensity of lived experience in Bosnia through the creation of an extreme and discomforting sonic environment using stroboscopes, and air raid siren, and exploiting the multi layered associations that some Bosnian citizens have with the basement environment.

The aim of the work is an intensely visceral experience, a vision from the future into which present feeling of rupture, diaspora and loss, the troubled relationship between Bosnian identity and a life outwith the country, are marked as an ongoing constant.



Figure 25 Maja Zećo, Performance, 2021. Photograph: Joe Morris



# CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA FROM 1995 TO 2020 AND THE ISSUE OF CRISIS Infan Hošić

An important perspective for understanding the crisis in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina can be established by looking at its institutions of cultural and artistic significance. The term "institutions" in this context means public institutions, but also private initiatives whose activities have left a significant mark in the artistic context of Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, it is impossible to discuss the institutional and noninstitutional culture in the country, without references to the cultural crisis, which has been articulated primarily around and within the seven cultural institutions of national importance. These are the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the National Gallery of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Historical Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Cinematheque of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Museum of Literature and Theater of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Library for the Blind and Visually Impaired of Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>1</sup>

By signing the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995, the legal status of these institutions remained deliberately unresolved and seemingly postponed for better times. Bosnia and Herzegovina's ethnocracy, formalized by the new constitution, has "lowered" cultural issues from the state to the entity and cantonal levels, bringing into question the collective cultural identity of the entire country, limiting and minimizing it. The smaller entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina had no interest in participating in the creation of a national cultural identity and in being an active creator of joint, i.e. state cultural policy that would restore the importance that the seven mentioned institutions had enjoyed earlier.

Such an attitude has weakened awareness of the importance of culture in general; key institutions have been systematically marginalized and some even shut down. Within the legal and legitimate framework, cantons and municipalities missed the opportunity to take over what the state failed to do – the regeneration of the devastated cultural space. Culture eventually died out and was recognized as useless and passive, as an object of constant tension, problems and unfinished processes.

In addition, the poor territorial organization of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Dayton agreement—which did not follow the geographical characteristics but the results of the brutal seizure of territories and mass expulsions—made its cities unconnected, which is to say, on the margins and periphery. The Bosnian entity of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina with its ten cantons on one side and on the other Republika Srpska as a separate entity with a pronounced national focus, further isolated and aggravated the situation of the country within which they are organized. The Dayton model has long shown its unsustainability, with parliamentary political nomenclature unable to redesign the existing constitution for fear of the possible loss of war booty.

In this regard, it seems important to keep in mind that the cities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, although in process of development and construction, were places of sophisticated industry with a strong urban middle class before the country's independence in the 1990s. After the war and the signing of the Dayton Agreement, the position and importance of Bosnia and Herzegovina's cities was redefined due to the new reorganization – they were industrially devastated and demographically weakened. In some of them, new institutions of general importance have been established, such as universities, galleries or cultural centers. Although for a moment it seemed that these cities were facing new social challenges, many opportunities have not been used enough from the end of the war.

Continuously poor policies at all levels of the state, disintegration in the education system as well as radical provincialization aided by changing demographic conditions have turned Bosnian cities into isolated and closed provinces on the margins. Pseudodemocracy, parliamentary travesty, corruption and clientelism, together with neoliberal tendencies of a global character, have served as a framework for unprofessional and unethical reflections in the heritage and cultural identity.

Within such an environment, cultural institutions have been contaminated with apathy, lack of propulsion and lack of ideas. Many of them have found themselves in a vicious circle that perpetuates the crisis. The absence of public discourse on culture, the lack of cultural strategy at the state, entity, cantonal or municipal levels and the lack of creative ideas have created an environment in which below-average cultural practices are established, that include courting the citizens and the public with insufficiently critically-informed and entertaining content. As Strajo Krsmanović, the director of the National Gallery of Bosnia and Herzegovina at the moment when this institution was supposed to take over the organization of the national pavilion of the country at the Venice Biennale in 2015, said:



**Figure 26** Artist talk with Joaquin Luzoro (Panaflex, curated by Smirna Kulenović). Brodac, Sarajevo 2018

"The National Gallery of BiH is currently unable to perform this task. We are not able to take over the organization, neither in terms of personnel nor finances"

The statement was greeted with shock and disbelief, as a model had finally been created between the entities, for financing the country's continuous performance at this prominent art festival.<sup>2</sup>

Disinterest and general ignorance have bypassed the awareness that culture is an agent of social change, that it has the power to identify and reidentify society with new models, as well as the power to reshape the consciousness of an individual and a group towards something new.

