

Memory of Violence and Dreams of the Future

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The French Institute in Serbia and the Goethe Institute in Belgrade, in cooperation with the Museum of Contemporary Art Vojvodina (MSUV), initiated the project *Memory of Violence and Dreams of the Future*, dedicated to the commemoration of the centennial of the First World War, memories of turbulent and violent socio-political conditions, personal traumas, migration and dreams, within a contemporary and artistic context. The project brings together artists from Europe who use, as a starting point, the last 100 years of European history, without returning to the “old debate” on nationalism, imperialism and the issue of blame. With their research they intertwine different dimensions, approaches and issues, the past and the present, relations between the center and the peripheries, aspects of movement/travel, migration and exile, as well as new standards of communication in contemporary local, regional and European dimensions, in times when the examination of constellations and ideologies of the past is becoming necessary for establishing positions in a multipolar world. Through a collective artistic practice, across national borders, the past or present, and free of mental constraints, artists from different positions and contexts have the opportunity to explore and create new standards of mutual recognition, respect for differences, networking and strategies against a permanent degradation of knowledge and cultural endeavor.

The project contains within itself several intertwining thematic sections, pointing towards the key elements of the concept. The first is dedicated to the *mythologization of the individual act* and deals with the influences of social context, cultural models and created myths on the construction of social values of individuals. It problematizes relations within the community, subject to inherited behavior patterns and traditionally constructed values. As the year 2014 marks the centenary of the beginning of the First World War, this segment has been particularly represented in many already completed artistic and political projects around the world, especially in Europe, via the emphasis on the Sarajevo assassination and its protagonists. The emphasis is generally placed on the reinterpretation and critical analysis of the assassination, a symbolic event which has been pinpointed as the immediate cause of the war. *Memory of Violence and Dreams of the Future* does not concern itself as much with a new reading of history, but focuses more on contemporary and artistic contexts. The included

research of the artists is aimed towards the universalization of the act of murder and assassination, or the psychoanalysis of possible violent situations through a personal, critical approach and its connection with the specifics of the place where artists come from, or where they are creating their work.

The second part of the project is concerned with *memories* and relationships of the collective and the individual during major social traumas, such as war. It emphasizes the notion of victimhood, the personal and the familial versus the militarized and the ideological. Political history neglects the position of women, children, the elderly and persons with disabilities, as “unfit” for an active role in battle, and therefore *less valuable* in the dominant patriarchal system that glorifies the role of the warrior. Contemporary art research examines positions of power, relations between individuals and various marginal groups, rendering the problems visible and inviting the public for further discussion. One of the problems present in the concept of artworks which are part of the project *Memory of Violence and Dreams of the Future* is the problem of family in wartime (non)conditions, as well as broken/separated families, migration, exile and asylum. Through their origins and their life paths, several artists are related to a number of countries or they currently reside in several cities and regions, maintaining or not maintaining connections to one or the other. The identities of many are debatable and their understanding requires a preliminary research approach, which simultaneously opens up new questions, such as: whether language, culture, family roots, address of residence or a passport represent the features of a national *identity*, and what if all of these characteristics vary, to what extent are they truly important? These considerations are significant given that the project deals with a world war, which can also be viewed through the change of borders and territories, the transformation of the natural and the urban landscape, the aspect of movement of people, mixing of populations and cultures, resulting in a variety of human destinies.

The establishment of *geographic relations* within the project is particularly emphasized. Each of the participants of the project finds the starting point for their research in their own artistic position, artwork media, identity and environmental context. Regarding the concept and the implementation of their work, some have found a starting point in the socio-political aspects and the role that Belgrade or Novi Sad had during the First World War, while most started from the position of the city in which they live and work in, finding new relations (Paris - Belgrade, Vienna - Sarajevo, Munich - Novi Sad, etc.).

