

# KRISTINA LEKO

---

WORKDOCUMENTATION SINCE 2000



ORIENTAL RUGS/FRIENDSHIP  
an action/happening  
MAK Vienna, Oriental collection  
May, 11 2012

## **ORIENTAL RUGS/FRIENDSHIP**

an action/happening

MAK Vienna, Oriental collection\*

by Kristina Leko

in cooperation with/guests:

Rudolf Koppensteiner, carpet dealer, (Orientteppich Koppensteiner - Koppensteiner Oriental Rugs), Vienna/Teheran; Dr. Behrooz Bayat, atomic expert and physicist, Vienna, member of the Executive Committee of the United Republicans of Iran; Ahmad Haschemi, engineer, TU Vienna, active member of the Green Party since 2010; Jaleh Lackner Gohari, retired internist, in Austria since 1955, 1986 co-founder of GIF (Gesellschaft Unabhängiger Iranischer Frauen - Society of independent Iranian women in Vienna/Austria), member of 'Iranian Vienna' and 'Women without Borders'.

"I invite you to take part in an event in a museum's oriental collection, where together we will ponder friendships between people. There will be several Iranians present from a variety of social areas. Among the invited guests is Dr. Behrooz Bayat, an atomic physicist. We will be asking him an important question. Together we will watch a short documentary film in Persian, in order to reflect upon cultural understanding beyond language limitations." (From the invitation text.)

As usual, I was concerned with making the museum space available to persons and content that would otherwise have only limited access there.\*\* My point of departure was a simple question: Who was it that took it upon themselves to bring oriental rugs to Vienna? - Carpet dealers. So I invited carpet dealer Rudolf Koppensteiner to be head speaker for the event, while the aim was to enhance and question the complexity of cultural representation, the power relations and economic background of a representative museum space. How is Western acknowledgment of Persian rugs as valuable cultural museum artifacts to be evaluated? Does it apply only to rugs? Is it at all conceivable, that these centuries-old mediated relations of commercial interest could be redesigned as a democratic, communicative relationship and equal transfer between cultures/nations?

First Mr. Koppensteiner presented his company, its two offices in Vienna and Teheran, its two Iranian partners, and his own rug collection.\*\*\* The current political situation, multiculturalism within Persian carpet production, types of folk art that are endangered by industrialization, and the US embargo on Iranian rugs were addressed. "Who weaves the carpets?" was one of the questions voiced during the presentation. In reply to this, Mrs. Lackner Gohari, doctor and activist, founder of several civil organizations, spoke about the role of Iranian woman. The biographies of our guests were an important element of my introduction and

moderation, in order to accentuate the personal aspects of each political issue. Then we looked at a YouTube video in Persian: A short documentary film about a recent assassination of a young nuclear scientist from Teheran University. Afterwards I asked our atomic expert, Mr. Bayat, the following question: "Could oriental rugs indeed prevent a nuclear war?" Mr. Bayat's speech was serious and it merged with a discussion about the video shown before. Comments and arguments alongside elements of regime propaganda visible in the video, but other aspects of understanding among individuals, cultures and communities became an important topic also. Subsequently, Mr. Haschemi, an engineer, from the Austrian Green Party, gave a speech about the duality of western morals, which ended with a poem of his. A lively discussion followed.

Tension between the two groups, guests and audience, Iranians and Austrians, but also tension between all of us and the room itself would come and go during the event. The space had such a scenic quality that while at one moment everything felt surreal, at the very next, the 'simple' reality of intercultural exchangetalk would take over. Our emotions would break in the space between us in those moments when the Iranians felt threatened by that what 'others' might think, and when that 'other' started being aware of it. At that point, we would quickly get into our 'empowerment mode', and establish ourselves as one group (key word 'friendship') re-appropriating a representative Austrian-monarchic museum scene with Persian rugs. My discrete moderation was all about that - letting us balance between those tensions. Museum visitors would regularly approach us, and listen for a while. In the days to come, I kept receiving extremely emotional feedbacks from both sides.

\* Kristina Leko, Oriental Rugs/Friendship, an action/happening, May 11, 2012, duration 2 hours, MAK - Austrian Museum of Applied Arts / Contemporary Art, Vienna; as part of the conference Applied Exhibiting, organized by the ecm - educating/curating/managing studies of the University for Applied Arts, Vienna.

\*\* "Rule 4. Keep your work/activity/events accessible for everybody. Include those who are usually excluded (For a cultural democracy. Unlimited general right of use for public venues.)", from my text "What should I do? An Ethics for Artists in Twelve Simple Rules", 2004, in: Kristina Leko, Secession, Wien, 2006, cover page.

\*\*\* We prepared together his power point presentation for which I also photographed his collection.



Above: Rudolf Koppensteiner, carpet dealer, Orientteppich Koppensteiner, Vienna/Teheran, presenting his business with the power point presentation that we created together. On the right: Ahmad Haschemi, engineer, Technical University of Vienna, since 2010 politically activ in the Austrian Green Party, read one of his poems. Below: Jaleh Lackner-Gohari, internist, retired, in Austria since 1955, founding member of The Society of independent Iranian women in Vienna, member of Women without Borders, gave her talk about Iranian women and the revolution, and questioned stereotypes.







Above: A documentary found on youtube, which was shown as part of our gathering.



Above: Dr. Behrooz Bayat, atomic physicist living in Vienna, member of the Executive Committee of the United Republicans of Iran, gave his speech answering my question, if the oriental rugs could possibly prevent wars.  
Below: an open discussion was an important part of the event which lasted 2 hours.



Monuments for the Good People of Volkertviertel, Monument No. 1/7. A biography of an anonymous retired construction worker who has lived in the neighborhood for the last 50 years. The text was written by Martin Braunstorfer and Sebastian Plöll, students of the local gymnasium.

## **MONUMENTS FOR THE GOOD PEOPLE OF VOLKERTVIERTEL**

A Community Art Project and Public Art Installation by Kristina Leko  
Kunst im Öffentlichen Raum Wien 2006

Seven biographies of workers and immigrants were written in cooperation with youngsters from the neighborhood and erected as written monuments on the walls of the buildings in seven locations in the neighborhood.

The biographies of workers and immigrants are significant documents of our times. The majority of today's societies are strongly marked by migrations and irregularities in the labor markets. Condensed in short and simple narratives, the biographies of working and immigrant people are subtle artifacts able to generate cultural and social identification and self-reflection.

The project documents the social reality of the neighborhood, but it also improves it. Following the idea that every individual or social group should be given a chance to influence the way he/she/they have been perceived in the dominant culture, this project documents life-stories of inhabitants while being produced *with* and *in* the community. The communication potential of the project within the community, and the working methods are as important as the final outcome. However, in its final form, the project needed to be appealing to the Volkertsviertel's visitors. Life-story telling of the people living around the corner were erected as written monuments spread throughout the neighborhood.

Project flow. In collaboration with three local schools six working groups of two to six youngsters were formed. Schools that took part in the project were: a vocational school for the handicapped, a local gymnasium and an elementary school. Young people were invited to take part in a "committee" which would find out about "the good people from our neighborhood" and document their life stories. They were invited to think, research, and suggest the people whose life stories can be instructive for the others. It was explained to them that we wanted to appreciate and honor them, and to produce together symbolic monuments for those good people. They might suggest their parents, relatives, neighbors, and people they have heard of to be included. The project wanted to put the elderly (age 45 +) in close contact with the youngsters. The elderly were invited to make their life stories public in order to transfer their valuable experiences to the youngsters.



Monument No. 4/7. Lea Niyatsov, next to her biography written by two students from the local gymnasium.

Over the period of three weeks I worked with the youngsters individually and in flexible small groups. We visited people in the neighborhood, audio recorded the interviews and then wrote down their narratives. At the end of this collaborative work process there were 7 texts of approx. 1200 characters, the compressed biographies of seven persons from the neighborhood written by their young neighbors.



Monument No. 1/7. Students of The Vocational School for Handicapped Youths Holzhausergasse next to the text they wrote for the project, a biography of a local shoe repairer, a Turkish women.



Monument No. 5/7. Biography of the owner of a near-by restaurant, a Serbian immigrant, written by two students. Students of the local gymnasium who participated in the project.



Monuments No. 2/7 and 4/7. Art students working on the wall writings. Below:

**Communal and community benefits.** The project was proposed together with a modus operandi with a wish that it would be completely produced within the community resources, within a neighborhood which suffers from economical depression and unemployment. Also, not only the production of the project empowers the participants creatively (interviewing people, writing biographical texts) but there is also a strong educational aspect to the whole process. As perceived by the inhabitants of the Viertel itself, it was supposed to be an urban story-telling aimed at encouraging their self reflection, social cohesion and feeling of togetherness of different national groups.

**Erecting the monuments.** The idea was that the erection of the monuments itself would be organized in a way that benefits the community and its members. The writing on the walls itself was supposed to be done through cooperation with other young people from the neighborhood. Due to lack of organizational resources, however, this was not realized. Instead, art students wrote the seven texts on the walls of the buildings.



at 1972 als erstes Kind einer Baumwollarbeiterin in der Türkei gekommen. Ein Jahr später wurde ihr Bruder geboren. Auf nach einer. Als Weißes Kind war sie vorher Monat das Brot zerkleint oder die Margarine auf den Boden. Sie war eine rüchige und brave Schülerin immer die hellen. Sie mit ihren Geschwistern bei den Großeltern aufgewachsen. In Wien lebten Die Frau hat immer auf ihre Brüder für die kleinen Mütter für ihre Brüder seit sie acht Jahren. Eltern konnten die kleinen Kinder nicht beschützen wo. Wenn jemand ihre Brüder geschlagen hat sie geschlagen und hat sie verleidet weil sie ihre Brüder.



Above: Monument No. 7/7. Biography of an anonymous Turkish immigrant worker written by her daughter and the daughter's friend. Below: Monument No. 2/7. Biography of a near-by hairdresser written by students of the local Vocational School for Handicapped Youths.





A Happy House of Justice and Love, participatory community art project, Bonn, 2009. Project participants, Marienhaus Nursing and Retirement Home, from the photo archives of the project.



### A HAPPY HOUSE OF JUSTICE AND LOVE

A participatory community art project  
Bonner Kunstverein, 2009

A collaboration with the residents of the Blumenhof social residence, the Evangelical Migration and Refugee Work, the Caritas Institution "Uns Huus" (youth center), "Marienhaus" (nursing home) and Prälat-Schleich-Haus" (home for the homeless). Project participants: Dustin Böff, Dorothee Büllow, Hidir Celik, Maria Dahmen, Angelika Dusny, Ingeborg Fehrenz, Michael Heveling-Fischell, Bronia Fischer, Bernd Jacobs, Markus Koch, Edith Kramer, Walter Künas, Fine Kürten, Frank Meißner, Margarete Mertens, Büsra Öz, Michelle Reichert, Danielle Reichert, Rene Riegel, Roman Rosenblatt, Dieter Röttgen, Alexander San Roman, Diego San Roman, Wilhelm Schmidt, Heinz Schmitz, Marija Spelic, Manfred Steinbrücker, Siemone Sommerfeld, Marica Tecí, Gian L. Todaro, Helene Wahl, Dirk Wiertelarz, Celine Willem.

To a large degree, the socially weak or precarious residential areas lack beauty, social potential and, likewise, identity. The Bonner Kunstverein is located in just such an area. Invited to develop a community based project for the forecourt of the Bonner Kunstverein, I decided to deal with the theme of architecture and community living and to work in situ with several social groups of different ages. My wish was to continue the way I have worked with communities before, but also to make a reference to the part of the Bonner Kunstverein's history related to the notion of *social plastic*. As a student, through my interest for the work of Joseph Beuys, I came across the concept of Artist Placement Group, which fascinated me. The more I became involved in a socially engaged art, the more I appreciated the APG agenda. In 1977 APG undertook a series of podium exchanges with German government officials taking place in the Bonner Kunstverein. It lead to the *first international artist with government placement*.

Through my Bonn project, I tried to created a circulation of people between a cultural institution (Bonner Kunstverein) and several social institutions. Therefore, the project consists of a big format outdoor mural intervention, a documentary exhibition in the exhibition hall of the Kunstverein, as well as of four small scale exhibitions in the participating institutions.

The objective is to integrate and link the project's individual participants, but also art's public space and the neighborhood. Under consideration are the beauty and the social responsibility of architecture and communal housing and residency, as well as the integrative promotion and sensitization for a cultural participation of all the members of society.



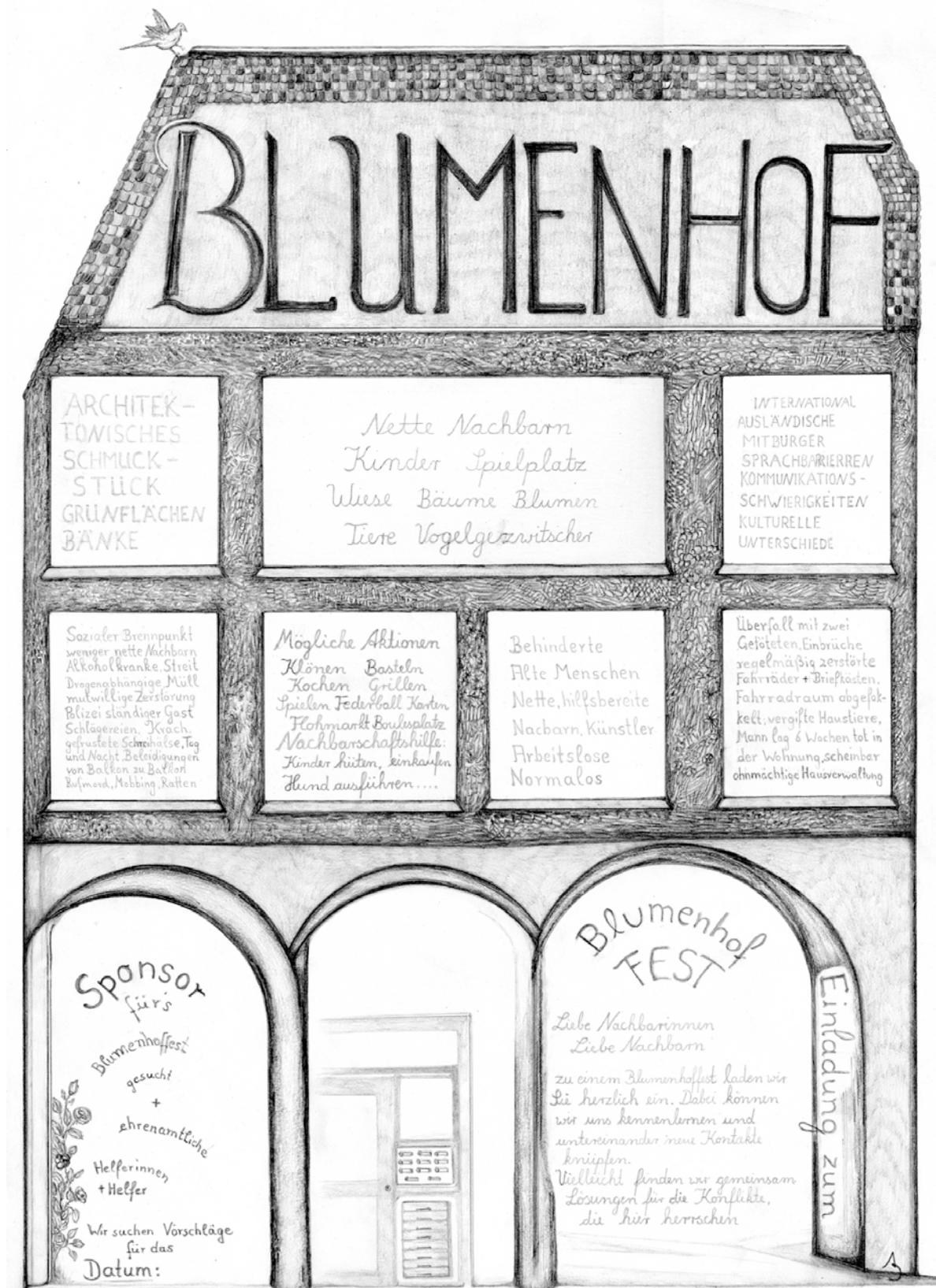
A Happy House of Justice and Love, 2009, outdoor mural intervention, digital print, 850 x 980 cm; underneath: project participants, the Bonner Kunstverein team, and project friends and supporters, 10/16/2009.



A Happy House of Justice and Love, participatory community art project, Bonn, 2009. Above: layout of the outdoor mural intervention with images, texts and drawings created by the project participants within the project workshop. Left: project participants, the Bonner Kunstverein team, and project friends and supporters on the October, 16 2009 during the exhibition opening.

In the course of the project a five-week workshop took place in the involved social institutions and in the Bonner Kunstverein. Hereby drawings, photographs, videos and texts were created by and in collaboration with the project participants. Also, several already created art works were found and later on included in the show in the Bonner Kunstverein.

Beside the artworks and artefacts mentioned above, four big format blackboards with handwritings are shown in the exhibition. These contain four text-collages made out of different individual biographies. These simple narratives are subtle artifacts which should generate cultural and social identification and self reflection, similar to my other projects (for example Missing Monuments, Volkertviertel, Amerika). This project as well documents a social reality, while simultaneously doing an effort to improve it.



Angelika Dusny, a drawing, an agitation poster, created within the project workshop, Blumenhof, 2009. As part of the project, during the exhibition in the Kunstverein, an exhibition of drawings by Angelika Dusny, a hobby artist living in the Blumenhof residence, is on view in the social/gathering rooms of the residence.



Above: A Happy House of Justice and Love, exhibition view, Bonner Kunstverein, 10/16/2009. Below: Blumenhof Biography Board, mdf board, acrylic, chalk, handwritings, 400 x 280 cm, a textual collage with the biographies of the Blumenhof residents; Blumenhof, a two-channel video installation; a found artwork – Flowers by Ingeborg Fehrenz, a senior citizen living in the Blumenhof residence.