Although there are funds at all levels that cover the needs of culture and art, it can certainly be said that their implementation is marked by nepotism, corruption, bad criteria and constant cuts. The existence of the Foundation for Music, Performing and Fine Arts at the level of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina does not suggest seriousness and commitment, while the process of evaluating received applications, and allocating funds, takes place in a non-transparent and clientelist way. The situation in the equivalent Foundation for Publishing is no better. Viewing nationality as a key element, incompetence, bureaucracy and deadly formalism are just some of the characteristics of how these funds function.



Figure 27 Ulay, For the Love of Water. Gallery Duplex100m2, Sarajevo 2011

A similar practice is present in the cantonal, i.e. municipal institutions and departments for culture. It is useless to talk about the ministers and officials who hold the positions at these departments and who supervise the available financial resources. Their appointment is often tantamount to sabotaging national and civic interests because their competence is unable to meet even the lowest demands of modern society.

Noninstitutional involvement is a counterpoint to the aforesaid and a reflection of the responsibility of citizens and individuals to resist the general decline and systemic devaluation. It is often motivated by the crisis of society, ranging from systemic state negligence, official ethnocratic organization, but also commodification due to the uncontrolled restoration of capitalist ownership relations in post-socialist Bosnia and Herzegovina. On the other hand, the mentioned problems on the scene of Bosnian culture, which are most evident through issues of institutional action in the range between the legislative and executive power, are a suitable environment for social practice and civic engagement. This type of action is marked by a discerning judgment of the validity of official practices of parliamentary political discourse, and is operational in clear spheres of assessment and action. Of course, this fits into the global trend of "increased tendencies to subject politics and art to the moral judgment of the validity of principles and the consequences of its practices." An ethically intoned approach on the cultural and art stage does not make all parties happy but on the contrary, it provokes, confronts and polarizes.

Perhaps the most important noninstitutional art project in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the Ars Aevi Museum of Contemporary Art in Sarajevo. In the spirit of the "Sarajevo cultural resistance", even while Sarajevo was under heavy attack, the idea of the Museum was born. The initial idea of its creation was based on "the conviction that the artists of this age feel and understand the injustice done to our city." Thus, the project, which was administered from the beginning as a citizens' organization and not as a public institution, encoded the idea of proactive action based on the need for civil resistance to war destruction and the natural desire to open the besieged city and connect it with the free world.

The expectations of the significance and scope of activities of an organization were surpassed with Ars Aevi, because in its breadth and depth it managed to produce incredible results. Under the leadership of Enver Hadžiomerspahić, former director of the opening program at the 1984 Olympics – later director of cultural programs at the Skenderija Olympic Center, Ars Aevi remained actively involved in the fight against the devaluation of general social and cultural values in its community. Careful curatorial selection of several collections that would form the fund of the future Museum was accompanied by painstaking engagement in the administration of the entire idea, only to become a Public Institution of the City of Sarajevo in 2017. From the formation of the first tangible collection until today, Ars Aevi still does not have formal headquarters and has moved several times, although its main architectural conceptual design was made by well-known architect Renzo Piano.

Ars Aevi is a cultural and artistic idea that, with its constituent elements, speaks about the phenomenon of the crisis in the field of culture and art in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is the paradigm of a new era that began with the unfortunate war of the 1990s, and which no longer has the capacity to base a projection of itself on events and happenings before that.

Ars Aevi is tangible with its problems and challenges while the establishment of cultural institutions after World War II is a distant history that is difficult to understand and turn into possible paradigms with which society could easily identify. Although Ars Aevi represents the logical development of an urban environment, in its essence it is a symbol of interruption, break and discontinuity caused by war.