Memory of Violence and Dreams of the Future highlights not only geographical but temporal relations, as well, therefore, through particular works, the artists intersect a variety of dimensions, approaches and issues of the past and present, using historical artifacts, myths or personal stories, developing their artistic practice through different media, such as: painting, sculpture, graphic design, photography, video, film and installations. The third segment is a dialogue between the artistic and historical content, through *the inclusion of historical artifacts* (films, photographs, objects, documents, magazines, etc.), as well as through the comparison of the past and present. It explores the relationship of artistic and historical positions through the engagement of avant-garde art practices, as an approach to art that defined the position of the progressive artist in the history of art. The segment presenting

avant-garde magazines from local practice has an important place within the exhibition, as a form of collective critical reaction of artists to the socio-political situation of the time.

The fourth segment is concerned with *the projection of social plasticity*, the totality of the artwork, i.e. the shaping of life within artistic experimental practices. It stresses the importance of building positive European values in the future through the problematization of a common past, in which, instead of dichotomy (positive-negative), the building of multiple views is emphasized, through the expansion and release from one's own boundaries within art.

The artists who were invited to participate in this project already had works dedicated to the key themes of the exhibition, or they had developed similar working models in their artistic approaches to date, and were interested in committing themselves to the implementation of new research. Contemporary art practice, defined through the problem of the memory of violence, formed the starting point of the project, and through the continuous communication with the participants of the exhibition the project had developed further, including new participants, interested in cooperation, exchange of experiences and knowledge, and essential for the development of the project's idea. The group of artists gathered in accordance to the concept of the exhibition are: Igor Antić (RS-FR), Igor Bošnjak (BA), *diSTRUKTURA* (Milica Miličević and Milan Bosnić, RS), Barbara Barbi Marković (RS-AT), Robert Jankuloski (MK), Jelena Jureša (RS-BE), Thomas Köner (DE-FR), Nebojša Lazić (RS-US), Marianne Marić (FR), Anuk Miladinović (CH-DE), Radenko Milak (BA), Vessna Perunovich (RS-CA), Magali Sanheira (FR) and Selman Trtovac (RS), and the contributors to the project, through texts, film programs and participation in discussions are: Pierre Courtin - Gallery DUPLEX100m2, Sarajevo (FR-BA), Stefanie Böttcher (DE), Arion Asllani (RS), Luise Kloos (AT), Ana Ivanović (CG) and many others.

The symbolic start of the project consists of the avant-garde, Dadaist art magazines such as *Ma* (editor Kassák Lajos) from the period of the First World War, Budapest, Vienna, then the journal *Az Út* (editor Csuka Zoltán), created immediately after the war in Novi Sad, and *Zenit* (editor Ljubomir Micić), published after the war, first in Zagreb, and then in Belgrade. These magazines belonged to the discourse of the Central European avant-garde artistic and literary practice; they advocated the international avant-garde movement of radical deviation from academic rationalism, as a response to the spiritual-political cultural and social climate, particularly in Western and Central Europe. They linked artists from across the region, regardless of political boundaries and dominant political views of countries in which they worked, progressively spreading the spirit of revolt against the ruling insular social models.

Using film archives preserved from the time of the First World War was the basis of the work *Rat je svuda* (*War Is Everywhere*) by Igor Antić, created for the project *Memories of Violence and Dreams of the Future*. The author chose to project scenes from battlefields in an atypical ambience of city streets, his own immediate environment, thus creating a kind of terrifying scenery of modern life which warns that military conflicts can erupt anywhere and at anytime. By creating specific situations with interventions in an urban, public space, which makes his everyday life, the author intersects the past and the present, problematizing

violence and our relationship to it, and also explores the perception and position of art in the contemporary political and economic context, such as the global commemoration of the beginning of the First World War.

In the video work *If I Hadn't Done It...*, conceived in the context of a large commemoration marking the anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War, Igor Bošnjak problematizes the position of a historical figure, the perpetrator of the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, Gavrilo Princip, through a subjective, psychoanalytical approach. With his camera, he records his movements through the streets of Sarajevo, in the first person, reconstructing events and the scene of the assassination itself, bringing dramatization to it with his comments and *timecode*, with time relentlessly running out. The artist's action is performed at the central place of the great commemoration - Sarajevo, a city of violent and traumatic social, political and ideological past, in which each new evaluation of historical positions is problematic and very painful.