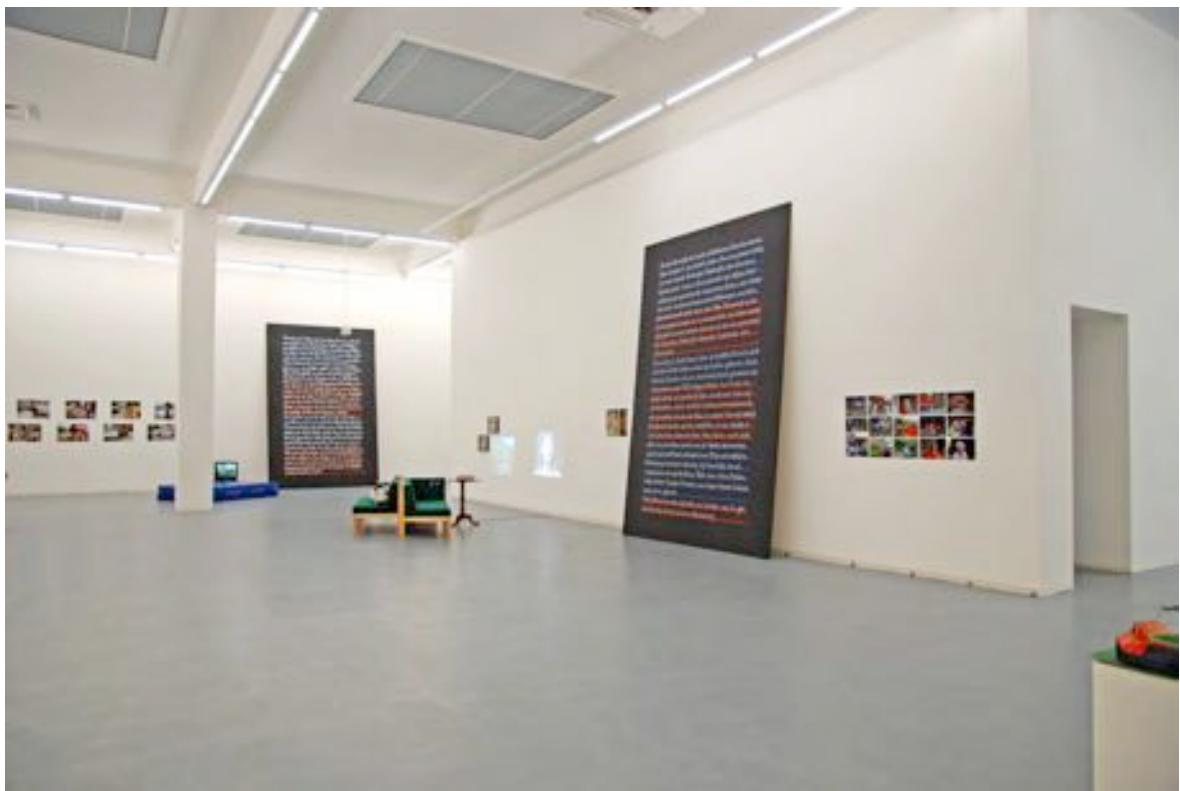
A Happy House of Justice and Love, exhibition view, Bonner Kunstverein, 10/16/2009. Sabine Müller, project assistant, Kristina Leko, and Margarete Mertens, project participant, Mareinhaus nursing and retirement home. In the background: Marienhaus Biography-Board, mdf board, acrylic, chalk, handwritings, 400 x 280 cm, a textual collage with the biographies of the Marienhaus residents.



A Happy House of Justice and Love, exhibition view, Bonner Kunstverein, 2009. Below: Marienhaus Biography-Board, 400 x 280 cm; a found artwork from the Marienhaus nursing home; Fawzia soll lesen lernen, a video featuring Alix Bronia Fischer, 20 min; two armchairs from the Marienhaus nursing home; photographs of the county mental home with Margarete Mertens, June 2009. More photographs and videos are to be seen in the accompanying exhibition in the nursing home.



A Happy House of Justice and Love, 2009. Above: Thuar-street, Macke-street and their way to school photographed by the project participants from Uns Huus Children Center; a videodocumentation of the project workshop, 30 min, 2009; Uns Huus Biography-Board, with a textual collage with the children's biographies; gymmat from the Uns Huus Center. Below: portraits as gifts to the participants of the video documentary about the Blumenhof residence.



A Happy House of Justice and Love, 2009. Above: exhibition view, Bonner Kunstverein, 2009. In the middle: from the photo archives of the project: Walther Künas, the blind photographer; Celine Willems, project participants, Uns Huus Children Center. Below: from the photoarchives of the project; three examples of the photographs exhibited in the exhibition in the Marienhaus Nursing Home. Below and right: K.L. speaking to the audience during the exhibition opening in the nursing home, 10/17/2009.



A Happy House of Justice and Love, exhibition opening at the Marienhaus nursing home, October, 17 2009.





ČEŽNJA : BORN LONGING BY ABENA KOOMSON & KRISTINA LEKO, JULY 5, 2012, THE KITCHEN, NEW YORK

**ČEŽNJA : BORN LONGING**

**by Abena Koomson and Kristina Leko**

a multimedia oral history performance/happening

The Kitchen, 2012

a CEC ArtsLink's project

Featuring:

Hettie Barnhill

Elana Bell

Zeljka Blaksic

Marcella Bonich

Mirjam Busanich

Rachel Busanich

Sarah Dahnke

Ivica Gasparic

Ivica Gasparic, Jun.

Arijana Gasparic

Karma Mayet Johnson

Dara Lazar

Adam Matta

Syreeta McFadden

Caits Meissner

Lynne Procope

Kate Quarfordt

Allison Schlegel

Margaret Zgombic

Nori Boni Zorovich



Photo credits. The group photo and video stills from the performance: David Smithson.  
Photos of our community meetings: Kristina Leko. The bus ride: Zeljka Blaksic.



Song-circles and meetings in the Croatian community in Astoria, Queens, and in New Jersey.



To say that New Yorkers are already accustomed to the type of exchange between cultures, races, and classes that CEC ArtsLink's One Big City initiative supports may be giving us too much credit. The program brings together New York-based artists in all disciplines with international artists to create, after a short period of residency, a performance or exhibition to be presented throughout the five boroughs. And while citizens of all backgrounds may be pressed up next to each other on the subway, share an office, or eat at each other's restaurants, the tight-knit ethnic communities that together have created the singular character of contemporary New York City can still feel absolutely impenetrable.

The partnership between Croatian-born, Berlin-based artist Kristina Leko and Brooklyn-based writer, educator and performer, Abena Koomson, for Čežnja: Born Longing was an attempt to bring outsiders into the Croatian community in the Astoria neighborhood of Queens (and vice versa), and to manage it in a way that went beyond superficial encounters or well-worn ideas of "cultural exchange." The idea of being "born longing," as the title suggests, is one which is utterly familiar in this city; a place where many displaced populations have come for refuge, often only to be forced out again by a more dominant group, real estate developers, or new industry, instilling a cycle of rapid reinvention of the ethnic or racial make-up of neighborhoods from generation to generation. The idea of a homeland or mother tongue becomes increasingly mythical as the years pass; geography and language that was once highly specific becomes fluid and hybrid. Subjective histories are transferred, translated, and repeated between families, students and teachers, religious congregations, and friends at bars. For those from the former Yugoslavia, this longing is amplified from the tumultuous history and eventual dissolution of the country which took place during most of the twentieth-century; they belong to an ever-growing international community of those who leave their homeland never to return, because it no longer exists. But, as Čežnja: Born Longing proved, the longing or nostalgia is not limited to those who may be first or second generation immigrants. It resides in us all for a connection to cultures that have preceded us, whether we are genealogically linked or not.

During a residency at P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center in Queens in 2002-03, Leko first entered the Croatian community in Astoria as a volunteer at a Sunday school, building relationships that would form the basis of Amerika, an ambitious exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb in 2005. While this installation presented video and ephemera in what Leko describes as "expanded documentary cinema," the evening at The Kitchen presented the opportunity to bring in four out of five women that Leko had met a decade earlier—Marcella Bonich, Miriam Busanich, Margaret Zgombic, and Nori Boni Zorovich—all of whom fled from Communist Yugoslavia in the 1950s and 1960s. By allowing them the opportunity to share their personal history with a live audience, there was an undeniable weight to the evening that can be lacking in an exhibition context. In an exhibition, one passes through space and chooses what to look at and what to overlook; in performance, we were here, together, seated, absorbing the information as it was delivered to us. Rather than being represented through documentation, the physical presence of the women (now ranging in age from 76 to 87), created a stronger bond between the younger artists, writers, dancers, and singers who shared the stage.

This live, communal experience highlighted the importance of the collaboration between Leko and Koomson, who had invited the New York-based guest artists to perform. The meeting point for the seemingly disparate cultures was the song as a social tool. Koomson, who often works with a cappella song circles based on the exchange and learning of traditional music, lent the evening some of the most poignant moments, as when Elana Bell, Karma Mayet Johnson, and Kate Quarfordt joined her onstage singing in Croatian, with many audience members adding their own voices. As part of the development of the performance, the four of them had been running song circles in the Croatian community centers in Queens, singing together and spending time with the four women and the

community. And coming full circle, they also performed at this year's Croatian Children's Festival, an event that had great presence in Čežnja : Born Longing. The presentation of two songs written for the festival by song writer Ivica Gasparic engaged the audience deeply, through two videos of his son and daughter translating songs Gasparic had written specifically for them. While his son refers to the sadness of the "big white bird" that has taken him from his homeland, his daughter touches on the more specific problem of ancestral homes being sold, like much of the real estate in Croatia, to foreign developers as the value of land has skyrocketed in recent years. In this situation, the homeland is not left behind as by those who emigrated; instead, it is taken out from under them, as economic pressures grow in tandem. As his daughter struggles to hold back tears, so did many in the audience, from Croatia and beyond, in this time of global foreclosure and financial instability.

As Leko had done in Amerika, a number of strategies were used to communicate the subjects' stories. Not only would the five women appear on stage, but also in video; not only song was used, but dance and poetry. The impossible task of "accurately" reporting personal histories was attempted by each vignette; instead of a single narrative voice, the past was enacted as multifaceted and ongoing— a process. The connections drawn were often startlingly direct, as in "The Crossing" with Zorovich, the writer Syreeta McFadden, and the dancer Hettie Barnhill, drawing upon parallels between Zorovich's journey to the U.S., which was an act of escape from communism, and McFadden's ancestors, brought over in the slave trade, an act of forced removal. McFadden begins her text, "Stories like ours always begins with a boat"; the "ours" here can refer to those on stage, as well as all of the others who have made a journey not knowing what lies on the other side. "Your" and "our" became weighted words in their repetition throughout the reading, as well as "home." None of these words were ever concrete in their meanings. Their stories are told separately at first, and then became intertwined by the end, another form of literal "crossing." Another strong bond was formed in the last scene of the performance, in which Busanic and poet Lynne Procope read poems describing the islands where they born; Busanic from Ilovik, and Procope from Ieri, Trinidad. Procope's poem centers around the bountiful, natural forms her god—a woman—takes. As she reads, images of a Catholic Madonna procession from Ilovik in 1958 (one of the last years the island was populated before a mass exodus in 1962) were projected, conveying a deep sense of nostalgia and tradition. The Madonna becomes an important link between these two women, born decades, miles, and cultures apart. She is a figure of borderless faith, a maternal protector whom they carry in their heart no matter how far they have travelled. The initial insider/outsider binary was magnified by Leko's acknowledgement that apparent racism within the Croatian community was an impetus to work with an African-American collaborator; to that end, the diversity portrayed on stage did not feel at all forced, but completely natural— completely representative of New York. Additionally, the palpable female presence—almost all the guest artists were women—was another aspect which may have been deliberate, but rather than being a quality to be remarked at, felt inherent to the project.

Čežnja : Born Longing ends with a "family portrait", in which the camera is placed on stage and faces the audience, all of which have taken part in this singular event. It is a full house of strangers, friends, and family; children, senior citizens, and everyone in between. Though many of these audience members had never met before, and may never meet, the gesture of inclusion here is very much in line with idea of community that The Kitchen has sought to build through their support of artists, and artistic experimentation in all disciplines, since its inception in 1971. Like many productions at The Kitchen, the separation between audience and performer became minimal; rather than facing each other in opposition, we existed on a single plane, just for an evening. The individual and collaborative work of artists such as Leko and Koomson demonstrates that the role of the artist is not as an individual autonomous to the world at large, but one which uses the capabilities of art to facilitate the relationship to others. For what better excuse than art is there for allowing 155 rapt listeners to share your history, to inspire communication between generations, races, classes, and neighborhoods—essentially, to not be forgotten?



Zeljka Blaksic, Allison Schlegel, a special bus ride from Queens to the theater was part of the Ceznja:Born Longing performance.



gretchen wilson  
kate bushell, elena bed, nina blakely,  
mariam bouach, morgan freeman,  
richie bunnell, sarah chalke,  
lisa gerrard, karen moffat johnson,  
carrie matthews, dana mayer, adam matta,  
lara spawler, allison schlegel, margaret  
grable, nell horvitzovich



Adam Matta



A small pot containing the remains  
of Zeljko's family brought in the  
refugee center in Croatia, July 11, 2012.  
The neighboring family had a similar pot;  
The two families exchanged the pots  
in a regular hand, since neither could  
afford a complete set on their own.



Zeljka Blaksic, Allison Schlegel



When we came to us, a woman brought another  
pot with her. She said she had been saving it  
for 10 years. She had no other possessions. And  
she said, "Take what you need for now. I will bring  
them to you again." (2012)



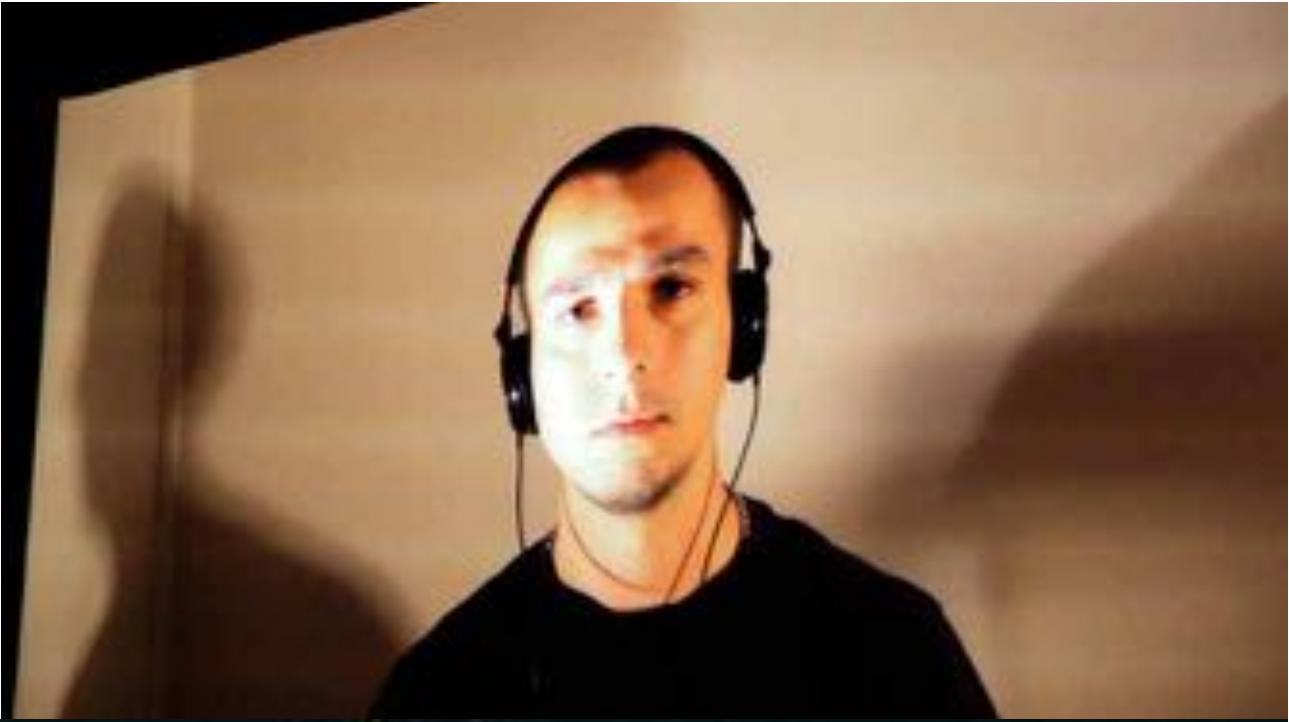


Marcella Bonich, Karma Mayet Johnson



Nori Boni Zorovich, Syreeta McFadden, Hettie Barnhill





Ivica Gasparic Jun., Arijana Gasparic, Adam Matta, Abema Koomson, Elana Bell, Karma Mayet Johnson



Elana Bell, Abema Koomson, Kate Quarfordt, Karma Mayet Johnson



Mirjam Busanich, Lynne Procope





ČEZNJA : BORN LONGING BY ABENA KOOMSON & KRISTINA LEKO, JULY 5, 2012, THE KITCHEN, NEW YORK

In the African American context, the tradition of group singing is not only a cultural tradition, but a political one. From the history of slavery where gathering and unified activities beyond slave work were seen as dangerous acts, to the advent of hip-hop and the beats of urban commentary, the call and response among voices and rhythms has been our history book. Group singing is a chronicle and a preserving agent, but it also initiates community. Once we sing together, our breath is woven into an entity that exists with the potential to breathe life into our intents and purposes. Songs like the gospel "Stay On the Battlefield," James Brown's funky shout out "Black and Proud," and the civil rights anthem "We Shall Overcome" transmit emotions and cultural experiences when embraced by a chorus of voices. In the African American context, even the soloist invokes this tradition when the handclaps, mmhmms, head nods and commentary of the listeners are welcomed, invoked and celebrated. It is from this context that I approach singing in community. I welcome witnesses rather than spectators, participants rather than audiences, movement, resonance and vibration rather than polite stiffness. Singing, by its very nature, which requires speakers and listeners, is a birthplace for community building.