Some sort of counterpoint to institutional action in the field of art is the appearance of the Sarajevo Soros Center for Contemporary Art (SCCA) in 1996. The intention to open the center in Sarajevo was based on the analysis of the post-war situation, and the guiding principle in its mission is to "gather dispersed creative energy" and to recognize "the urgent needs specially of young generation of the artists who wanted to reappropriate the streets and places after years spent in shelters." 5

Curator Dunja Blažević was appointed as the head of SCCA and, as an experienced and knowledgeable person in the field, she understood the key points of the crisis in the field of art immediately after the war, which aim to "fulfill generation's gap; bridge discontinuity in artistic life; reestablish missing links between individuals and cultural centers."

SCCA has done an important job of stimulating contemporary art practices and generating an exchange of the local scene with the international one. The number of initiatives, exhibitions, discursive and educational content – initiated by SCCA – is a very important and indispensable element in creating the cultural physiognomy of Sarajevo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also their recognizability on the domestic or international scene. At the same time, SCCA nurtured the awareness that official state institutions were not able to provide a "direct response to all these accumulated problems" which is why it imposed itself as an important factor that would understand the "complexity of the existing situation, SCCA developed itself as an information/documentation/education/production and distribution center."



Figure 28 Participants of the Kuma International Summer School, Sarajevo 2021

Due to its agility and adaptability to a specific moment, SCCA can be understood as a link between what Obala Art Center did during the war on the one hand, and related noninstitutional and independent initiatives that will follow later during the first and second decades of the 21st century on the other. As such, and in terms of the importance of its activities and its contribution, SCCA is a continuation of what developed so well during the 1980s when Sarajevo was definitely one of the "central stages of the then Yugoslav endeavors", while at the same time it is a generator of institutional pluralism and independent artistic activity.<sup>8</sup>

In such social, political and cultural framework, the emergence of individual and independent initiatives can be understood, whose goal is also to generate artistic discourse, mediate its content and educate the general public. The significance of these initiatives is vast because each of them in its own way managed to accompany some of the most important artistic phenomena during its existence, stimulate the emergence of some sort of art scene and encourage dialogue within contemporary art practices and independent curatorial work. The initiatives also served as platforms for the exchange of ideas, but also as a meeting place for artists from abroad.

Among the most important is the appearance of French gallery owner and cultural manager Pierre Courtin, who from 2004 until 2018 was one of the most important figures on the Sarajevo art scene with a very intensive program. His first exhibition initiative called Gallery  $10m^2$  was founded in 2004 in Sarajevo's Glass City [Stakleni grad] near the pedestrian zone in Ferhadija Street, literally in an area of 10 square meters. His fourteen-year professional stay in Sarajevo was marked by progress and the need to grow the exhibition space, which eventually led to a relocation in 2011. The last six-year phase (from 2012 to 2018) called Duplex  $100m^2$ , was marked by activities in the residential unit of the Art Nouveau building in Obala Street. "Duplex was the only space with a constant program of rapidly changing exhibitions, which since its inception in 2004 decidedly supported contemporary art."

With his direct and often experimental work, Courtin covered several different but similar fields – from commercial gallery activity and affirmation of Bosnian artists abroad through participation in numerous art fairs, affirmation of art collecting in a country affected by the economic crisis, to social practice which is consciously or unconsciously generated "on the sidelines" of his program – exhibitions, round tables, promotion of publications and many other events.

Pierre Courtin's curatorial and managerial strategy can also be understood as compensation for what official institutions have been unable to do. The scope of his work covers the mistakes of official institutions which did not consider themselves invited or responsible to be the initiators of art life in the city. While official institutions were failing, his way of working operated consciously with the context of the crisis and found a certain starting point in it. Ingenuity and adaptability to the situation made him flexible and resistant to all possible adversities in a society of devaluation of universal

values and art. Today, it is almost impossible to reflect on the content, dynamics and development of contemporary art in Bosnia and Herzegovina without the awareness of Pierre Courtin's presence.

The closure of the gallery in 2018 left behind a gap that is difficult to fill, although the participation of international actors on the Sarajevo scene has continued through some new independent initiatives. This primarily refers to the Brodac Gallery, the gallery of the Sklop organization or the Kuma International Center for Visual Arts from Post-Conflict Societies.