DiSTRUKTURA (Milica Miličević and Milan Bosnić), for the first time in collaboration with writer Barbara Marković, who lives in Vienna, conceived and created a video work for the project *Memory of Violence and Dreams of the Future*, which is based on an interdisciplinary intersection of their common interests and their literary/artistic practices to date. The video is the result of research of a specific location - the square of Alija Izetbegović in Sarajevo where the assassination took place in 1914, in the form of a textual recording of all inscriptions noted at the given site at a particular, contemporary moment. It is a psychogeographical analysis of an urban landscape derived through specific authorial "coding" of the place (and time), first in the form of text, then its oral interpretation and video recording, as the final result of research, which is presented to the public as a work of art.

Robert Jankuloski in his work entitled *Ostaci memorije, 1935–2014. (Remains of Memory, 1935-2014)* uses historical artifacts - studio photographs of the inhabitants of Bitola by the Manaki brothers, taken in the period after the First World War, while, as part of the scenery, shell casings appear in the unusual role of ornamental objects. Due to its geographical position, the city was on the front line and exposed to constant bombardment by various explosive devices, first during the Balkan Wars, and then in the period of the First World War. The consequences were devastatingly visible in the destroyed buildings and the violence against the population. Goldsmiths were making decorative vases and other utilitarian objects from found shells casings, keeping them as treasures available even today at flea markets and in private homes. This work presents the direct and indirect consequences of war through old photographs and objects - shells, indicating the intrusion and assimilation of the wartime situation into the daily lives of people.

The video installation *Still* by Jelena Jureša consists of an audio-recording of the *Princes krofne* children's choir, founded in 1993, during the siege of Sarajevo, in order to enable activities that children could look forward to every week, accompanied by photographs of the room where the choir held rehearsals, in a symbolically Yugoslav building, burnt down in 1992 (recently renovated), and videos of the neglected natural environment filled with waste. The author deals with symbolic images of Sarajevo, the place that suffered many years of

violence, not only in relation to the beginning of the First World War, but also the conflicts caused by the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, pointing to the problem of violence and war in general, in the context of identity and people's everyday lives.

Thomas Köner also addresses the concept of the *Memory of Violence and Dreams of the Future* exhibition by thinking about violence in general, as a constantly present problem of contemporary society, visible in all parts of the world, as well as on the outskirts of Buenos Aires. His video work *Le Pâle Signe* exudes the specific atmosphere of foreboding, filled with the sounds of the past, children's play and distant conversations which gradually become overshadowed by dark clouds. The method of implementation of the work indicates a research-based media approach to treatment and usage of audio-visual impulses.

Through a group of prints, Nebojša Lazić addresses the problem of the assassination as a pivotal historical event permeated by complex political motives and aspirations, forms of deliberate violence which cannot be accidental, or banal, however, in time, it becomes subject to different interpretations and views. His project *Assassinated* consists of portraits of people who have been assassinated, as mythic icons of a certain time, whose role was suddenly interrupted, changing the course of history. Among the portraits are statesmen, politicians, and artists from all over the world and different historical periods, including: Franz Ferdinand, John F. Kennedy, Zoran Đinđić, Osama bin Laden, Benazir Bhutto, John Lennon and Andy Warhol, indicating the universal presence of crime in time and space.

Marianne Marić realized her project *Rose Sarajevo* during her stay in Sarajevo, a city which she did not remember, and which she connected with through painful family history, especially memories of her tragically deceased older sister. Travelling through different places, the artist photographed natural landscapes, architecture of cities, commemorative sites, military objects and young girls who reminded her of her sister. The specific archeology of the city, interspersed with the traumatic consequences of war, helped her gradually put together her own history tied to family identity. Through this very personal project, hidden segments of memory were connected and recognized.

Vessna Perunovich, through her personal approach to the intimacy of home, anguish and possible suffering, utilizes an everyday element of a home - a bed that she symbolically constructs from transparent red threads torn by a strong saw. The element of security and creation becomes its total opposite, a place of violence, crime, fear and destruction in the installation *Splitting Up* from the 1990s, the artist's reaction to the socio-political circumstances in former Yugoslavia. The installation points to the fragility of human relationships and family ties caused by the demolition of a multi-ethnic community and a country that was once a model of tolerance, and is imbued with a personal relationship towards family, emigration and emancipation in turbulent times.