Abena Koomson

Without knowing about each other, Abena Koomson and I wrote very similar project proposals. I wanted to continue my research from 2002 about the topic of nostalgia in the Croatian community songs in Astoria, and suggested collaboration with an African American artist in order to (additionally) try to influence the racism that I had spotted in the community back then. Abena, belonging to the NY Ghanaian community, wanted to research songs in a community that she had not had any access to beforehand. Being an African-American musician and educator, a teacher, Abena's background is (political) empowerment through music. She organises song circles on a regular basis.

The story line of our theatre performance was based on my Amerika exhibition (2005) and the Čežnja performance featured four elderly Croatian immigrant women from Astoria, Queens, and their life stories. Aside from them, a diverse assembly of New York-based artists invited by Abena was involved in the performance. On stage, the two groups/communities encounter one another physically and symbolically in a mixture of documentary video, live performance, poetry, beat boxing and a cappella singing. We filmed interviews related to our theme of longing, prepared the elderly ladies for their act on the stage, established contact between them and three female writers, two of them African American, who, in response to the 'Croatian' stories, wrote their personal stories. (Texts enclosed.)

The performance involved lots of singing with and among the audience. All the songs were telling about the old country and were extremely sad. Many people cried during the show. The audience was mixed and approximately one third of it were members of the Croatian community. The day after, we received an invitation to perform in a hall in New Jersey, which we were unable to accept. Finally, an additional credit to our project was the fact that Abena and her a cappella friends opened and then sang at the Croatian children's festival in New York 2012, one of the most important cultural events of the US Croatian community.

Kristina Leko

**Ilovik**

by Caits Meissner

this line that crosses the distance  
between pinky and thumb is the mainland  
if you were to place a penny  
in the corner of my palm, there is my island  
these two hands are maps

these hands are currency  
the men have gone to the government  
we have kept the winter's bounty  
in the attic to keep us all until spring  
there is you and I  
and 1,500 bodies on this island  
to keep alive

these hands are a calendar  
they mark the seasons  
they have grown browner than  
the skin I was born in  
the sun tags along into the fields  
where I pick the fruit  
bring a basket to their leaves  
and put my palm around  
the small weight of  
oranges and lemons  
bite into their thick jackets  
and let the juice flood my tongue,  
these hands bring gifts

they stack the sardines like bricks  
belly to back to belly to back  
rub them with salt until we sting  
back bent round over the barrel  
these hands will carry the smell of fish  
through summer, until they are rubbed  
with the blood of ripe tomatoes  
then wrung to dry, their shells  
hung in the window wrapped in cotton

I have in my hands all I can hold  
there is a song to this work  
the thin drum of the roof as it gathers  
rain into the pot to boil  
I stir the Polenta,  
I squeeze the wine from the grapes  
I bottle up the olives to keep for many  
moons  
the children hold the press like the steer  
of a ship  
and run 'round and 'round

I know each stitch that binds the mattress  
I have cut the thread on my teeth  
and stuffed their bellies with wool

I slip my work into the dreams of my people  
my people, who sit at the feet of the Lord on  
Sundays  
my people, Sundays, we dance in the hall,  
where the town gathers  
my people, we jump in the water to swim  
home in the dresses our mother made us,  
pink as the sun as it descends into water

we are a people of water  
I wonder what is on the other side  
but if I were to leave  
who would milk the goats in the morning?  
who would stoke the fire until it dances  
or mop the floor of the school house so clean  
the children could see their teeth in its  
shine?

come morning we'll throw in the lambs in the  
water  
to soak them, tie down their limbs in the  
grass  
when we'll take off their coats, one side at  
a time  
they'll become bare as the dirt

in the morning, where we take the sheep  
we will find five skulls buried under the sand  
no other bones for the dog's to chew on  
where we swim from our mother's home to the  
fields,  
they will discover a bronze statue beneath  
the water  
time will have taken its head from its body  
and they'll pull it out onto a big boat and  
try  
to sell it for more money than we've ever  
seen

in the morning, one day, a ship wrecked in  
storm  
will wash a body onto our shores  
we'll see the girl's body round with salt  
and turn black under the sun  
and we'll know not where she came from  
or where she was trying to go

these hands are memory  
do not forget, they tell us, you are, too  
earth and water  
you came from this rain and rich soil  
and, too, you will one day, return

## ZORA

by Syreeta McFadden

Stories like ours always begins with a boat.

The ocean, the same. Salty indigo dark. That depths and depths and depths. Momma used to say that the buoys along the coast echo the moans of our fore-bearers crossing. She used to say that odd quiet of rushing water and the quiet clap, clap against the pier was an old mothers moan. A woman desperate enough for escape she'd hurl her own body overboard surrender to the dark. My people come by way of Portsmouth by way of a long ride from some black African coast we've never been able to name. Any attempt is bastardization. How we ended up here, on a stoop in Queens, with our neighbors Puerto Rican and Croatian, is what one would call, a lovely urban coincidence.

We've come this far by faith, is what my mother's mother would say.

Queens, too, is an island, a regional conglomerate of three islands that we call New York. If we're to be honest here, most of us came here by boat. Everyone in America is from somewhere else. South of where we sit now, tourists from some state west of here are on a boat to Ellis to find their fathers names on its rolls. These folks were privilege with the choice of choosing their crossing. I've been there once. Chaperoned my eldest's on a school fieldtrip. She asked if we could find our name on that long registry, in a time period that followed our ancestor's arrival. Broke my heart a little to tell her she'd find no evidence of black Transors on those scrolls. Our story began before they kept records like these. She ran off to watch her friends light bright discoveries. The names. The boats. The possibilities. The legacies. Coveting their stories of seeking home and opportunity to the land of milk and honey, land that seemed to welcome them and their skin..

Ours, too, is a story of crossing, Nori says.

She tells me this. My neighbor. Her English is music. Snaps me back to the iced lemonade in my hand, its cold is remarkable and comforting in this heat. My kids mock my mason jar. That' so country, they say. But I don't care, to drink from it is a kinda of homecoming I can't articulate for them. The act connects me back to something I'll never be able to describe without an ache. She tells me of their crossing. A lazy midsummer afternoon, our children and children's children long somewhere off, scattered off in archipelago of New York and America, for that matter. The particulars differ my own story but I do recognize it. I tell her how my youngest Zora is headed to college. She smiles a knowing wink. I recognize that too, how women have a twinkle in their eyes holding onto a pearl of a private memory, but she still looks distant.

That was the name of our boat, she smiles. For a time it was home. She continues. The boat, 18 meters, so, 60 feet, it was our boat we fished with, with which we made our escape.

For two years the sea was our home. I can't tell you that this is home. In my dreams I see aquamarine ribbons rivulets a vast openness, a threadbare line between sky and sea. I can tell you that my dreams were tranquil. It was not all beautiful. We encountered tempests and maelstroms, times when the sea provided to little food, but we hard our faith. We imagined a home not unlike the one we left on the coast of your land.

Easy Nori, I say. I shake the ice against jar's walls. I feel my stomach shift into a tight ball around two innocuous words: your, land.

I was born here, but I'm never so sure that those words belong to me. You know, four years ago, they mauled Michelle Obama for saying that it was the first time she was proud of her country. Everyone wanted to sweep under a rug our complicated legacy. She is by definition the product of that legacy. It doesn't make it any less true. This is all to really say: I'm courting the idea of mouthing the words my land belongs to me. They're just words you say. Maybe, I think.

I've seen many crossings into this land of milk and honey. Stories passed down to me in hushed tones, quiet like river water lapping against rocks and stones.

My people moved west and south, under a slavemaster's lash, fire at their heels. I don't know this first hand. I know the photos that survived the burning. The erasure of court records of birth and death, towns burned to ground because they'd grown more prosperous than white ones. A blink from a century past. I know this to be true.

Nori looks off, her eye a hard stare at everything and nothing. She fans herself with a flattened newspaper. A signal to the absent summer breeze to return to work. A dog barks in some unknowable distance.

When they came to our island, she says, they banned our language. When she says this, music of home still lingers, I can almost see her island home. She continues, There were choices to be made. We had to disappear, to die.

Here, her story becomes mine:

We were little snails carrying on ourselves all our little possessions, and walking and walking without knowing where we were headed. We were not emigrants with wishes and hopes. We were refugees without any hope. The only important thing was to leave.

Leaving, remarkably, is equally hard as staying, she adds. What I learned from the sea is that you can't dream freedom as much as you dream home.

I think about that some. I imagine when all my family left the plantations over generations that each move, the wandering, the walking, the dark in some part of their dreams.

What is freedom anyway? I add.

What is home? She says.

I cannot say we are Americans. We live here, respect the laws, we are content, but with our hearts we are always there. But you, here is your home. No matter the story, here is your home. You are American as pie.

I accept this. Offer her an empty glass. We make lemonade from lemons, I say. She says she never understood this.

I say that's what freedom is.

I ache, she says. Wish you could have seen my home.

We watch the sun yellow to tangerine. A maroon impala passes by, windows down, and music briefly fills our block with a forgotten melody from yesterday.

Did I ever tell you Zora means in my tongue? She asks.

No, I say.

Like your daughter's name... It means dawn.

**Longing for Ieri**

by Lynne Procope

Trinidad, is the southernmost island of the Caribbean.

The native people, the Arawaks, called my country Ieri,

Land of the Humming Bird. Columbus called it La  
ysla de la Trinidad,

in honor of the Holy Trinity. We call it paradise.

We believe

no matter how far we travel, no matter how far our  
hungers drives us,

we can never leave Ieri.

In my country we call god  
by her many names. We name her  
bois mabi, she of the bitter bark  
hibiscus, she of the humming bird belly  
breadfruit, she of the poor man's pot  
and sapodilla, she of the sweetest milk  
We name her guava and passion fruit,  
pommecythere and poui. She the blossom,  
the burst fruit. She- the first garden  
and the fall.

We name her every flowering  
rush of this three mountain island.  
We name her lover, sister and mother too.

Now to sing our hosannas and beg her  
forgive us our leaving. Now to wreath Trinidad  
in our small pride, culled in these cold places.  
Now to survive surviving,  
without her sun drugged breezes. Now  
to forgive ourselves any year we do not return  
to Trinidad. Any of our fathers' sailor dances  
or their robber songs which we can no longer re-  
call.

--- --- ---

I'm a girl-child born of a smooth blade  
machete, of the dark blood and fearless prayer  
of mosquito. I broke open  
the year the mountain tumbled down,  
the year the bulldozers leveled god  
at the ankles. When I learned to dance again;  
It was the calinda of cold, sinking asphalt,  
The heel and toe hallelujahs of underground  
trains.  
I learned to let my hips sing  
till the knot slipped my heart.

I was raised in a soca wild music in tassa and  
the smooth sway of shanti, in the rolling Oshun of the Orinoco,  
in the hunger Caribbean Sea, but I found here America;  
another country, cold oceans to house my deep,  
my ever longing. This longing true as a bell rung  
and wailing in the belly. My belly is a house of hunger,  
a wilder humming, this far from home, this far  
from all the god I've known.and named and praised  
for what I've owed.

for the red dirt of the belmont hills,  
always a sweet rain damped scent in my nose.  
The song of the guitar pan like a string  
dragging your navel. My chest always a cathedral  
for my love, for my longing, my hands wringing out  
that one song, Ieri. It is a psalm of me and all who came  
before me. Psalm of the hummingbird. It is the thousand  
glories my godbody can be named Ieri,  
Still the one truth I know.

[lynneprocope.com](http://lynneprocope.com)



*Missing Monuments*, installation views, Landhaushof, Graz, 2007/08.

## **MISSING MONUMENTS**

A Community Art Project and a Sculptural Installation by Kristina Leko  
in collaboration with ...  
Kunst im Öffentlichen Raum Steiermark, Graz, 2007/08

The project was dedicated to the immigrant communities of Graz, in honor of:  
Fred Ohenen, Nigeria, Talat El-Kholy, Egypt, Pawan Kohli, India, an Anonimus  
Asylum Seeker, Africa, and Ante Repusic, Croatia.  
Five sculptural portraits were modelled by Amina Banna, Ileana El-Kholy, Emanuel  
Nkrumah Kwabena - ENKS, Hermine Kurzweil and Ana Ludvik under the guidance of  
David Smithson

[www.missingmonuments.eu](http://www.missingmonuments.eu) was realized in collaboration with Albena Angelova,  
Bogie Balint, Marie-Louisette Douatsop, Mandoffane Faye, Herbert Fuchs, Martin  
Gjecaj, Francisco Santiago Nino, Valentina Nistor, Peter Presinger, Carlos  
Escobar Pukara, Veada Stoff, Interkulturelle Frauen, Österreichisch-Kroatische  
Initiative, Österr. Russische Gesellschaft, Indish-Österr. Gesellschaft, NIL,  
and Ägyptischer Verein.

The installation consists of five sculptural monument-like artifacts honoring  
five distinguished members of immigrant minorities in Graz. Each monument  
consists of a head portrait and a text. The installation site is culturally  
relevant and representative, the courtyard of the provincial parliament, which  
is also a passage between the two main shopping streets in the historical  
center of the town. The installation period was 4 months.

*The missing monuments* are dedicated to the five individuals who significantly  
influenced their communities: Dr. Talat El-Kholy, Egyptian Cultural Club, active  
for over three decades in the integration process, Fred Ohenen, Nigerian, first  
president of the Immigrant Council/Parliament of Graz, active for over 10 years  
in educational programs against racism, Pawan Kohli, president of the Indian  
Cultural Organization in Graz, Ante Repusic, Croatian, dedicated himself to work  
with refugees from ex-Yugoslavian countries, and an anonymous asylum seeker,  
an African woman living in the Women's Home of Caritas Graz.



Missing Monuments, sculpture workshop.

The distinguished individuals were selected by their communities through a workshop involving volunteers from several communities. In the workshop, five biographical texts explaining accomplishments of the individuals honored by sculptural portraits were written. Within the workshop biographical texts of other people with migrant backgrounds were written as well. In addition, several texts were created based on interviews. There are 21 biographical texts created during the project, and they are made public through the web site [missingmonuments.eu](http://missingmonuments.eu).

Following the idea of the political right of self-representation as applied to the artistic process; the sculptural artifacts of this project were not created by professional artists, but by community members who wanted to have an artistic affiliation, i.e. by five individuals who had never modeled before, in a 10-day workshop led by the sculptor David Smithson.

Afterwards, the sculptural portraits were cast by a professional sculptor. Each community involved received their portrait copy in plaster. For the installation in public space copies cast in marble powder were produced. After the installation in public space, the five heads with pedestals became part of the collection of the Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz.

The project wanted to benefit the selected immigrant communities. The participatory method aimed to develop and nourish intellectual and cultural resources of the communities. Therefore, the creation and production process of the project was done through the involvement of the communities' members/volunteers. On the other side, there was a wish to critically question the symbolic structure of cultural and historical representation present in the existing urban structures, and to integrate the immigrant minorities into the existing symbolic order.

The goal of the project was to improve the public image of the immigrant communities by presenting unexpected artifacts of a high artistic quality in the city public spaces of cultural and historical relevance. The main goal implies not only a benefit for the immigrant community, but, importantly, an enrichment of the dominant culture through a critical self-reflection.



Missing Monuments, installation views. The El-Kholy family by the portrait of Talaat El-Kholy.



Vaeda Stoff and another member of *Liste Interkultureller Frauen* by the portrait of an anonymous African asylum seeker.  
Installacion view. Missing Monuments project participants at the opening, September 15, 2007.



For the collection of biographical texts created within this project,  
please, visit [www.missingmonuments.eu](http://www.missingmonuments.eu), Texte.

Wie die Welt funktioniert?

Die Kleinen müssen unten bleiben!

Aber für mich sind die Kleinen

die größten Menschen, weil sie

wissen, was los ist.

ZITAT NACH Y.B., GRIESPLATZ, 2011



Above: The project poster-folder. Translation:  
How does the world function? The little people  
have to stay at the bottom. But for me, the little  
ones are the big people, because they know what  
is going on. On the right: A May Day performative  
happening, sightseeing walk for the project open-  
ing, May, 1st 2013, Graz.

#### NO MONUMENTS FOR LABOUR AND IMMIGRATION

a series of text-based art works in public space

student seminar, social sculpture

by KRISTINA LEKO

in collaboration with ...

[complete project impressum pg.27]

rotor.mur.at

Graz, Austria

2011-2015



#### INSTALLATION SITE 1/8

Griesgasse 50

This text-based artwork is a monument to a snack bar. The San Grill Bar, where you could get "the best grill between Helsinki and Tirana", was run at this location by Bosnian-born Kadir Smailović from 1997 to 2002. It was an important meeting point for numerous members of the Bosnian and ex-Yugoslavian communities in Graz. The text tells about the bar, and about Kadir Smailovic's life story, outlining the social, political and economic background of refugees in general.





A May Day performative happening,  
sightseeing walk for the project  
opening, duration 2 hours, ca.  
200 participants, May 1st 2013,  
Annenviertel, Graz.

Photographic documentation: J.J.  
Kucek



A May Day performative happening, the project opening, May 1st 2013, Graz.  
Above: Kadir Smailovic unveils the art work at Griesplatz dedicated to the San Snack Bar, which he ran from 1997 to 2002.





The project opening, May 1st, 2013.  
During our performative happening the people took part in the event by reading through megaphones selected historical texts dedicated to labour movement history on different sites during the tour. From Griesplatz the group headed to the second location in Pflastergasse/Ägydigasse.