The Brodac Gallery is interesting because it has been created through the idea of comparative reliance on the mentioned Duplex. It was launched in 2016 by enthusiast Mak Hubjer and is based on the belief that as such it fills the "void" between the space of young and non-established artists on the one hand, and Duplex by Pierre Courtin on the other. It is conceived as sort of "step" on the artistic path of young artists, i.e. graduates of art studies who did not get enough practice in designing, curating, organizing and conducting exhibitions. Such knowledge and insight into the situation came from the young founder of the gallery, who himself, as an art student at the Sarajevo Academy of Fine Arts, found it easier to see the problem on the art scene from his student position. At the time Brodac was created, Duplex had more than ten years of operation behind it, and it was easy to see what it didn't cover through its program that should be included.

Judging by the motive, it is a socially engaged project of an individual who consciously addresses the problems of official institutions – the Academy of Fine Arts of the University of Sarajevo – and points out the shortcomings of its current curriculum and syllabus subjects. On the other hand, Brodac is a space of informal and spontaneous interaction, not only of artists and participants in the scene, but also of their immediate surroundings, which are the Baščaršija neighborhood and the nearby Telali market.

The mentioned gallery of Sklop and Kuma International Center for Visual Arts from Post-Conflict Societies, although independent and largely inspired by the unenviable state of the country, come from the academic and scientific research register and have greatly influenced the cultural and artistic physiognomy of Sarajevo and whole country. Both were founded by art historians who came to Sarajevo from abroad – Sandra Bradvić, founder and artistic director of Sklop, although originally from Bosnia, came to Sarajevo as a doctoral student from the University of Bern. Italian Claudia Zini, the founder of Kuma International also came as a doctoral student from Courtauld Institute in London.

Sklop continued in a somewhat smaller and limited form with what SCCA had started, focusing on the organization and performance of the Zvono Award for Young Artists from Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was necessary to continue awarding this important prize at a time when the SCCA was in crisis and on the verge of closing down. By focusing on domestic and international art of the younger generation of artists, Sklop nurtures commitment to scientific work, research practice and curation, i.e. presenting art. It



Figure 29 Opening of the exhibition Zvono 2020. KRAK, Bihać 2022

was founded in 2017 and for two years it operated within its own space intended for exhibition, research and collaboration, located near the Academy of Fine Arts. Since 2019, the organization has been operating without its own physical space, which indicates the instability and discontinuity of the independent art scene in the country.

On the other hand, Kuma International projects its vision and mission of existence through educational programs and curricula in which local, regional and international groups of professionals overlap – artists, practitioners, researchers and activists, for whom art and culture are the primary tools. In Kuma's spectrum, the crisis is the thematic backbone and it very consciously grows into a strategic commitment, or *modus operandi* in the design and implementation of educational syllabi. Based on expertise on artistic opportunities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and aware of the need for its international opening, Kuma is a dynamic educational program of engaged art history and contemporary curatorial practices in the broadest sense of the term.

Apart from Sarajevo as the most propulsive art center, important institutional phenomena took place in Banja Luka as the capital of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian entity Republika Srpska. The establishment of the Academy of Arts at the University of Banja Luka in 1998 and the Museum of Contemporary Art of Republika Srpska in 2004, with a number of

important exhibitions organized by them and the initiative to represent the country at the Venice Biennale in 2013, are considered a pledge of Banja Luka's dynamism in the field of institutional art. In particular, the Academy of Arts, like few institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, managed to justify its founding and generate a significant artistic turn in the country, and through the practice of ideological and programmatic newness to articulate a sort of counterpoint to existing patterns often burdened with tradition. It was a pledge of new educational paradigms that have already spawned several generations of socially responsible and proactive artists, who have sovereignly and without restraint made Banja Luka an art center worthy of attention at all levels – local, regional and beyond. Precisely these young artists were the bearers of the noninstitutional art organization and the initiators of associations that would form a sort of counterpoint to institutional action.

Although Banja Luka has recently been seen as an interesting and young cultural destination, as evidenced by its initiative to host the European Capital of Culture in 2024, its ethno-national exclusivity is manifested through numerous unofficial censorships in the field of cinema. An additional test for this environment and its cultural closedness caused by ethno-national politics are films *In the Land of Blood and Honey* (2012) by Angelina Jolie and Jasmila Žbanić's *Quo Vadis, Aida*? (2021). Only sporadic voices of some activists advocated the right to artistic freedom, not in Banja Luka but in Prijedor.

