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BLACKWOOD, J. 2016. *Imaginarium: contemporary video art from Macedonia*. [Exhibition]. 4-18 November 2016, Gray's School of Art, Aberdeen, UK.

Video Art in the Republic of Macedonia began to be made in second half of the 1980s. In this late period of the former Yugoslavia, video was experimental in nature and came about largely through collaboration with state television. In these years video equipment was very expensive and not easily accessible to everyone.

Video art became quite commonplace in the first years of independence, from 1991 onward. At this time cheap and easily available video technology, and an art world much better funded both by government and by NGOs, meant that many artists were able at least to experiment with the medium.

The videos that you see in this exhibition date from 2006 onward. This is a significant date, as it was the year in which the government of former Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski came to power. Gruevski's conservative political party, VMRO-DPMNE, have dominated Macedonian politics ever since.

A key tactic from Gruevski's government was to launch a policy of "antiquization"; the transformation of Macedonia's capital, Skopje, and other larger towns by means of neoclassical and baroque aesthetics, in the "Skopje 2014" scheme. Consequently, the visual appearance of Macedonian towns and cities has been altered fundamentally in the last decade. Nearly six hundred million euros has been spent on this grandiose scheme, in one of Europe's poorest countries.

The consequences of Skopje 2014 have been felt widely in contemporary culture, bitterly dividing artists. The contributors to this show have been chosen as using video in one of three ways; to critique the prevailing political and social imperatives of contemporary Macedonia; to document either the making of art work or its production and discussion; to retreat into the imagination as a means of escaping a troubled, contested and highly volatile political sphere.

With no real market for critical or contemporary art in Macedonia, the audience for such work is found largely abroad—amongst audiences such as yourself. This show invites you to enter a parallel reality, and imagine a profoundly different and challenging socio-political context at the other side of the continent. This is a show that challenges contemporary notions such as "nation", "identity", "ethnicity", transition and neoliberalism, in a very specific local context.

Imaginarium is produced with the generous support of Gray's School of Art, RGU and the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland.

The following texts appear alongside the exhibits:

The artist / Verica Kovacevska

The Artist is a short split screen video that features the artist herself. In the video she performs a series of repetitive actions that document the work process of an artist. As her work becomes more and more affordable, The Artist critically examines the value of creative production in today's market-based economy.

<http://www.kovacevska.net>

My sunshine / Nikola Uzunovski

My Sunshine is a utopian project, suspended between art and science, visionary ideas and social issues, poetry and hyper-technology. Its aim is to produce a flying object that reflects sunlight to a specific area of Earth and appear as the Sun itself. A broader version of My Sunshine contemplates the production of several copies of the aerostat, which shall create the effect of multiple suns in the sky. The project concentrates on areas around the Arctic Circle where, due to the rotation of the Earth's axis, during the winter the Sun stays below the horizon, its rays unable to illuminate

the ground. This phenomenon has a massive influence on the emotional state and relational dynamics of the local population. The project itself consists of an open process that evolves through an extensive participation of the public, moving from the scientific community, astrophysicists, engineers, architects, to embrace whoever wishes to join in the realization of a dream called My Sunshine.

My Sunshine was initiated in Trieste, Italy, where it received the European Emerging Artist Award, where a research in collaboration with the International Center for Theoretical Physics was made on the feasibility of the project. Later in the residency Pollinaria in Abruzzi, Italy, My Sunshine developed in a further phase, where the first prototype model was realized. In the winter 2008-2009 a test session was realized in Rovaniemi in collaboration with the University of Lapland.

In the summer of 2009 it was presented as a National Pavilion of the Republic of Macedonia at the Venice Biennale, where a 4 meter diameter prototype was realized for the event. Until now there were produced various prototypes, but they were controlled manually, like a kite, which showed the desired effect for short time periods. The next stage is to develop a robotic system which can stabilize the mirror to maintain a position, and a propulsion system which can guide the aerostat through the sky.

These three videos are documentation of various stages of the development of the *My Sunshine* project.