## INSTALLATION SITE 2/8

Ägydigasse 12 and 14

Except for the first one, each project location has two text panels installed on the building facade or on an outside wall. One text mediates the history of local labour movement, whereas the other text-panel gives an insight into the life stories of immigrants working or living in the immediate surroundings of that historical location. In this case, the historical text tells about the Italian migrant workers in Graz in the 16th and 17th century. These construction workers built the city walls, the grand buildings, paved the streets... The local population was hostile to them, using the very same arguments the anti-immigrant discourse uses nowadays. The other text brings biographical notes of three people who come from Ghana, Iran and Macedonia and live at this address - three life stories of so called simple people who contribute to society by working hard at their nursing or maintenance jobs.







May 1st, 2013. Installation site 2/8, Pflastergasse/Ägydigasse.  
During the performative happening, the audience read the texts in situ in front of the artworks. Additionally, excerpts of biographical text were read aloud through megaphones. In most cases these texts were read by students who either wrote the text or participated in its creation by working in a team.

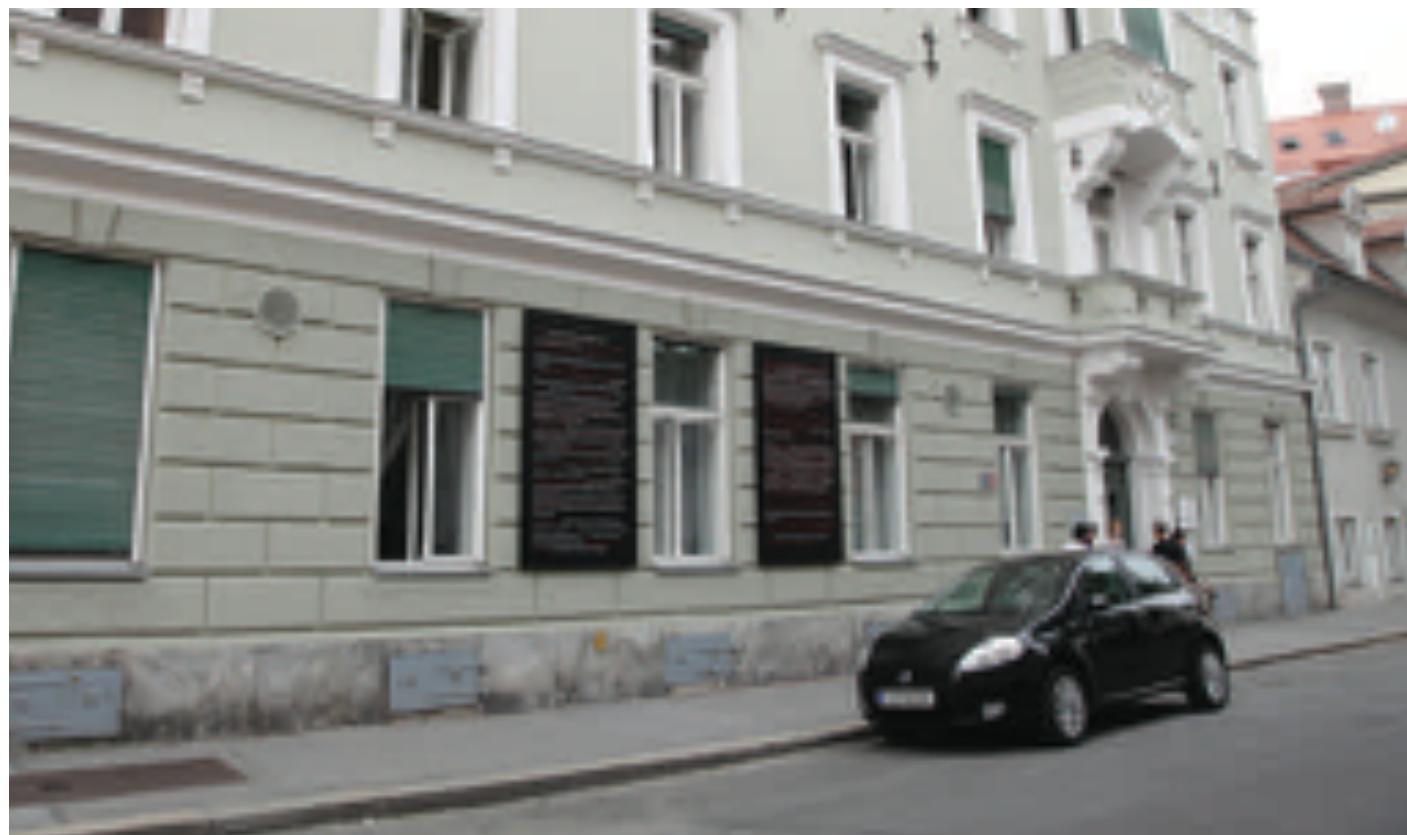


In the middle: Evelyn Ark, project participant with her son Kingsley in his school. Our two students, together with Evelyn Ark and their children during a drawing workshop session, which was a part of our field research dedicated to immigrant biographies. Above: Installation site - application of historical and anthropological research in public space. Here: one of eight interventions in public space with biographical text about Evelyn Ark.

## INSTALLATION SITE 3/8

Dreihackengasse 2 - ISOP

The text positioned on the left tells about the ISOP organization (Innovative Sozialprojekte), which has been active in different social and intercultural work since the 1980s. The text artwork on the right hand side is a textual collage created from biographical notes about four people living or working in the immediate surroundings.





Seit 1989 führt ISOP auch Deutschkurse für Flüchtlinge durch. Die Erfahrungen und Anforderungen führten zum heutigen Arbeitsbeschwerpunkt – der antidiskriminativen und antirassistischen Arbeit sowie der interkulturellen Arbeit mit Flüchtlingen und MigrantInnen. Seit Anfang der 1990er Jahre werden neben Deutschkursen auch Berufsorientierungskurse für Flüchtlinge und MigrantInnen angeboten. Es folgten spezielle Angebote für migrantische Frauen und Kinder. Um 1995 steigt ISOP in Jugendarbeit und Streetwork ein. ISOP wird ein "Interkulturelles Forum" und ein "Pädagogisches Forum" unterteilt und der Name auf "ISOP - Innovative Sozialprojekte" geändert.



A May Day performative happening, the project opening, May, 1st 2013. Above: Reading historical texts about ISOP organisation (Innovative Sozialprojekte) on the way from Pflastergasse/Ägydigasse to Dreihackengasse. Historical texts about the Graz "Bloody Saturday" of 1919 were read while the group walked towards Orinet Shop, the next installation site. Mr. Liyi junior joined the group as well.

200 und 300 Demonstranten. Die Polizei der Kommunistischen Partei verhinderte die Abfertigung der Demonstranten. Trotzdem wurde die gewaltsame Verhandlung der Demonstranten aufgetragen, wobei die Gewalt, die ausübte, bestimmt ist durch die Begriffe aus dem sozialdemokratischen Programm der Kommunisten. Die kommunistische Theorie vertritt gegen die Kommunisten.

Für Samstag, den 12. 3. 1919, rief die KPD geplante Kundgebung am Hauptbahnhof auf, die jedoch durch die Versammlungswettschriften verbunden werden sollte. Trotzdem wurden zahlreiche revolutionäre Maßnahmen ergriffen und die Kundgebung gestoppt.

Die KPD vertrug die Kundgebung nach Gelingen.

Immer wieder demonstrierten sich DemonstrantInnen an den Alpenstrasse und gegenüber der Universität vor. Einige DemonstrantInnen gingen zur St. Andräkirche und verlangten vom dort eingesessenen Arbeitervikariat einen Abzug der Studenten. Gegen 11 Uhr wurde das Arbeitervikariat durch die Kommunisten. Die Studenten entließen das Feuer auf die Menge und flüchteten an den Linke Munde. Der Tote und 73 Schwerverletzte blieben zurück.

Einrich Brodigt und seine GewerbeInnen waren maßgeblich am Grazer Bloody Saturday von 1919 beteiligt und unterstützten die DemonstrantInnen. Erst nach einer wichtigen und unerlässlichen Erfahrung mit einer anderen Industrie.

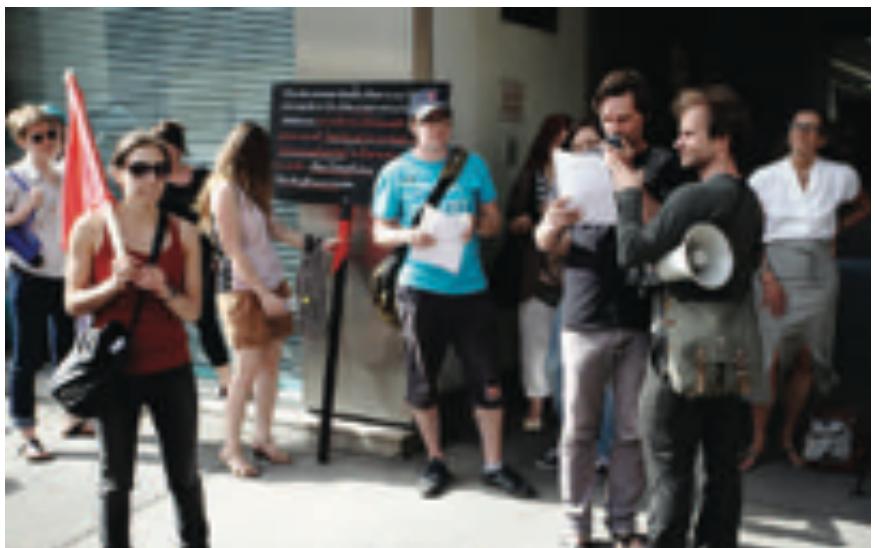
## INSTALLATION SITE 4/8

Annenstraße 10 – Orient Shop

The historical text tells about the "Grazer Blutsamstag" (Graz Bloody Saturday) of 1919, when a demonstration turned into street fighting. The communists were blamed for the event, although the authorities were responsible. The second text panel tells the life story of Mr. Mao Liyi from China, who came to Austria at the age of 29, and trades continuously with 28 countries.



vertrieben und — zur Überraschung von  
„naivem“ Chancen — Kunden genannt.  
Im Jahr erfreute sich verblüfft im Restaurant  
Küchen. Nach einigen Jahren eröffnete sich Mao  
seine Geschäfte. Meine Kinder helfen mir im E-  
Shop mit. Das Geschäft ging fröhlich los, aber  
haben immer noch etwas Stromkundenschwäche.  
Die e-  
xportierte Waren sind die einzigen Dinge zu sehei-  
ten, gründete sich ein Import-Export-Unternehmen  
mit dem ich in unterschiedlichsten Ländern der  
Uren ankaufe, die per Containerschiff nach Ti-  
mopardien werden: Olivenöl und Weine, PET-Di-  
latabatterien, Bleiser, Computerzile, Schuh-  
fertigung usw. So habe ich schon 28 Länd-  
e ausgetestet, keiner wendet mindestens zehn weitere an  
an. „Man lernt nie aus“ ist mein Lebens-  
motto auch auf meine Kinder weitergelebt. Aber



May 1st 2013.

Above: Angela Praßl, student, reads her text about the life story of a young African asylum seeker in front of the Austrian Chamber of Labour (AK) Library, installation site No.6. Below: Historical texts about Konsum organization, which was a cooperative trade society established and run by social democrats in the 19th century in the development of the labour movement, were read in front of a banner placed on a building that used to belong to Konsum.



#### INSTALLATION SITE 5&5a/8

Annenstraße, Corner Volksgartenstraße – Inside Styria Center  
Strauchergasse Corner Volksgartenstraße

Two text panels are placed inside a neighborhood shopping center. One text tells about the history of the cooperative trade society Konsum whose wholesale outlet was at that very location from 1926 until the 1970s. Konsum society was established by social democrats as a class struggle instrument to contribute the labour movement. The other text panels consist of biographical notes of a person who lives and works at the address.

A large scale banner positioned on the house facade shows a historical photograph from the year 1912 – a festive assembly of the Konsum society in Graz.



In diesem Gebäude befand sich von 1926 bis 1995  
ein Warenhaus der Konsumgenossenschaft



Festversammlung der Konsumgenossenschaft im Zug 1912

Above: The artwork installed inside the Styria Center.  
Underneath: The banner positioned on the Styria Center  
house facade.



#### INSTALLATION SITE 6/8

Hanuschgasse 3 – Library of the Austrian Chamber of Labour (AK)

The historical text gives information on the Austrian Chamber of Labour, Styria, in particular on the library and its importance within the labour movement. The biographical text tells the life of Mr. Clinton, an African asylum seeker, who spends most of his free time using the internet facilities of the AK library.

INSTALLATION SITE 7/8

Niesenbergergasse 67-69 / AMS



Installation site 7/8. The historical text tells the history of employment agencies that came into being in the Austria of the 19th century, as well as how the employment offices in Graz developed into today's Public Employment Service Austria (AMS). The other text panel is a textual collage created from biographical notes of three AMS clients.

Ich wurde als einer von neun Kindern in bescheidenen Verhältnissen in einem armen Land auf. Heute bin ich 57 Jahre alt und arbeite noch. In den 1990er Jahren arbeitete ich schwere auf Baustellen und in Restaurants in Hannover. Dann musste ich – von der Kripo ohne Arbeitsverbot ausgesucht – in die Komotowstraße nach Graz hin ich Anfang der 1990er gekommen und war immer häufig. Jetzt, im fortgeschrittenen Alter, plagen mich die Schmerzen von vielen Jahren harter Arbeit. Doch es wird besser werden, denn wir haben ein halb fertiges Haus in der alten Heimat, das wir unbedingt fertig bauen wollen. Wenn werden wir das Leben genießen.

Ich wurde in einer Gemeindeaufstellung im Burgenland auf und erhielt die österreichische Staatsbürgerschaft. Danach zogen wir zurück in die Türkei. Lehrabschlussprüfung mit 22 verbrachte ich Kinder. Da ich keine Anstellung fand, beschloss ich, nach Graz zu kommen zu gehen. Zuerst war ich erst einmal bei einer Firma durch angestellte Männer arbeitet ich als Leichtarbeiter nur ein oder zwei Monate bei einer Firma – als Lagerarbeiter, Speditionsfahrer, Elektroinstallateur oder Briefkundearbeiter. Ich wusste nur, dass sich etwas Besseres ergibt. Graz war für mich nicht mehr eine Übergangslösung.

Ich arbeite seit meiner kranken Mutter im erste



#### INSTALLATION SITE 8/8

Idlhofgasse 36 -Shop window of the Kurdistan Information Center and court-yard building

The historical text in this installation tells about the "Bund herrschaftsloser Sozialisten" (Alliance of Non-Authoritarian Socialists) whose headquarter and clubhouse was located on this site in the 1920s. The other text refers to the history and current situation of the Kurds and the Kurdistan Information Center which has been situated at the location since 2003.





The installation site 8/8, Kurdistan Information Center KIZ, courtyard building.



The project opening, May 1st, 2013.  
Kurdistan Information Center, Idlhoffgasse 36.



The project opening, May 1st, 2013.  
The historical texts about the anarchist movement and their local organization, as well as about the Kurdistan Information Centre were read aloud at the final destination of our May, 1st tour, in the Idlhoffgasse 36.



October 2011, Seminar "No History - No Monuments, visual ethnography and representational critique in art and cultural anthropology", Karl Franzens University, Graz.

Guided tour through the Annenviertel neighborhood and its locations relevant for labour movement and migration history; with historians Joachim Heizl and Dr Leo Kühberger, Dr Judith Laister, anthropologist and Kristina Leko, artist. Here: the students in the seminar are visiting the Kurdistan Information Centre, Idlhoffgasse 36.

## NO MONUMENTS FOR LABOUR AND IMMIGRATION

a series of text-based artworks in public space

2013-2015

student seminar/social sculpture

2011-2013

Graz, Austria

a project by KRISTINA LEKO

in collaboration with:

Joachim Hainzl, Leo Kühberger, Judith Laister,

students of European Ethnology and the residents of the Annenviertel neighborhood:

Yemi Adesuyi Ojumo, Evelyn Ark, Ayten G., Yakut Benan, Martin Breuss, Bianca

Flecker, Tanja Fuchs, Peter Lukas Oktavian Gillmayr, Claudia Gross, Michael Jabbour,

Pinar K., Robin Paul Klengel, Emir Kuljuh, Ali Kurt, Claudia Leitinger, Mao

Liyi, Katja Fischer, Aline Marques, Elisabeth Matlschweiger, Fatima Maria N.,

Anna Orgler, Piso O., Stefan Postl, Kurt Pöschl, Andrea Pöschl, Kennedy P., Angela Prassl,

Hildegard Ruhdorfer, Barbara Schmid, Mustafa Seyhan, Kadir Smailović,

Heide Spitzer, Nora Kim Steinbach, Kristina Stocker, Daniela Stradner, Kurosch U.,

Karoline Walter, Katrin Wankhammer, Michael Windisch

produced and curated by:

< rotor > center for contemporary art rotor.mur.at

project team:

Margarethe Makovec, Anton Lederer, curators,

Doris Psenicnik, Christina Lessiak, Anna Kamyshan, Wolfgang Oegg

cooperation partners:

Institut für Kunst im öffentlichen Raum Steiermark

<http://www.museum-joanneum.at/de/kunstraum>

Stadtbaudirektion Graz - Stadtteilmanagement Annenviertel

Institut für Volkskunde und Kulturanthropologie der Universität Graz

<http://volkskunde.uni-graz.at/>

additional support:

Ministry of Culture Republic of Croatia

Office of Cultural Affairs of the City of Zagreb

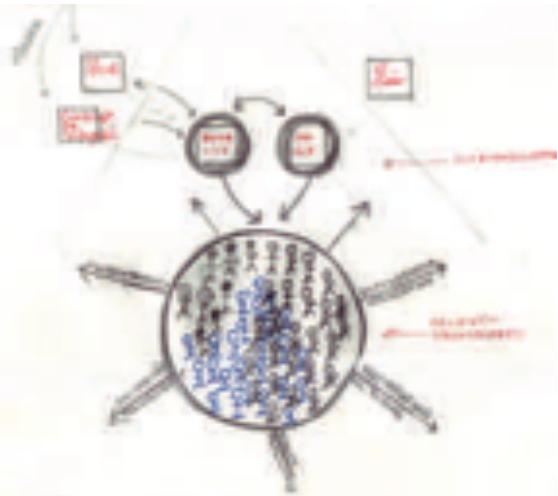
Kristina Leko, an artist specialized in community art, participatory art practices and art in public space, initiated this project in 2010. The project is a further development of her "Missing Monuments" project, Institut für Kunst im öffentlichen Raum Steiermark, Graz, 2006. [www.missingmonuments.eu](http://www.missingmonuments.eu)

IMPRESSUM/PHOTOCREDITS:

This documentation file belongs to the portfolio of artist Kristina Leko.

kristina@kristinaleko.net [www.kristinaleko.net](http://www.kristinaleko.net)

The photos from the May Day happening: J.J.Kucek, Graz and Rotor Center for Contemporary Art. The rest of the photographic documentation: Kristina Leko.