The group of visual artists Tač.ka, founded in Prijedor in early 2007 by several then students of the Academy in Banja Luka (Igor Sovilj, Mladen Bundalo, Boris Eremić, Dragan Inđić, Milijana Grabovica; later joined by Dajan Špirić and Nemanja Čađo), was recognized from the start as a subversive group bold enough to use strategies through which they examine the practice of manipulating cultural tradition and its stereotypes but also the practice of manipulating official politics with historical and cultural narratives. The subversiveness of Tač.ka group is manifested through the fact that it has been marginalized by state institutions and public institutions. Cultural theorist Charlotte Whelan argues: 'The small art gallery in Prijedor, Gallery '96, has consistently prohibited Tač.ka from exhibiting there because they are too politically controversial in terms of their critiques of cultural institutions and connections to local NGOs that go against the standard heteronormative Serb framework of the town."

Tač.ka strived for an alternative understanding of art and action in the field of culture, criticizing the inert glorification of elite art events, while "pioneering conversations, analytical processing and critical freedom, characteristic for narrow discursive space, are suppressed, condemned and not actualized within state and cultural institution." The organization was active until late 2016 and, and in the span of nine years of its existence, it produced eight editions of the international art laboratory in form of an artistic stay, far from institutional domination, known as *Ars Kozara*.

Perhaps the most ambitious and complex noninstitutional art event in the country took place under the auspices of the Banja Luka Center for Visual Communications

Protok [Flow]. Its initiator and visionary is painter Radenko Milak. As the name of the organization says, the vision was to make Banja Luka flowing and fluid in the post-war period when it was still burdened with a fresh post-war legacy. The most important contribution of Protok is their annual exhibition *Spa Port*, whose first iteration took place in 2008 with the title *It's raining outside*, *but I don't believe that it is*, curated by Ana Nikitović. The launch of this exhibition was permeated with the efforts of young Banja Luka artists to open up to cultural and artistic trends that surround them, and "it's basic goal has focus on a region, that is on a regional production, and that in this way sort of characteristic regional production should be represented, in this case Banjaluka would be some, let's say place where people of profession could meet and get acquainted with lates regional production." *Spa Port* boldly and ambitiously pursues the continuity of pre-war exhibitions such as Sarajevska Dokumenta [Sarajevo Documents] and Banjalučki jesenji salon [Banja Luka Autumn Salon], and relies on the methodology and conceptual approach of the Sarajevo Soros Center for Contemporary Art.

Through the next two iterations of *Spa Port*, the artistic leadership continues the initiated practice of critically confronting what it *is* and what it *should* be when it comes to current topics from broad and narrow socio-political context. In accordance with complicated organizational approach and a demanding curatorial concept, *Spa Port* has grown into a leading event in the field of contemporary art in our country after a few years. It is a qualitative counterpoint to local organizations of fine artists inherited from the past system. On an ideological level, *Spa Port* decisively opposed the opportunism, romanticism and amateurism of numerous and impersonal art colonies of our environment and managed to question extremely sensitive, socially undesirable and politically taboo topics.

The last and most ambitious exhibition is curated by the duo DeLVe (Institute for Duration, Place and Variables) from Zagreb, consisting of Ivana Bago and Antonia Majača. Their name Where Everything is Yet to Happen sublimates the basic assumptions of contemporary art – absurdity, paradox, irony – and places Banja Luka at the center of the world of art. The curatorial concept tried to bring attention to the traumas of the 1990s and "the issue of cooperation, complicity, articulation of trauma, the issue of exile and return, politics of memory, politics of language, politicization of art versus culturalization of politics." With this exhibition, a number of urgent issues in the local community have been initiated, and it is considered a qualitative turn that marked a new time on the Banja Luka art scene. 14

Spa Port nurtured cultural pluralism, stimulated the development of art and as such was a pledge of continuity of mature artistic reflection on current social issues. With its content and represented artistic positions, the exhibition managed to overcome local trivia and with undisputed artistic credibility, to be recognized among artists and art critics as the most important event of contemporary art in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region in the period from 2008 to 2010.