<http://www.flgallery.com/nikola-uzunovski-home.html>

Subversion to red / Nada Prlja

Subversion to Red is a project that fosters a search for new forms of socio-political organisation by revisiting certain concepts and societal forms from the past. The project has three stages of development:

1. Knowledge (Red Discussion)

Red Discussion is conceived as a discussion between relevant thinkers and theorists who are invited to analyse and critique various concepts within socialist / Marxist theory. The goal of these discussions is to raise the possibility of reactivating certain 'historical categories', while bringing an element of discursiveness (delete) from within the realm of socialist / Marxist theory. The aim is to deconstruct former models (those no longer relevant to current social and political structures) and to propose aspects within them that may still be applicable today.

2. Ideology (Red-iness)

This second stage aims to point out the validity of certain socialist / Marxist postulates for contemporary society. Newly created artworks will revive these ideologies, by re-enacting excerpts from various speeches, books or films, in the form of performance or video-performance.

3. Application

When stages one and two have been familiarised (i.e. when a level of public knowledge and ideological belief in them has been augmented), a third step could then be applied. Concretely, the application of these new strategies would be tested within art institutions, by proposing to modify their internal working structure and strategies. The art institution(s) would work according to these modified strategies, supported by employees' internalisation and appropriation of these ideologies.

<http://www.nadaprlja.com>
<http://www.seriousinterests.co.uk>

Cruising or stories of nothingness / Igor Toševski

Igor Toševski has been active in the Macedonian art scene for over thirty years, first exhibiting in Skopje in the mid-1980s whilst still a student at the Faculty of Fine Art. A multi-disciplinary artist active in film, site-specific installation,

and sculpture, he was a member of the *Grupa ZERO* late avant-garde from 1985-1991; more recently he was a founding member of the contemporary art initiative *KOOPERACIJA* from 2012-15, alongside fellow exhibitors Vladimir Jančevski, OPA, Gjorgje Jovanovik and Nikola Uzunovski. Together with other members of *Grupa ZERO* he exhibited in the Macedonian pavilion of the Venice Biennale in 2011.

This short film, *Cruising or Stories of Nothingness*, features the artist himself at the wheel of his car as he and three friends tour around the centre of Skopje, discussing the changes that were planned but not yet delivered when this was made (the Skopje 2014 scheme was begun in 2009 and is still on-going). Visitors with the time to sit through the discussion will gain a wry insight into Macedonian society and politics, some stories from the former Yugoslavia, and will be able to see the outline of a Skopje that in 2016, no longer exists.

<http://toshevski.weebly.com>

Whistling buildings / Gjorgje Jovanovik

Gjorgje Jovanovik is a multi-disciplinary artist working in site-specific installation, street art, comic art and public intervention. He was a member of the initiative *KOOPERACIJA* (2012-15) and since 2006 has been part of the *Sviračinja* collective of comic artists. He is also one of the people behind the web radio station *Radio Free Skopje*.

Whistling Buildings is a project that uses humorous means to comment on the privatisation and politicisation of public space in contemporary Macedonia. The artist comments:

"In Whistling Buildings, these are abandoned place, connected with the processes of privitisation, and the bad ways in which capitalism here has operated; wild capitalism, operating without regulation. I guess these buildings are the subject of this corrupt and bizarre privatisation, and the work is a scream against these processes. I also wanted to point out that people here are not so aware of these important things...maybe the artist can help in sensitising the audience and making them aware of this important information, by putting it in the public domain."

<http://www.gjorgjejovanovik.com>

Colourful revolution / Aleksandar Spasoski

The manipulated sound of the buzzing insects makes direct reference to the events of the "Colour Revolution" currently happening across Macedonia: a series of organised citizen protests against government corruption and malfeasance. The protests have been on-going since early 2015.

Another bone of contention for many Macedonian citizens has been the privatisation and transformation of public space in the "Skopje 2014" project. In protesting against this, citizens have attacked government buildings and some of the new monuments with coloured balls of paint, fired with a slingshot. The lurid saturated colour in this film refers to these protests.

Music is by Dine Doneff, Thanos Sideris and Nikos Paraolakis.

<http://www.spasoski.com>