NO MONUMENTS FOR LABOUR AND IMMIGRATION is a multifaceted interdisciplinary artistic project based in the Annenviertel neighbourhood of Graz. It is dedicated to the local labour movement and migration history. Over a period of three years the project developed in collaboration with several institutions, and over forty individuals participated in its realization.

In 2011 two historians, Dr. Leo Kühberger and Joachim Heinzel, were commissioned to carry out special historical research. The objective was to research and describe 18 locations in the neighbourhood – sites of particular relevance to labour movement history, and to the history of migrations. One example is the Pflastergasse, a street where a community of Italian migrants (construction workers) dwelled in the 16th century, whereas today a city owned social housing project mostly populated by immigrants is to be found on the spot. Another example is the Idlhofgasse 36, which was the headquarters of the first anarchist organization in Styria back in the 1920s. The same rooms have been home to the Kurdistan Information Centre since 2003.

On a weekend in October 2011 this historical research was presented in the form of a neighbourhood walk to students of the Institute for Cultural Anthropology, Karl Franzens University in Graz. The two-day sightseeing walk was part of the seminar "No History – No Monuments, visual ethnography and representational critique in art and cultural anthropology", a collaborative university seminar by cultural anthropologist Dr. Judith Laister and the artist Kristina Leko. Whereas Judith Laister gave theoretical input, Kristina Leko undertook field research with students. Since 1999 Leko has been artistically involved in biographical research in different social contexts. Within this seminar, Leko mediated her knowledge and skills related to biographical field research to students. On the other hand, the research done within the seminar was transformed into an artistic project in public space.

Working in small groups and individually, the students researched and edited the biographies of the people with migrant backgrounds who live or work at the above mentioned historical sites. One of the goals of the seminar "No History – No Monuments" was an encounter and exchange between the students and the residents of the neighbourhood. The other goal was to empower our project participants – migrant

residents - by involving them in a cultural project with considerable visibility in public space. Nineteen students took part in the project, and over twenty biographical texts were written. In the next phase, a choice of historical and biographical texts created in the project was made. These texts were then shortened and transformed into text-based artworks. Each text was created through the participation and involvement of several individuals, where all the involved parties edited the text (individual field researchers, sometimes several researchers for one biography, their interview partners - people whose biographies were subject of interest and research, several members of project team, historians involved in the project).

The final result of the project NO MONUMENTS FOR LABOUR AND IMMIGRATION are eight interventions in public space. These are considered to be socially and politically functional art works. The project is structured to involve a mediation process over a longer period of time (several years).

On each of the eight project locations, two text panels designed as school blackboards appear applied on the building facades. The audience is invited to put the two texts, two panels in a relation. On each location one text tells a story from the history of the Austrian labour movement, whereas the other text narrates about migrants' biographies. Thus, the project as a whole is a statement about migration and its main intention is to draw public attention to the fact that migration should be perceived as a part of labour history. In the period until 2015 the Rotor Centre for Contemporary Art offers guided tours through the project and the neighbourhood in order to spread knowledge about the local history of labour and migration, and in order to promote the main thought of the project: migration (history) is a part of Austrian labour history.

The opening of the project took the form of a guided tour and performative happening, with megaphones and banners, on May, 1st 2013. Over 200 people participated.



Three drawings by Kristina Leko, 2011, that were used to explain to the students the structure of the project, and possible relations and interactions within the project, in the context of the university seminar "No History - No Monuments".



From top to bottom: Griesplatz in Graz, one of the intervention sites of the project; Kurdistan Information Center, the location where back in the 1920s an association of anarchist-socialists had their headquarters - as well an installation site of the project; Orpheum, Kurdistan Information Center - guided tour with students and the historians Dr Leo Kuhberger and Joachim Heinzl in the frame of the project-related university seminar, 2011; final presentation and exhibition of the seminar at the Rotor Center for Contemporary Art, Graz, 2012.



The end presentation of the seminar "No History - No Monuments, visual ethnography and representational critique in art and cultural anthropology", students and their research-partners - the interviewed persons, Rotor Center for Contemporary Art, Graz, 2012.





ALL ABOUT TITO, WITH LOVE, community art project,  
modelling workshop, intervention, exhibition,  
video documentary 2011/2013

## **ALL ABOUT TITO**

Intervention in a museum space. Sculptural and video workshop.

Community art project. Exhibition.

Kumrovec, Croatia, 2012/2013

In collaboration with David Smithson

Project participants: Ahmed i Elmasa Kavgić, from Labin-Raša; Nadir and Fatima Dedić, Zagreb; Ivica Kukolja, Balija Mijo and Ljudevit Tršinski, from the town of Zabok; Vilim Broz, Mikša Ivan, Dario Raskaj, Danijel and Dado Vrudelja, from Kumrovec

Josip Broz Tito (1892–1980) was a Yugoslav revolutionary and statesman. He was secretary-general (later president) of the Communist Party (League of Communists) of Yugoslavia (1939–80), supreme commander of the Yugoslav Partisans (1941–45) and the Yugoslav People's Army (1945–80), and marshall (1943–80), premier (1945–53), and president (1953–80) of Yugoslavia. Tito was the chief architect of the "second Yugoslavia," a socialist federation that lasted from World War II until 1991. He was the first Communist leader in power to defy Soviet hegemony, a backer of independent roads to socialism (sometimes referred to as "national communism"), and a promoter of the policy of nonalignment between the two hostile blocs in the Cold War. (from Encyclopedia Britannica)

With the change of political systems in 1989, the official politics defined Tito as a controversial communistic dictator, and held him responsible for the WW2 war crimes in the region. The presence of Tito has been banned in public space, his monuments removed, the streets named after him renamed. The Old Village museum, a preserved 19th century village where Tito was born, has been turned into an ordinary ethnographic open air museum, with a programming completely neglecting the fact that Tito was born there. In the last decade however, a network of NGO citizens' associations called "The Josip Broz Tito Society" emerged all over Croatia, and in the former Yugoslavia region. They gather people who think Tito was a great politician and a great man. Every year for Tito's birthday ca. ten thousand people gather in the village of his birth to pay tribute. But, in the museum there is nothing to see related to Tito's life and accomplishments, except a photo exhibition of US president Nixon visiting the village, which should serve the needs of the increasing number of American tourists.

This project is an attempt to engage the community and reclaim the Old Village Museum as a historical site related to Josip Broz Tito. The participants of the project are all members of Tito Society organizations from Kumrovec, Zagreb, and two other small towns in Croatia. Our end goal is to create an exhibition that will be created by the members of the society, and show it in May for Tito's birthday.

Our open air sculpture workshop led by David Smithson took place in September 2012 and was an intervention in the museum space itself, and lasted for ten days. The interaction

with tourists was an important aspect of the intervention. We also used the opportunity to explain what we were up to, why and how we are working on the project. Each person modeled one head of Tito corresponding to a particular period of his life, as related to particular historical circumstances and political ideas.

Three boys from the neighborhood were curious and wanted to join us. At the beginning of our work they did not know anything about Tito. Our video workshop was about collecting memories and thoughts about Tito, his life and work, as a video archive to accompany the modeled heads in the exhibition. The exhibition will be about Tito as much about the people who like him. Our project participants also include concentration camp survivors from WWII.

Preceeded with another one-week workshop, and a small-scale exhibition, our final exhibition will partially be supported by individual members of Tito Society communities, and will take place in 2014.



A group of American turists observing the modelling work. Ahmed Kavgic, a former mine worker from Istria/Bosnia, with his work showing Josip Broz Tito as on the photo from 1928 when Tito was prosecuted and imprisoned for his activities in the communist party.





On the previous page: A group of school kids from the south of Croatia visiting the village. They stayed in our workshop for half an hour. That same day two local school boys joined our project, and another one came in on the following day. When they started, they did not know anything about Tito except he was born there. Above: Ivica Kukolja, 44, the youngest president of a Tito Society in Croatia, is as well a war veteran who has been severely injured in the Croatian Homeland War 1991-1995. Below: Mijo Balija, 80, former manager, with his drawing of Tito as partisan leader in the WWII.





The last four days of the workshop, participants were Ivica Kukolja and Ljudevit Trsinski from the near by city of Zabok and Miksa Ivan, a former high positioned police officer from Kumrovec. His participation in the project made us gained local visibility and visitors as well.



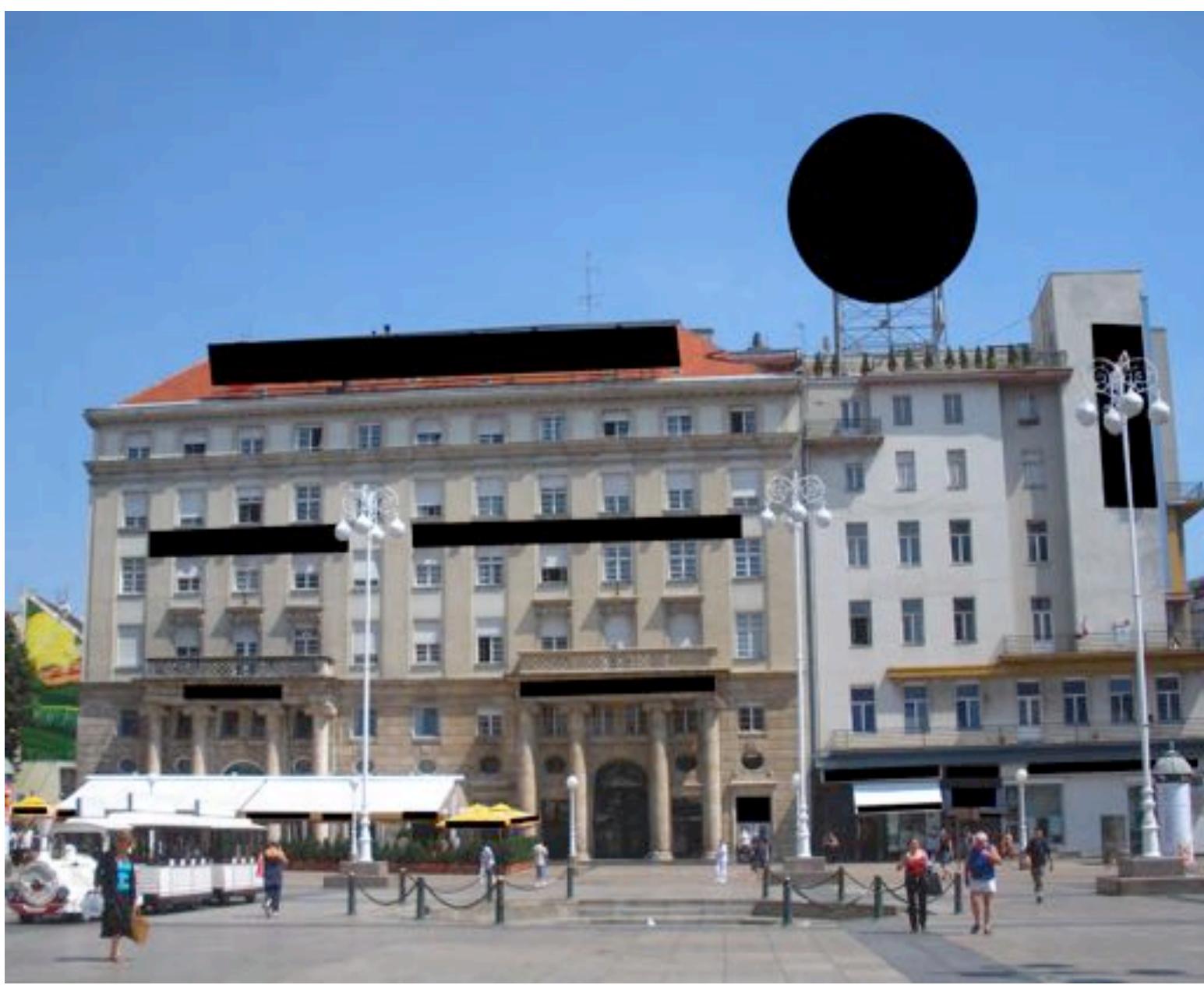
Final works created in the project, presented with the related photos of Tito.  
The authors: Dario Raškaj, Ivan Mikša, Ahmet Kavgić, Elmasa Kavgić, Ljudevit Tršinski, Ivan Kukolja.





Stills from the video statements: Nadir and Fatima Dedic, concentration camp survivors, Vilim Broz, a relative of Tito's, Iju-devit Trsinski, Ivica Kukolja, Elmasa Kavgic, Mijo Balija. Some of the project participants could not take part in the modelling workshop because of their age and health problems. Some of them created drawings, and some texts for the exhibition. The video statements, together with texts related to project participants as well as to Tito, will expand the exhibition of Tito's heads and historical photographs.





Suprematism on the Square!, project proposal for intervention in the public space, Zagreb main square, photomontage, 2008.

## **SUPREMATISM ON THE SQUARE!**

an intervention in the public space, Zagreb, since 2008 ongoing documentation of the working process, web site, social sculpture Kristina Leko in collaboration with BLOK, Local Base for Cultural Refreshment

"Suprematism on the Square!" is an artistic site specific intervention on the main square of the city of Zagreb, Croatia. It will cover all the adverts and company logos with black cloth, or, alternatively, another color, for 24 hours. The intervention is planned for the year 2010. It will be a collaboration with the companies involved with the main square advertising surfaces, the advertising sign companies and the municipal authorities.

The collaboration with companies means that each company should cover their logos or adverts at their own expense. Each company is approached through several meetings (until now, we met the responsible parties from 10 companies). At these meetings, we explain the project, and try to get the other side enthusiastic about the project. A diary is being kept documenting these meetings. The aim is to explore to which extent the business people are ready to give away their advertising for a non profit and poetic cause. During the meetings we also negotiate the color: if we feel that there is a problem, instead of black, we offer alternative colors, first red, and then white.

In December 2008, in the production of Local Base for Cultural Refreshment, a non profit organization, a test intervention on the east side of the square was supposed to take place. By covering the logos and adverts in black only, during the Christmas time, this intervention wanted to influence the passers by to reflect about the status of material values in todays society. This time, the covers were to be paid by the non profit organization.

The project was not realized. The leading bank in Croatia did not want to openly refuse taking part in the project. Instead, their director called the mayor. After that, the permission, issued 2 weeks beforehand, was cancelled. Therefore, other companies which wanted to take part in the project were not able to do so.

The cancellation of the permission by the municipal authorities is unique. It never happened before. It was not well received by the media. Several newspaper articles were critical about the bank and the city.

All this influenced the form and dynamics of the project. Because of this incident, the project initiated its web site which promotes the project and informs about it. Also we collected signatures of support and comments about the project. After 500 signatures were collected, we filed a complaint, and asked for a renewal of the permission by the municipal authorities. At the moment, I am working on the hand written letter to the mayor and the bank director asking them for a meeting, in order to change their mind, and give support to the project.