Insight into the dynamics of cultural and artistic noninstitutional activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1995 onwards is a completed survey determined by extremely specific socio-political processes of attempts to normalize the situation after the brutal war from 1992 to 1995. Such a review detects the main causes of the crisis in Bosnian society and sheds light on the constitutive elements on which the crisis is based. Reconstruction of the social, political and cultural context is a basis on which it is possible to define what could be conditionally called the "picture of the crisis". This syntagm refers to the semantic framework determined by political upheavals, conflict scenarios and poverty – which in turn produce a general state of crisis within which culture, art and design articulate an image of it but also a self-image as sort of response to a given situation. At the same time, civic and professional self-organization takes responsibility by compensating for the shortcoming caused by the "non-existence" of the state and its system.

#### Endnotes

- 1 Musabegović, Senadin, "Tradition and cultural institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the jaws of ethnonationalism and neoliberalism", in: *Život umjetnosti* (93). Zagreb 2013. pp. 22-35.
- 2 Pijetlović, Mirna, "Odlazak u Veneciju pod znakom pitanja za BiH" in: *Glas Srpske* 5/11/2014, Banjaluka 2014.
- 3 Rancière, Jacques, *Dissensus on Politics and Aesthetics*. Continuum, London / New York 2010. p. 184.
- 4 Hadžiomerspahić, Enver, "International cultural project Museum of Contemporary Art Sarajevo. General Concept", in: *Museum of Contemporary Art Sarajevo*. Arsaevi, Sarajevo 1999. p. 10.
- 5 Blažević, Dunja, "Appendix: SCCA-s Still Alive / Case Study", in: *Duplex 100m*<sup>2</sup> & *Contemporary Art from Bosnia* & *Herzegovina / 2004-2008*. Duplex100m2, Sarajevo, 2019. p. 13.
- 6 Blažević, "Appendix: SCCA-s Still Alive / Case Study". p. 13.
- 7 Blažević, "Appendix: SCCA-s Still Alive / Case Study". p. 13.
- 8 Denegri, Ješa, "Sarajevske umjetničke priredbe u drugoj polovini osamdesetih", in: *Novi Izraz* (Fall '98), Sarajevo 1998, p. 166.
- 9 Bradvić, Sandra, "Make it, or break it", in: *Duplex* 100m<sup>2</sup> & Contemporary Art from Bosnia & Herzegovina / 2004-2008. Duplex100m2, Sarajevo 2019, p. 19.
- 10 Whelan, Charlotte, Exploring alternative geographies, politics and identities in Bosnia and Herzegovina through contemporary art practices (PhD thesis manuscript). University College London, 2017. p. 116.
- 11 Bundalo, Mladen, *Grupa vizuelnih umjetnika Tač. ka.* (Internal Document), Prijedor 2021.
- Milak, Radenko, *It's raining outside, but I don't believe that it is.* YouTube, 2009. https://youtu.be/SUpWhJSxMk4 (Last retrieved 9/4/2021).
- 13 Bago, Ivana i Majača, Antonia, *Where Everything* is Yet to Happen. Protok, Banjaluka 2010. p. 24.
- 14 Hošić, Irfan, *Iz/van konteksta*. Connectum, Sarajevo 2013.

# AUTHORS-BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES



### Jon Blackwood

Jon Blackwood is a Reader in Contemporary Art at Gray's School of Art, Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen. He studied Art History at the University of St. Andrews, and obtained his Ph.D at the Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London. He has previously taught at the University of Glamorgan and DJCAD, University of Dundee.

Jon has a longstanding interest in art from Yugoslavia and its successor states. From 2011-14 he divided his time between Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Skopje, Macedonia, and has written extensively on contemporary art in these two countries. His research is particularly interested in cultural ecologies and the intersections between contemporary art, activism and politics.

Jon's activities cover curating and writing. Previous books include *Critical Art in Contemporary Macedonia* (Skopje: mala galerija 2016) and he edited the collection *duplex100m2* and *Contemporary Art in Bosnia-Herzegovina 2004-18* (Sarajevo: Editions Riveneuve); he has published critical reviews in *a-n* and *Art Monthly*.