Anuk Miladinović presents two of her works at the exhibition. The first is a video work *Ordinance*, which consists of several sequences of different situations that rotate without an emphasized beginning or end, without a narrative that would connect them. Scenes were filmed in different environments, creating an illusion of unrealistic or distorted situations, in

which the reactions of the participants are fragmented, as in images from the subconscious which cause discomfort to the viewer. The video creates an atmosphere of psychological anticipation of events, confusion, fear of the unknown, anxiety and anguish because of what is left unsaid, strong emotions which tear apart individuals left to the destinies of others. The second work marks the space of Savamala in Belgrade, and the Museum in Novi Sad, with advertising billboards in public spaces with an illustration of the gun that Gavrilo Princip used for the assassination, suggesting the possible presence of “a trigger” that could be pulled anywhere, at any moment.

In his project *Never Ending Stories*, Radenko Milak uses pages of daily newspapers, such as *The Daily Mirror*, from the beginning of the First World War, to its end, and the celebration in London, pointing to significant political events and personalities. In addition to the assassination in Sarajevo, a special place in his project is occupied by a series of watercolors dedicated to the research of one of the curiosities of war -carrier pigeons, which communicated information and recorded aerial photographs with specially designed machines. The author examines the medium of communication during the war, the means of communicating messages, recording information, the possibilities of disseminating information and media manipulation, but from the perspective of a contemporary analyst who understands the importance of communication.

With his object *Crna ruka (Black Hand)*, Selman Trtovac responded to the violence which, in the period of the early 1990s, during the wars in the former Yugoslavia, made up our everyday lives and, in a specific way, characterized the historical and political element of the legacy which was our burden. The identity of the Slavs in the Balkans can be seen through a militaristic-warrior cultural code, which glorified violence as an element of rebellion, fighting for freedom and, in this sense, justified and mythologized the assassination. Although it may be placed in the context of the First World War and the most recent war of the 1990s, the *Black Hand* was created through a much more personal approach of the artist. This is a metal cast of a real hand of a real murderer, which the artist came to meet due to number of circumstances, at the same time insisting on truthfulness in the implementation of a previously established concept.

In her work *Fleur bleue et Rose blanche*, Magali Sanheira uses a blue and a white rose suspended in space by a special long needle, similar to needles used to create an ikebana. With a subtle approach to space, through a multi-disciplinary process, the artist combines simple elements imbued with the symbolism of historical events, people, psychology, philosophy, and literature, to highlight the importance of love, the dream of paradise lost, communication and balance with nature, as a utopian aspiration towards progress and the achievement of an ideal balance in life. On the other hand, it is also a symbolic reminder of the proximity of death, as a permanent burden which corrodes our daily lives.

The project *Memory of Violence and Dreams of the Future* includes a segment dedicated to various research in the architecture of memory, memory of a site and situations, from the perspective of legacy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia, Italy and Austria, and implemented through the medium of documentary, experimental and short films. Bringing

together the concept of these works is a project entitled *Beautiful Days 1914/2014* led by *Luise Kloos* (AT), and the participating authors are: Arion Asllani (RS), Admir Mujkić (BA), Sanjin Fazlić (BA), Igor Juran (HR), Josip Zanki (HR), Davide Skerlj (IT), Lotte Schreiber (AT), Lea Titz (AT). Various critical-analytical and psychological approaches to the memory of the First World War are visible in their research, from the use of symbolic sites, architecture, literature to personal family objects and memories.

Starting from different artistic positions, media of research, geographical locations and cultural codes, artists gathered within the project *Memory of Violence and Dreams of the Future*, through a contemporary artistic approach, confirmed the importance of establishing new relations, cooperation and mutual dialogue. The project dedicated to the commemoration of the centenary of the beginning of the First World War was in this way utilized for creating a new platform, open for exchange and communication on a widest spectrum of issues, even the problematic ones, suppressed and painful histories, traumatic legacies and insular relationships. It connected, through a partnership support of France and Germany, most of the countries of the former Yugoslavia and its neighbours, and has thus created opportunities for new cooperation and positive relationships.