# HOW THE PEOPLE LIVE – REPORTS ON DISENGAGEMENT DIDACTIC EXHIBITION IN EIGHT PARTS

KRISTINA LEKO & ASSOCIATES  
MSU MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART ZAGREB, 2016  
WORK IN PROGRESS SINCE 2014

AUTHOR OF THE EXHIBITION & PROJECT: KRISTINA LEKO

MSU CURATOR: JASNA JAKŠIĆ

EXHIBITION SET UP: DAVID SMITHSON

VIDEO PRODUCTION: KRISTINA LEKO I MARTIN SEMENČIĆ

FEATURED / PROJECT PARTICIPANTS:

BOŠNJAK FAMILY, ŽELJKO, RADE, RENATA; BURČAK FAMILY, IGOR, NIKOLINA, KIRIL, ANICA; ČORAK BRACO I MIRA; ČORTAN FAMILY, JOVICA, ZORA, MARIJAN, IVANA, LJUBICA, MILOVAN; IVICA FRANIĆ; JELICA HAMER; MIKI JERKOVIĆ; BLAŽENKA KRULJAC; LUKŠIĆ FAMILY, STJEPAN, ZLATKA, TONI; MARIN FAMILY, ZVONE, NEVENKA; TONI MILOLOŽA; TOMISLAV OŽEGOVIĆ; PERVAN FAMILY, STIPAN, IVA, PATRICIA, ANĐELKA, NIKO; PERVAN MARKO; IVO RADICA; SALAPIĆ FAMILY, LJUBAN, ZORA, VESNA, JOSIP, SILVA, MARIJANA; UDRUGA HRVATSKIH BRANITELJA OBOLJELIH OD PTSP-A ŠIBENSKO-KNINSKE ŽUPANIJE: BRANKO SMRČEK, MEMBERS: ANTE CVITAN, ANTE JURIŠIĆ, TOMISLAV VUNIĆ; ZADRO FAMILY, IVAN, DANICA, BRANKO, DANKO; JERKO ZADRO

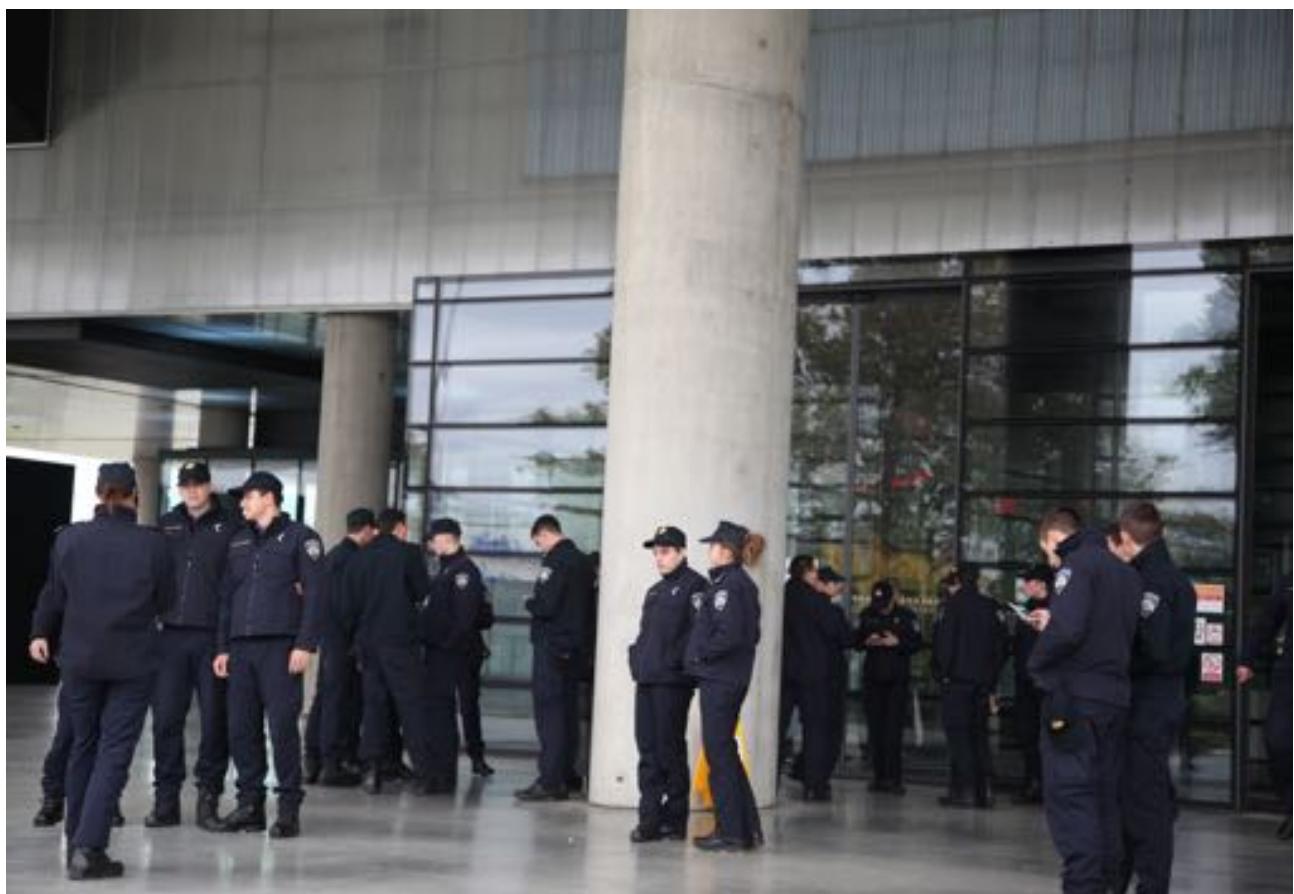
EDUCATIONAL PERFORMATIVE PROGRAM REALIZED BY: DR. SC. ANKICA ČAKARDIĆ, KRISTINA LEKO, ANICA TOMIĆ, DR.SC. KOSJENKA LASZLO KLEMAR AND EXHIBITION GUIDES & MEDIATORS HELENA BLUM, JOZEFINA ČURKOVIĆ, SUNČNA DORČIĆ, REA DRVAR, HORVAT KRISTINA, ILEANA KURTOMIĆ, MAJCEN MARTINA, DOMAGOJ MARTINIĆ, ANA PIA MATIJAŠ, BARBARA OGRESTA, EMA PAVLOVIĆ, PRANJIĆ TEA, MARIJA ROJKO, SANTRIĆ MARTA, SULCER DENIS, ŠEGOVIĆ NINA, PETRA ŠKOKIĆ, ŠINDILJ VERONIKA, TEPŠIĆ SANJA, KLARA TONČĆ, ANDREA ZENERAL; UMIROVLJENICE: MILENA BORJAN, JOSIPA GRČVIĆ, ALEKSANDRA MARIĆ, MARIJA ŽARIĆ

ASSISTANT CURATOR: ANA BEDENKO

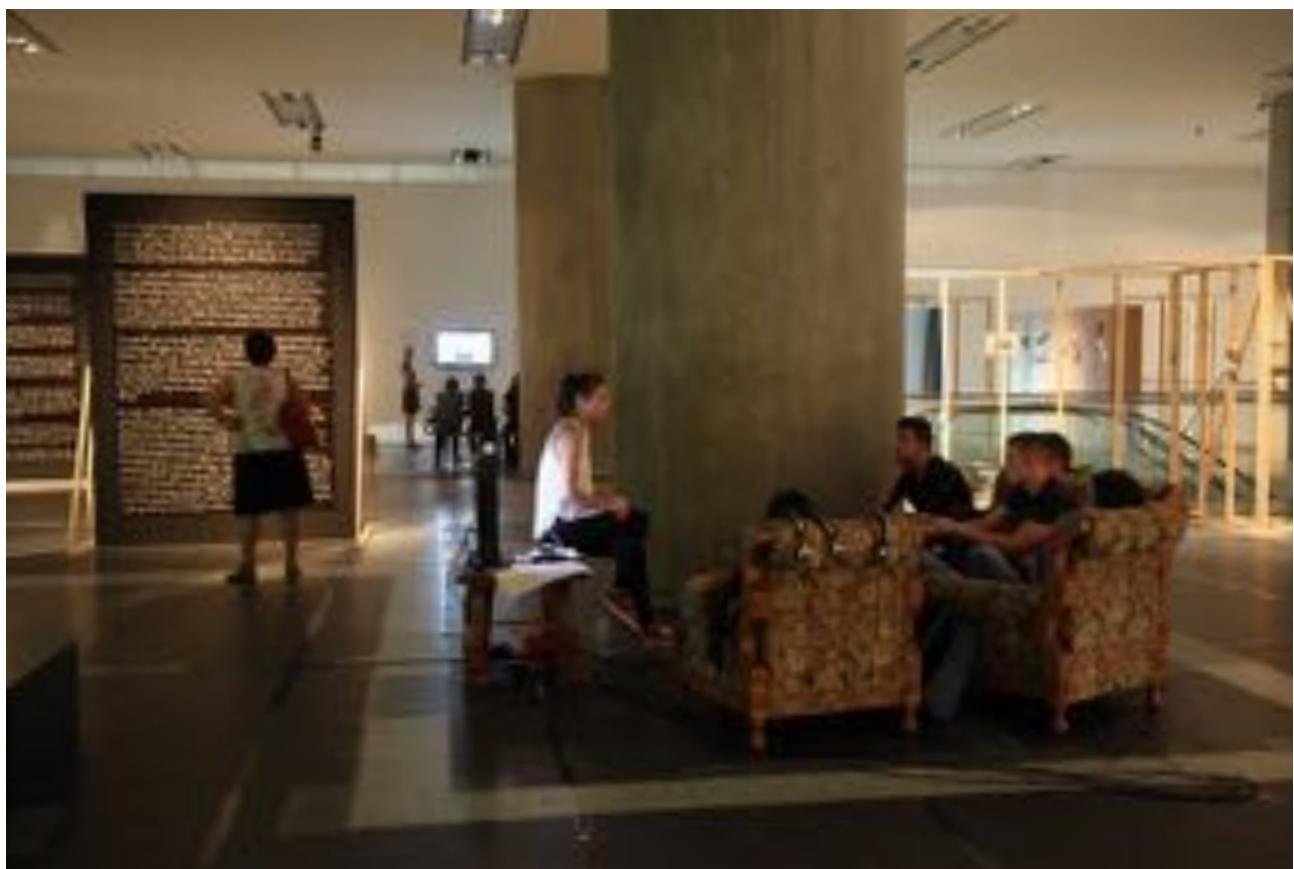
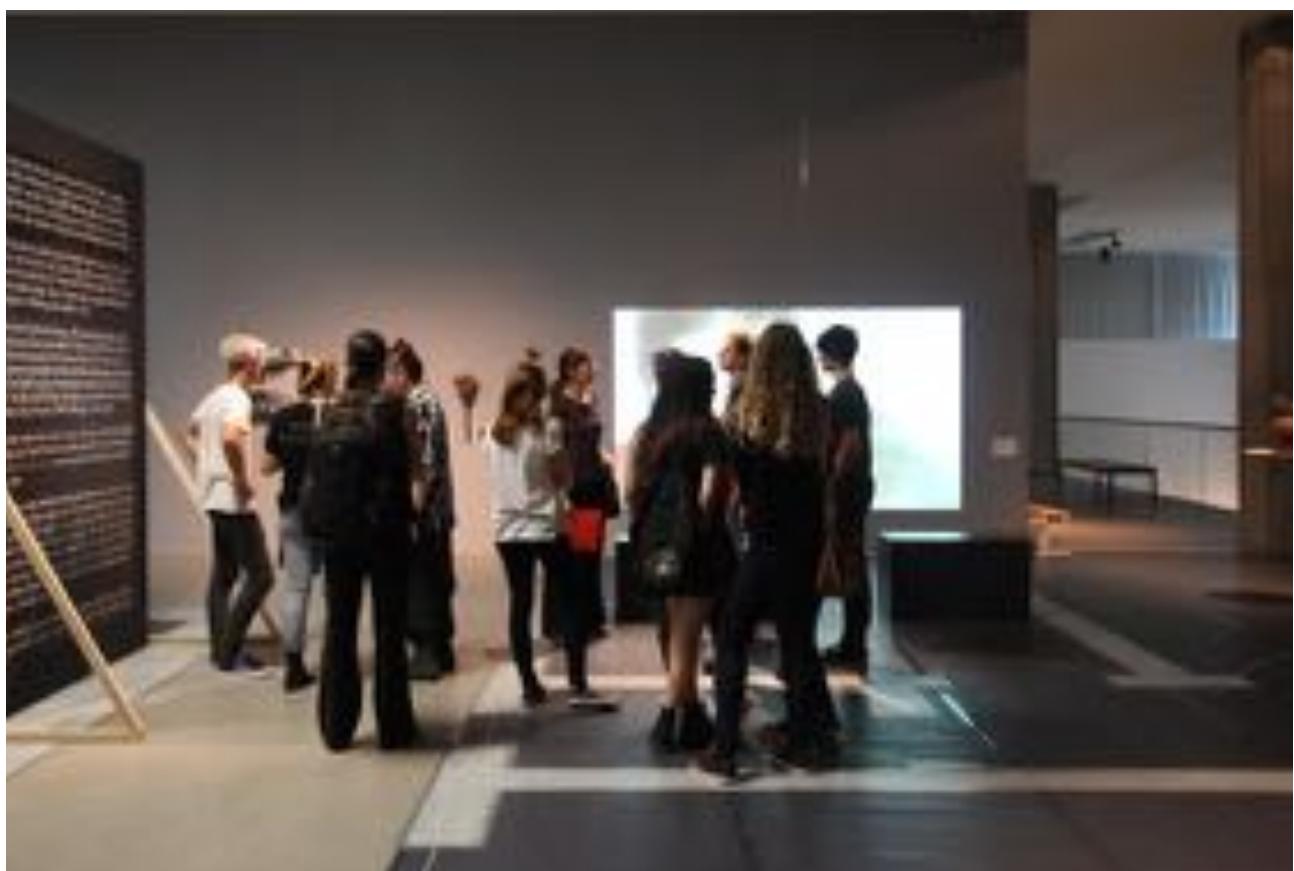
HANDWRITINGS: JELENA GODRIJAN, MAJA HUDIČEK, TINA NOVAK, LARISA SMITRAN, KLARA ŠIMUNOVIĆ, ALEKSANDRA VUK, LUCIJA ZELJKO

GRAPHIC DESIGN: SANJA KUZMANOVIĆ

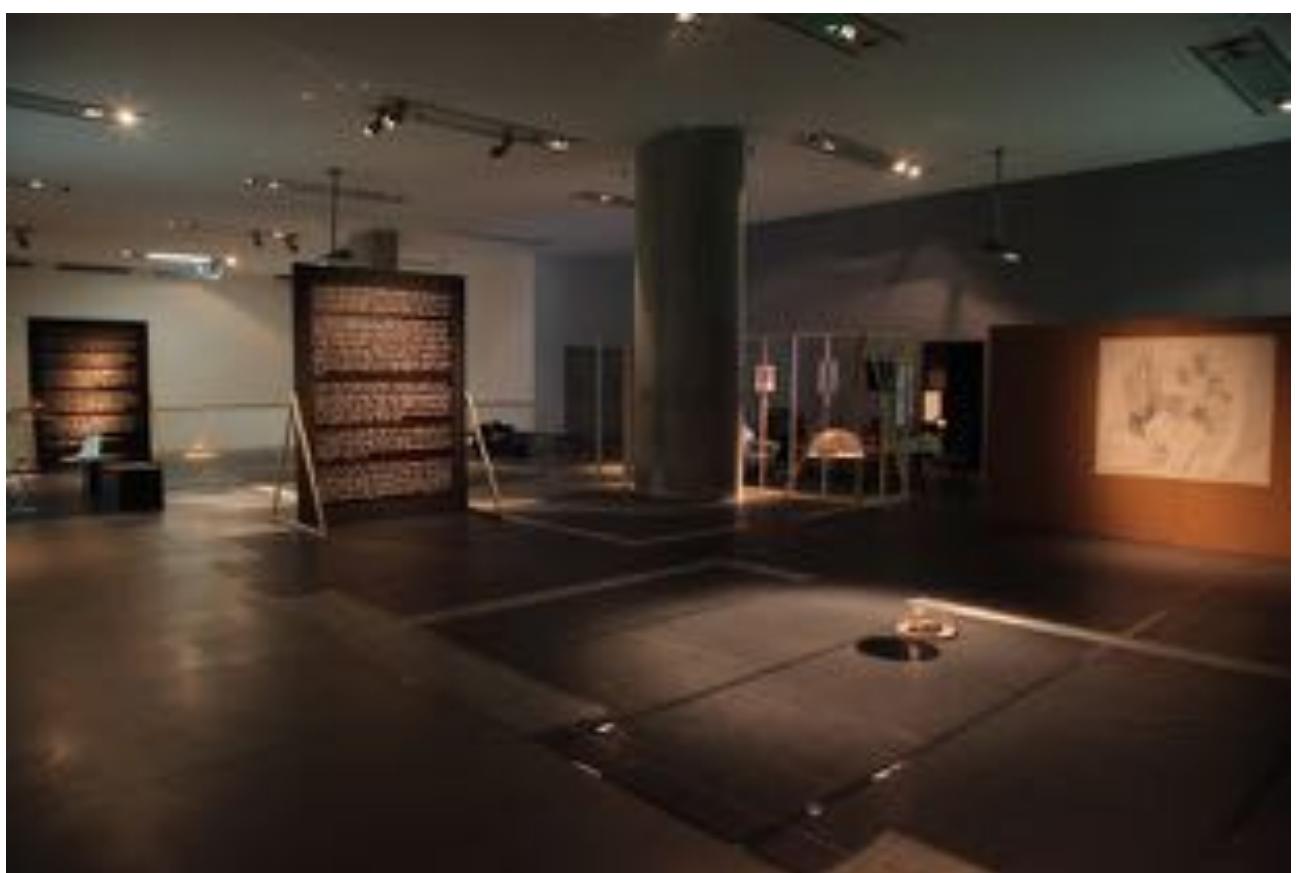
SUPPORTED BY: MINISTRY OF CULTURE OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA, THE CITY OF ZAGREB, KULTURA NOVA, HAVC - CROATIAN AUDIO-VISUAL CENTER.