Previous exhibitions include *Dekodiranje: Savremene Umjetnosti u Bosni I Hercegovini* (co-curated with Branka Vujanović, Igor Bošnjak, Predrag Terzić & Slobodan Vidović, Atelier Dado, Cetinje, Montenegro, 2014), *Property of Emptiness: Jusuf Hadžifejzović* (Institute of Contemporary Art, Zagreb, 2015), *Captured State: New Art from Macedonia* (Summerhall, Edinburgh 2017) *Utopian Realism: Mladen Miljanović* (Peacock Visual Arts, Aberdeen, 2019), and *Overcoming Art* (co-produced with Bojan Ivanov, Ivana Samandova & Angela Vitanovska, SCS Jadro, Skopje, & Institute of Contemporary Art, Zagreb, 2021).

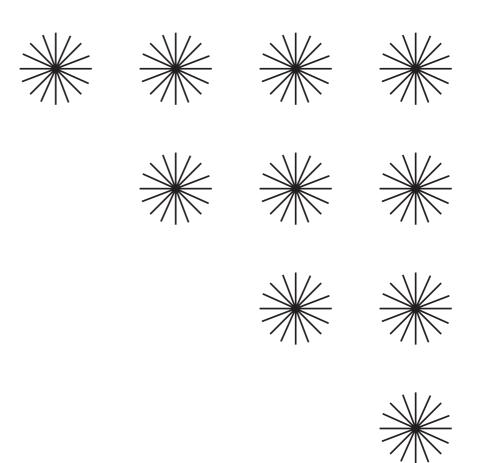


### Irfan Hošić

Irfan Hošič holds a PhD from the Department of Art History, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Zagreb. His field of research is Bosnian art of the 20th and 21st century. He won the BIRN Journalism Award (Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, Belgrade) in 2012 and the Patterns Lectures Award from the Erste Stiftung and WUS Austria in Vienna in 2016.

Irfan Hošič was the curator of the Pavilion of Bosnia and Herzegovina at the 55th Venice Biennale (2013), entitled *Garden of Delights* by the artist Mladen Miljanović. In 2013, he was a lecturer at the Stamps School of Art and Design at the University of Michigan and in 2019 at the College of Arts and Sciences at Florida Gulf Coast University (USA). He won the Basileus Scholarship for a ten-month postdoctoral research stay at the University of Ghent (Belgium) in 2013/2014 academic year, Weiser scholarships for a research project at the University of Michigan (USA) in 2015 and Green Tech scholarships for a research stay at the University of Paderborn (Germany) in 2017. During 2019/2020, as a Fulbright Visiting Scholar, he attended the College for Creative Studies and Wayne State University in Detroit (USA).

He founded the Revizor Foundation in 2017. Hošič holds a position of Associate Professor at the University of Bihać. He writes reviews and works as a curator and is co-founder of KRAK in Bihać.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abraham, A (2021) A Constitution of the People and How to Achieve It: What Bosnia & Britain can learn from One Another, Stuttgart: ibidem-verlag

Ambrose, D (ed. 2018), K-Punk: The Collected and Unpublished Writings of Mark Fisher 2004-16, London: Repeater Books

Baker, C (2018), Race and the Yugoslav Region: Postsocialist, Post-Conflict, Postcolonial? Manchester: Manchester University Press

Berardi, F (2011), After the Future, London: AK Press

Berardi, F (2017) Futurability: The Age of Impotence and the Horizon of Possibility, London: Verso Books

Bennett, C (2016), Bosnia's Paralysed Peace, London: C Hurst & Co.

Blackwood, J (ed. 2019), *Duplex 100m2 & Contemporary Art in Bosnia-Herzegovina 2004-18*, Sarajevo: Editions Riveneuve. Accessible at: https://rgu-research.worktribe.com/record.jx?recordid=692954

Bošnjak, I, Future Repeats Itself More than History Used To, MSURS, Banja Luka, 2022

Bridle, J (2019), The New Dark Age: Technology and the End of the Future, London: Verso Books

Carmichael, C (2015), A Concise History of Bosnia, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Courtin, P (ed. 2012), Duplex 100m2 Exhibitions Inventory 2004-11, Sarajevo: Editions Riveneuve

Dery, M (ed. 1994), Flame Wars: The Discourse of Cyberculture, Durham N.C & London: Duke University Press

Djurić, D & Šuvaković, M (2003), Impossible Histories: Historical Avant-Gardes, Neo-Avant-Gardes, & Post Avant-Gardes in Yugoslavia, 1918-91, MIT Press

Donia, R (2008), Sarajevo: Biography of a City, London: C Hurst & Co.