MSU MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART ZAGREB, 2016



HOW THE PEOPLE LIVE – REPORTS ON DISENGAGEMENT, EXHIBITION VIEWS,  
EDUCATIONAL & PERFORMATIV PROGRAM, MSU ZAGREB, 2016; PHOTO: DAVID SMITHSON

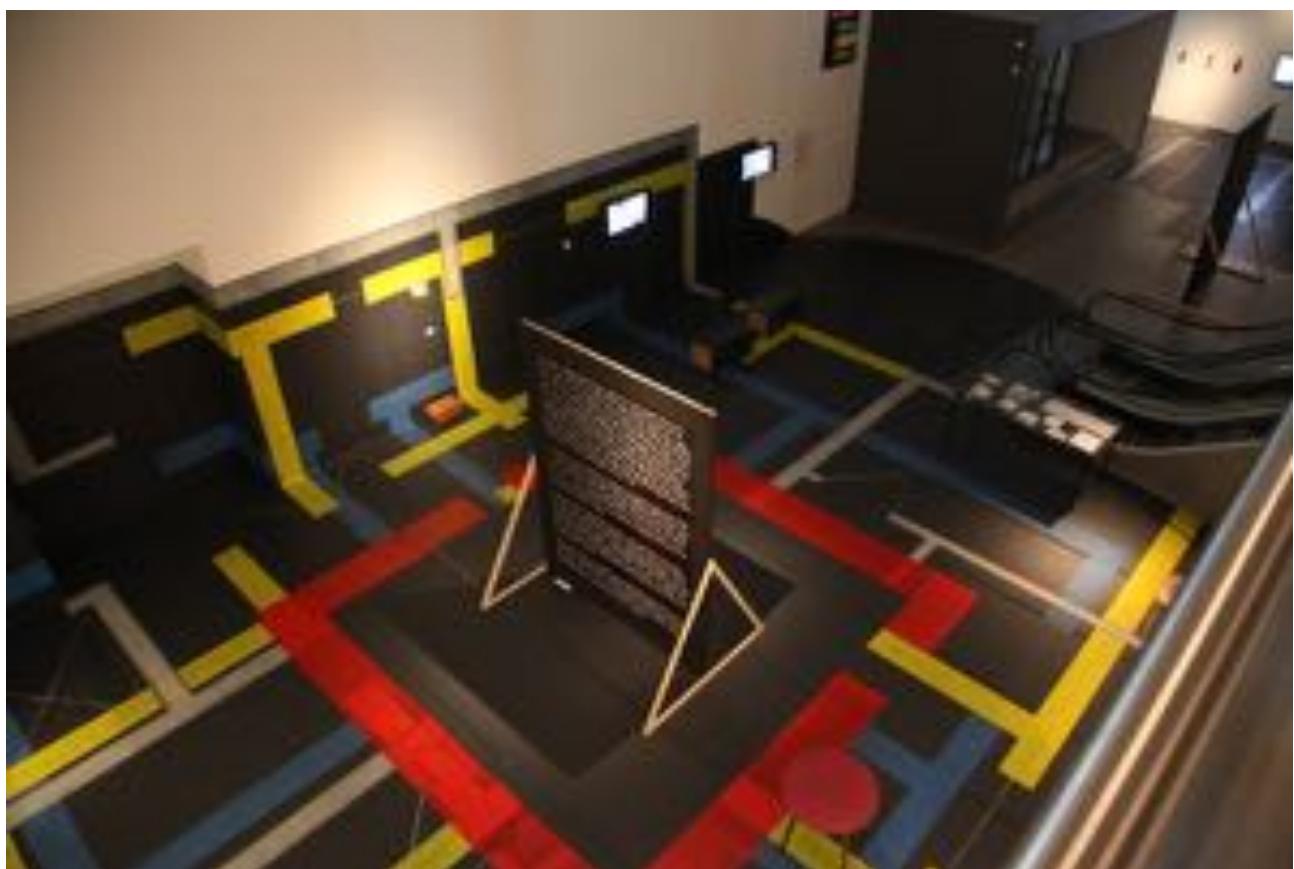


HOW THE PEOPLE LIVE – REPORTS ON DISENGAGEMENT, EXHIBITION VIEWS,  
MSU ZAGREB, 2016; PHOTO: DAVID SMITHSON

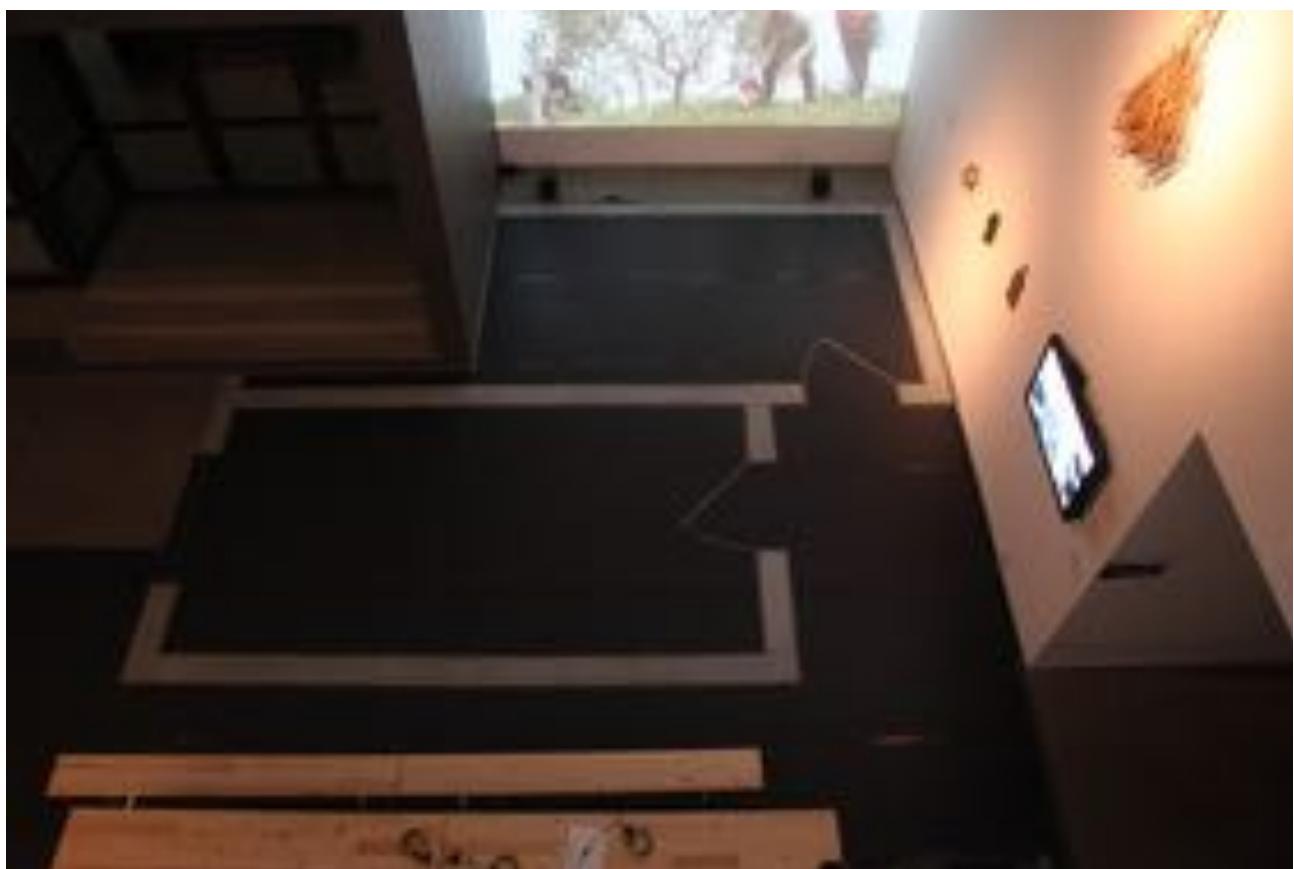
HOW THE PEOPLE LIVE - REPORTS ON DISENGAGEMENT, a didactic exhibition in parts, an exhibition with a moral, created by Kristina Leko, and associates, introduces eight completely ordinary families, six from Croatia and two from Bosnia and Herzegovina. These are people who work industriously and live relatively modestly. The exhibition is inspired by the book of Rudolf Bićanić „How the people live - life in the passive regions“ of 1936. On release from the prison in which he had spent three years for writing about the economy and for political activity among the peasants, Bićanić spent months travelling on foot around the unproductive areas of Banovina Croatia (the title of the country at that time) and recorded in detail the social and economic relationships and conditions of life produced among the impoverished population by the crisis. Eighty years later, artist Kristina Leko travelled the same regions, from Livno, via Western Herzegovina, Lika, Dalmatinska zagora, the hinterland and the islands, and talked with people, and, following in the footsteps of Bićanić, recorded the circumstances of life and the current social and economic problems. The exhibition reflects on and seeks solutions for the situations of unproductiveness through talks with the leading actors in the project, the members of the eight families. Is passivity the dominant national psychological feature of today? How does one get out of the circle of passiveness? Where can we see the future?

First put on in the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb, the exhibition has turned the museum space into an imaginary village of eight houses, drawing the ground plans on the floor of the institutions. Inside the ground plan the material collected is exhibited, chosen by the artist in association with the people most intimately concerned; video installations, or film materials, documents, family and other photos, household and personal objects, and the authentic furnishing, with which several real-life living spaces are recreated. Each exhibition unit is supplemented with a portrait of the family, a large-scale drawing and a monumental black plate on which is a hand-written original text, a summary of the history of the family in the past hundred years. Each one of the eight exhibition units represents a family, a local community. The artist follows the idea of Rudolf Bićanić that completely ordinary people are capable of thinking economically and that they know very well what is to be done for their community and they themselves to have it better. She is thus deliberately linking up with current discourse demystifying economic theories (Piketty and Varoufakis, for example). The video-recorded talks with the members of the family critically consider the unused and obstructive economic and natural potentials, the economic absurdities and the corruption.

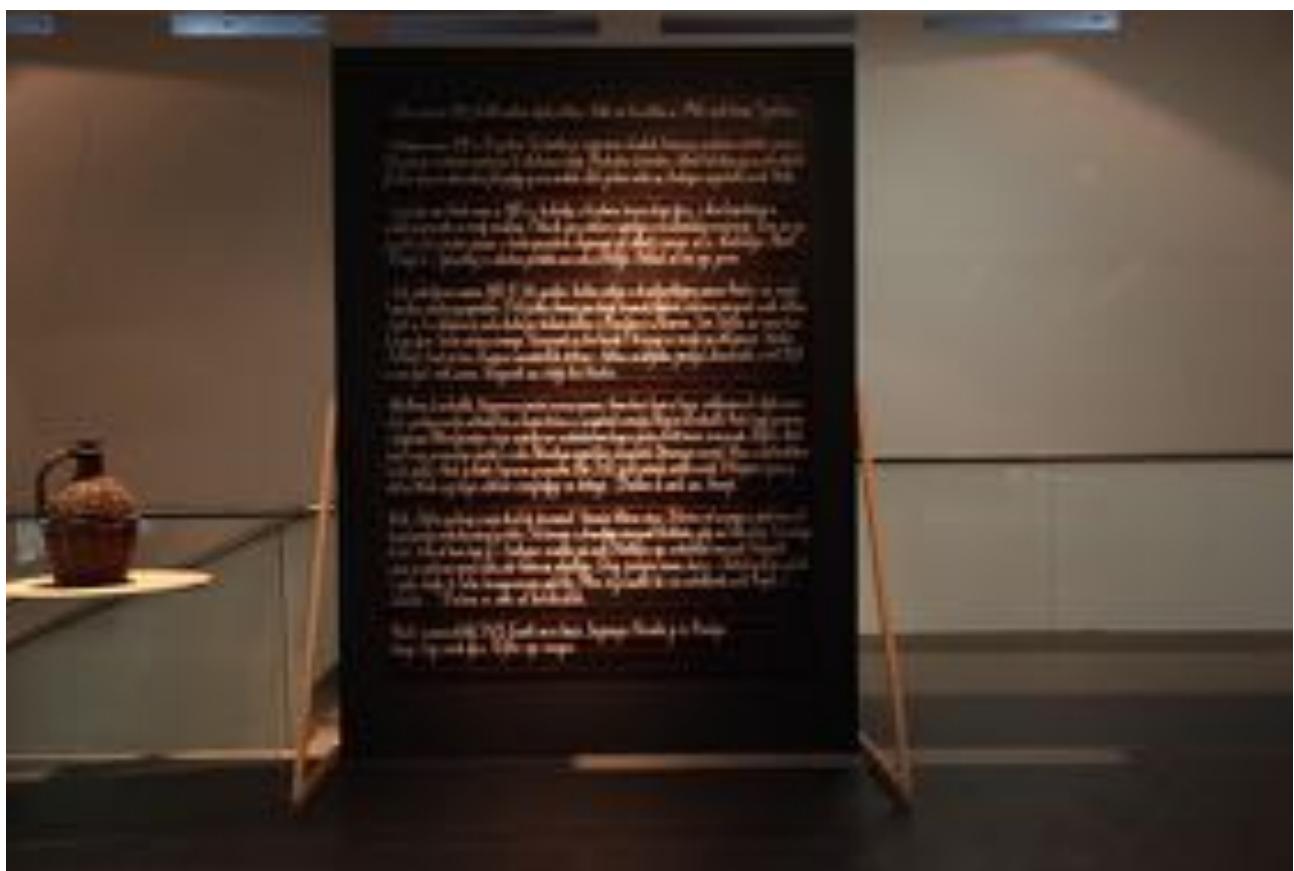
An inseparable part of the exhibition is an educational and performative programme that Kristina Leko, with the help of associates the philosopher Ankica Čakardić and theatre director Anica Tomić, as well as museum educationalist Kosjenka Laszo Klemar, applies to the exhibition format the concept of an engaged and active audience implied by Brecht's instructive dramas, also conceived during a crisis, in the early 1930s. For six weeks, as part of the performative and educational programme, twenty guides from the student and recent graduate popular modulated the guided tour through the exhibition in the form of two-hour discussions. In this manner, 2500 young people were actively involved in small-group discussions about pressing social and economic themes and the values of a democratic society, pondering at the same time how to win their way through to a better economy and more equitable social relations.



HOW THE PEOPLE LIVE – REPORTS ON DISENGAGEMENT, EXHIBITION VIEWS,  
INSTALLATION NR.6, PERVAN FAMILY, TIJARICA/BERLIN, MSU ZAGREB, 2016;  
PHOTO: DAVID SMITHSON



HOW THE PEOPLE LIVE – REPORTS ON DISENGAGEMENT, EXHIBITION VIEWS,  
EDUCATIONAL & PERFORMATIV PROGRAM, MSU ZAGREB, 2016; PHOTO: DAVID SMITHSON



HOW THE PEOPLE LIVE – REPORTS ON DISENGAGEMENT, EXHIBITION VIEWS,  
EDUCATIONAL & PERFORMATIV PROGRAM, MSU ZAGREB, 2016; PHOTO: DAVID SMITHSON



Kattenburger Triumphal Arch, 2010.



Kattenburger Triumphal Arch, project participants and project team, 12-2010.

## **KATTENBURGER TRIUMPHAL ARCH**

a community based public art project  
by Kristina Leko and David Smithson  
commissioned by the City of Amsterdam & Wiseguys Urban Art Project, 2007/2010

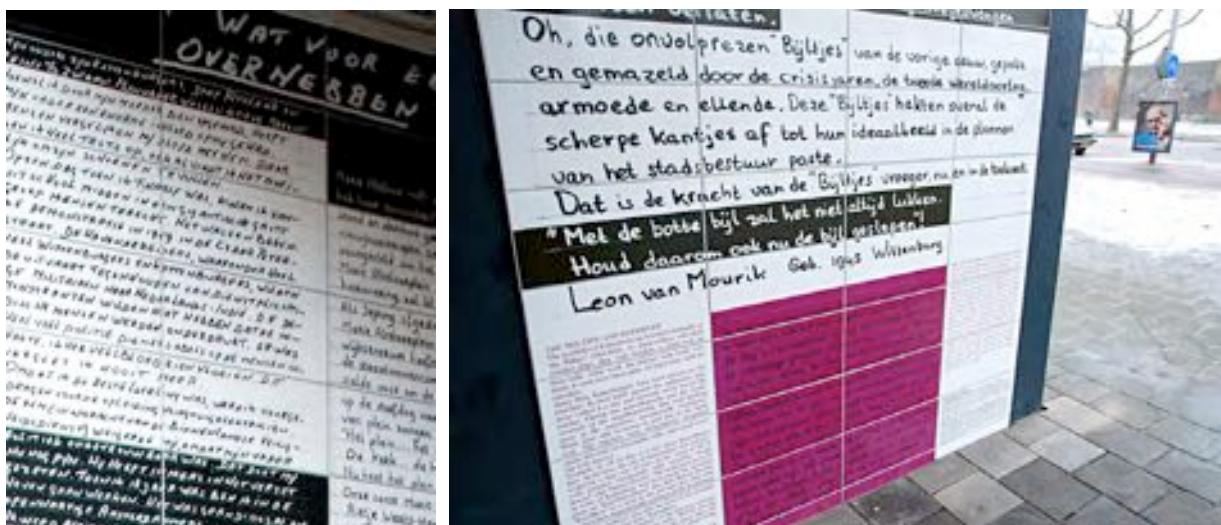
A monument honoring the residents of the Kattenburg island and their social and community engagement has been erected in collaboration with the community. Thus, the monument is partially created by the individuals to whom it is dedicated. It features stories written by the community members, personal histories and memories of important developments in the community. The Kattenburg Island is a well organized working class community with several family trees living there for 100-200 years. The Kattenburgers are respected as very special people known for their independent spirit and social activism. The recent

history of Kattenburg is marked by social and community initiatives: the community fought to maintain the residence on the island after the reconstruction in the 1960ies, a strong law-rent-movement in the 1970ies, the famous fight for the construction changes funded by the city in order to prevent criminal activities in the neighborhood. Historically important was also the union activism on the island. Some of important figures in the Dutch union history were Kattenburgers. Our monument documents the social engagement of individuals as well as social activities in the community in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It honors the people and the ideas related to these initiatives.

The starting point of the project is a creative involvement of the individual members of the community in creating the monument i.e. influencing their everyday environment. The initial contacts with Kattenburgers in 2007 were successful and mediated through the communal cultural center. The idea of erecting a monument dedicated to the social initiatives and their activists had an enthusiastic feedback.

In April/May 2008 project workshop took place in the neighborhood, and lasted for 5 weeks. A leaflet was placed in every mail-box on the island inviting the Kattenburgers to write their own history themselves. 25 individuals took part in the project. Some of them came with the texts already written, some wrote their texts in the workshop, some dictated their textual statements. All texts were proofread and some also edited by a professional proofreader, and then handwritten by the authors. In its final outcome, the hand writings are applied on ceramic tiles, and cover 6 columns (12 surfaces) in the most prominent passage in the neighborhood.