Fisher, M (2014), Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures, Alresford: ZerO Books

Groys, B (ed. 2018), Russian Cosmism, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT

Horvat, S. & Štiks, I (2015), Welcome to the Desert of Post-Socialism: Radical Politics After Yugoslavia, London: Verso Books

KAJET Issue 5 (2022): On Easternfuturism, Bucharest: Dizpositiv Books

Malcolm, N (1994), Bosnia: A Short History, Basingstoke: Picador

Mujanović, J (2018), Hunger & Fury: The Crisis of Democracy in the Balkans, London : C Hurst & Co.

Raščić, L (2014), Lala's Reader, Ljubljana: P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E Institute

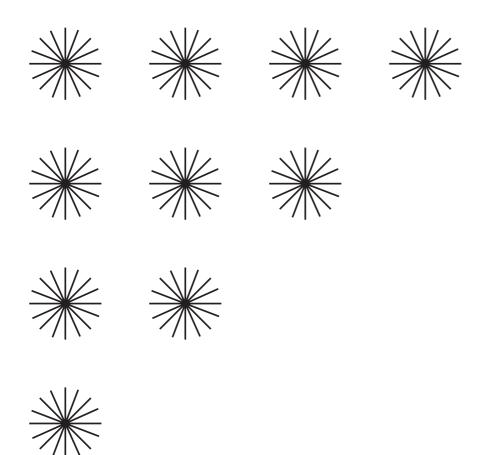
Ramet S.P (2005), Thinking About Yugoslavia: Scholarly Debates about the Yugoslav Breakup and the Wars in Bosnia and Kosovo, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

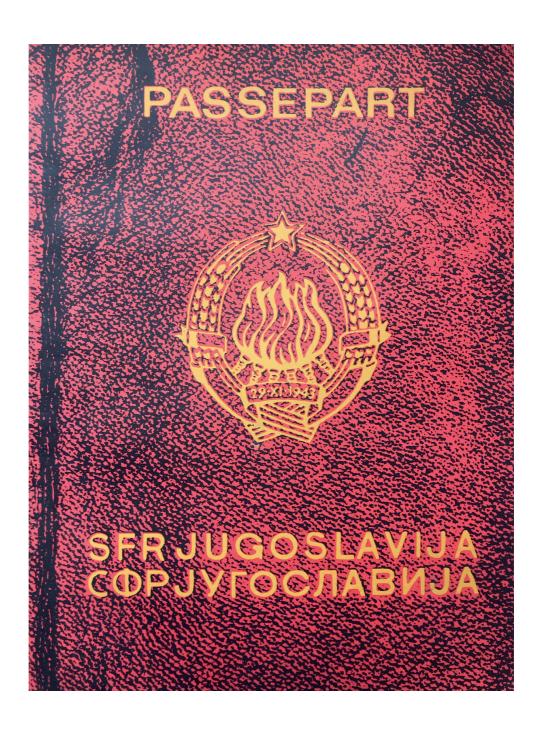
Tumbas, J (2022), I Am Jugoslovenka: Feminist Performance Politics During and After Yugoslav Socialism, Manchester: Manchester University Press

Ugrešić, D (2014), Europe in Sepia, University of Rochester: Open Letter Books

Vidmar, S. (ed. 2017), Heroes We Love: Ideology, Identity & Socialist Art in the New Europe, Maribor: Umetnosta Galerija

Zamalin, A (2018), Black Utopia: The History of an Idea from Black Nationalism to Afrofuturism, New York: Columbia University Press





#### **Note on Design**

The cover of this catalogue, created by the North Macedonian designer Ema Velkovska, is inspired by the passport of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In part, it pays homage to the catalogue cover of Richard Demarco's canonical touring exhibition of Yugoslav art, ASPECTS '75, designed by Boris Bucan, which featured the Yugoslav passport.

ASPECTS '75 opened at the Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, on 29 September 1975, and then travelled to Dublin, Leigh, Lancashire, Belfast, Brighton, before finishing at the Third Eye Centre in Glasgow in May 1976.