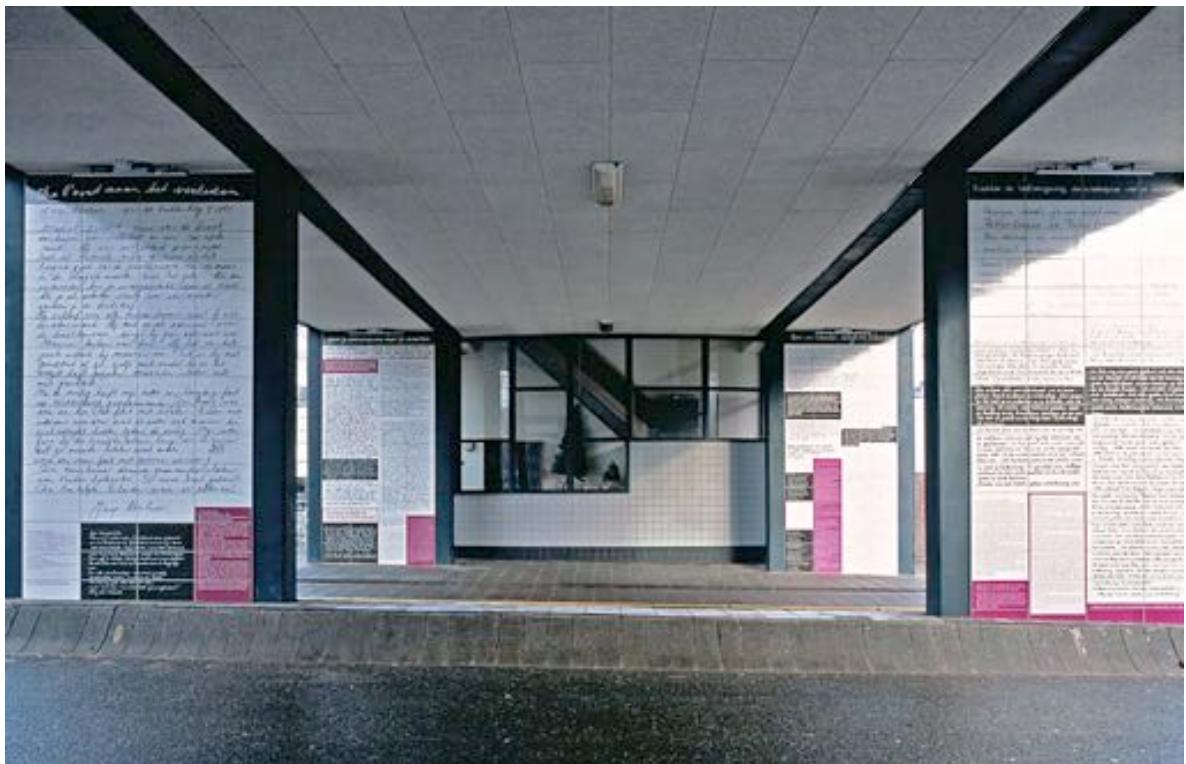
Most of our participants were in their 60ies, and have been active in the activities related to the low rent movement, and other communal actions in the 1970ies, 1980ies and to some extend in 1990ies. The collection of texts consists of: stories and reports about different events, memories about certain periods of time (war, after the war, before the war, childhood, before the renovation, moving back to Kattenburg, etc.), and portraits of individuals (about mothers, and fathers, about Marie Altelaar, community activist, about Jaap Altelaar, union activist, etc.). The texts and stories mostly relate to the low-rent movement. However, all the other important communal actions have been described as well. There are also notes and thoughts about social and political activism and community living, philosophical thoughts about society and community, about family and friendship, about solidarity and social justice.



Kattenburger Triumphant Arch, Details, 2010.



Kattenburger Triumphal Arch, Detail, 2010.



Kattenburger Triumphal Arch, 2010.



Kattenburger Triumphal Arch, final sketch, 2010.





The Berbers, installation view, Naschmarkt, Vienna, as part of the exhibition Im Paradiesgarten, Wienerfestwochen, 2010.

## THE BERBERS

Text based installation, Naschmarkt, Vienna, 2010

Im Paradiesgaerten, Wiener Festwochen

The Berber Family runs their stand since 1970 at Vienna's best known open market. Nowadays they sell vegetables and fruits, whereas in the past they have had home made Greek and Turkish specialties made by the mother of the family. The origin of the family goes back to a Greek island in Turkey, which was depopulated in the course of the 20th century due to the political problems and Greek-Turkish war. The Berbers, similar to many other Greek families from the island, became political refugees during the crisis of the 1960ies.

The Berber family is historically important, for the Naschmarkt and for the Vienna gastronomy in general. In early 1970 the father of the family, together with his two Austrian partners, organized the first import of olives, olive oil and feta cheese to Vienna. Today, the father of the family is retired, and the sons are running the stand.

The installation features the stories told by the family members about their stand, their family life, their past and future. Through texts, photographs and video, the stand was transformed into a memorial recalling the history of the family within a wider context.



The Berbers, installation view during a guided tour, May 2010.



The Berbers, installation views, Naschmarkt, Vienna, as part of the exhibition Im Paradiesgarten, Wienerfestwochen, 2010.



The Berbers, installation views, Naschmarkt, Vienna, as part of the exhibition *Im Paradiesgarten*, Wienerfestwochen, 2010.



The Berbers, installation views, Naschmarkt, Vienna, as part of the exhibition Im Paradiesgarten, Wienerfestwochen, 2010.



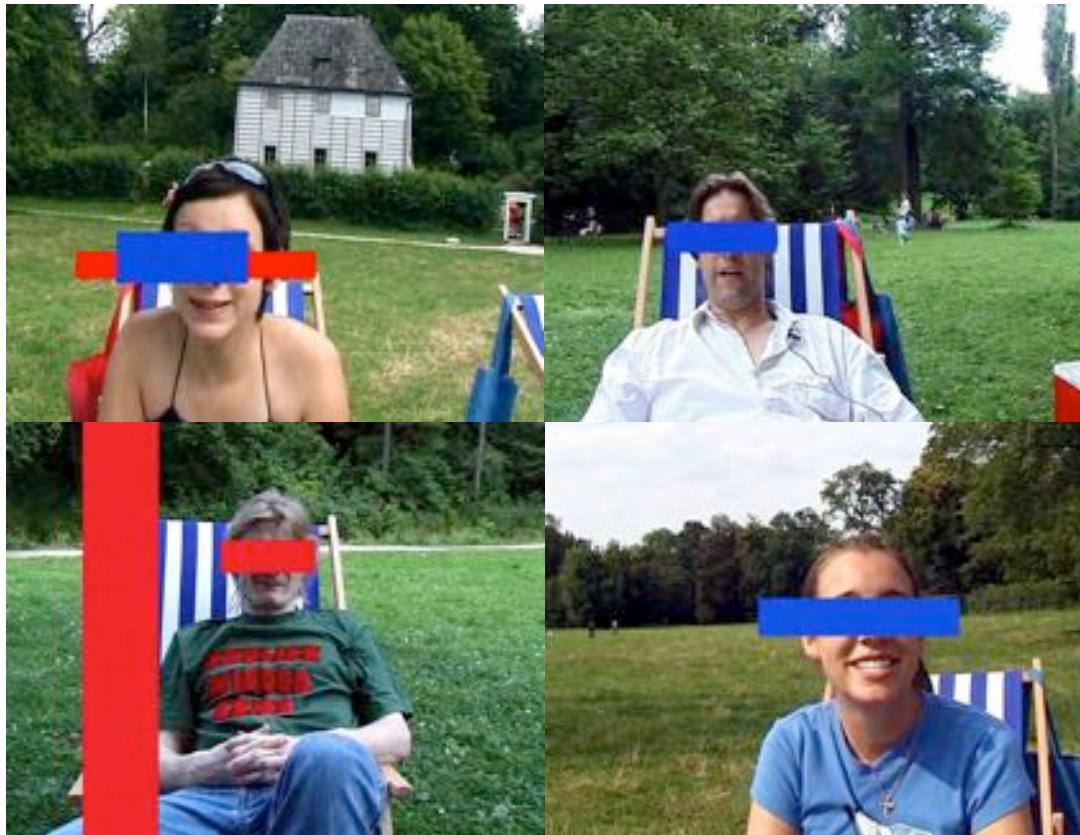


*Constitutional Overhaul Bureau, 2004, Weimar City Park. Top: Approaching passers-by in the park and inviting them to take part in the project. Above: Scenes from the open-air bureau of the project.*

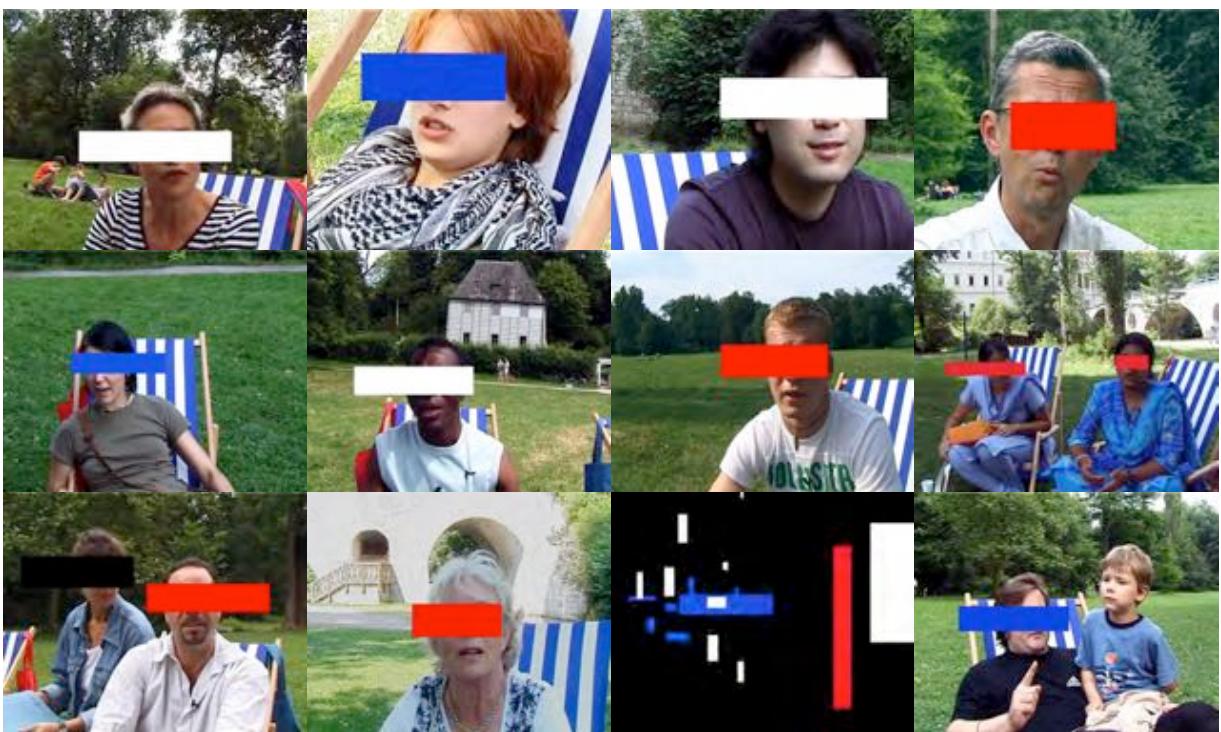
## **CONSTITUTIONAL OVERHAUL BUREAU / VERFASSUNGSKORREKTURBÜRO**

One-Week Action by Kristina Leko in the City Park of Weimar 2004

During a week in July 2004, in the city park of Weimar, I was approaching passers-by offering them a bowl of nice candies, and asking them to help me "save the world" by improving the US Constitution. I would explain that the US Constitution is very old and needs refreshing, and that I personally think people all around the world should have the right to vote in the US elections. People reacted mostly laughing, but some of them took part in the project. All together over a hundred people visited my open air Constitutional Overhaul Bureau. Some of them wrote their suggestions in my project-book. In my open-air office there were copies of different constitutions that one could read and compare. If one didn't want to spend too much time on reading and writing, one could give his/her short video statement, and address American people and/or American politicians. During that week, 38 messages for American politicians were recorded. I promised to print the new version of the Constitution and send the DVDs to selected politicians, which I will do in the further development of the project.



*Addressing the Americans, Part One, 2004/05, stills from the video.*



*Addressing the Americans, Part One, 2004/05, stills from the video.*

*The people you will see in this video wanted to share their thoughts with an American audience. I promised them to mail the DVDs to a selection of US politicians.*

*As I encountered people being afraid to record their video statements, I had to offer to edit the video in a way that would protect their identities. Approximately 20 % of the participants thought putting masks on their faces was not a necessity. 80 % wanted their identity protected.*

*As I was recording the statements of people talking in their mother languages, I realized that, although I might not speak that language, I was able to understand what the person was saying, and which political opinion he/she was representing. This made me decide not to subtitle the video, but to kindly ask you, dear audience, to make an extremely valuable effort and try to understand the language you do not understand.*

(Text from the flyer in the installation room; appears also in the video.)



*Addressing the Americans, Part One, 2004/05, installation view, ACC Galerie Weimar, 2005.*

Two-channel video installation: one channel features non-European languages with sound present in the room, the other projection features statements in English and German with sound on head-phones. Within this room, the audience was invited to print out their own "improved" version of the U.S. Constitution.





*Sarajevo International*, 2001, stills from the twelve videos.

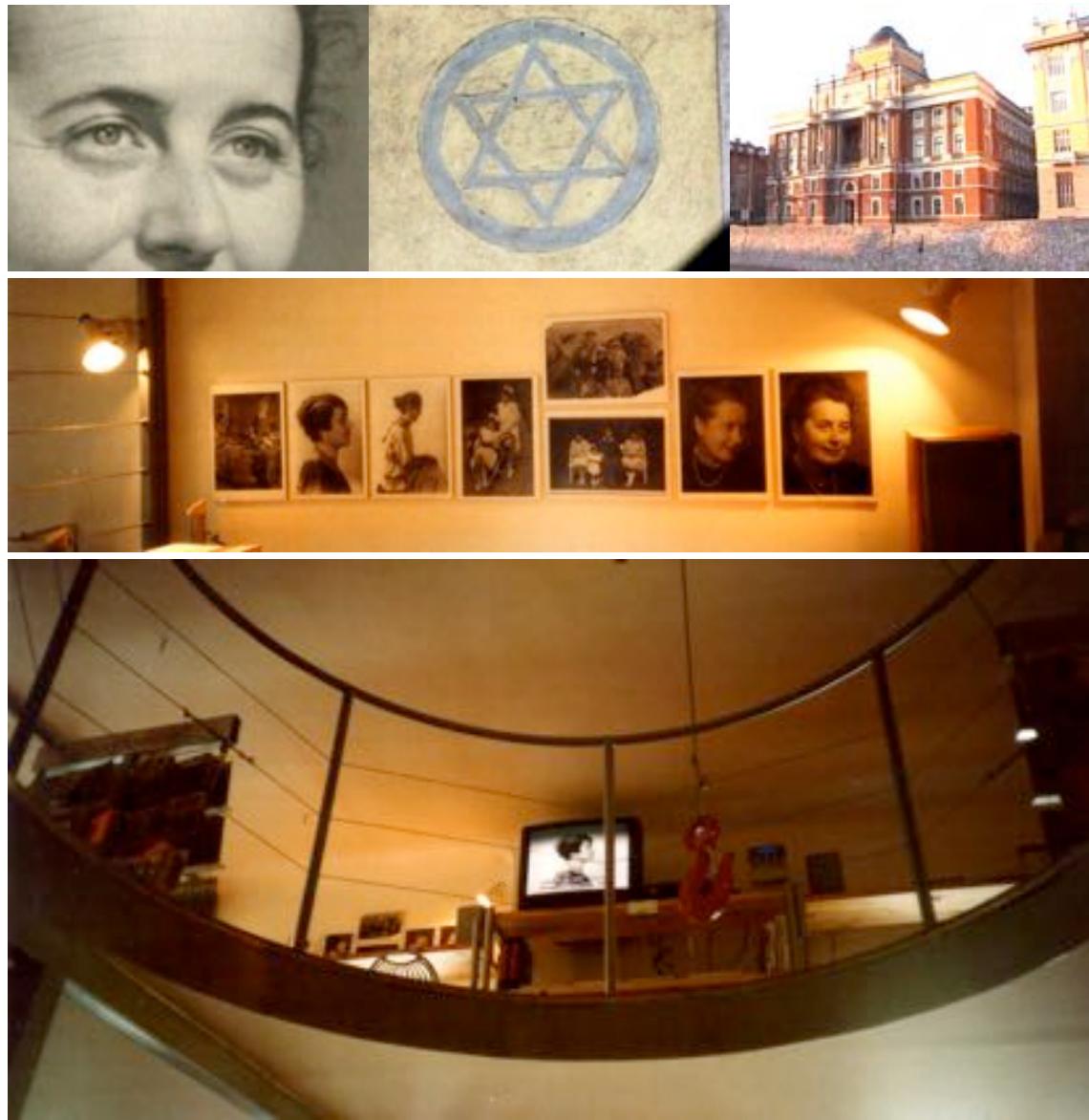
## **SARAJEVO INTERNATIONAL**

Twelve Video Installations in Sarajevo Public Spaces  
Twelve Videos Created in Collaboration with Foreigners  
who Moved to Sarajevo in the 1990ies  
SCCA Sarajevo 2001

The project participants, twelve foreigners who moved to Sarajevo for personal reasons during the 1990ies, differ from each other in their social background, religion and nationality: from university professor to a small Chinese shopkeeper. My idea was to show economical, political and social backgrounds of an after-war society through the representative selection of foreign citizens. Relevant social and historical issues are revealed through personal video documents.

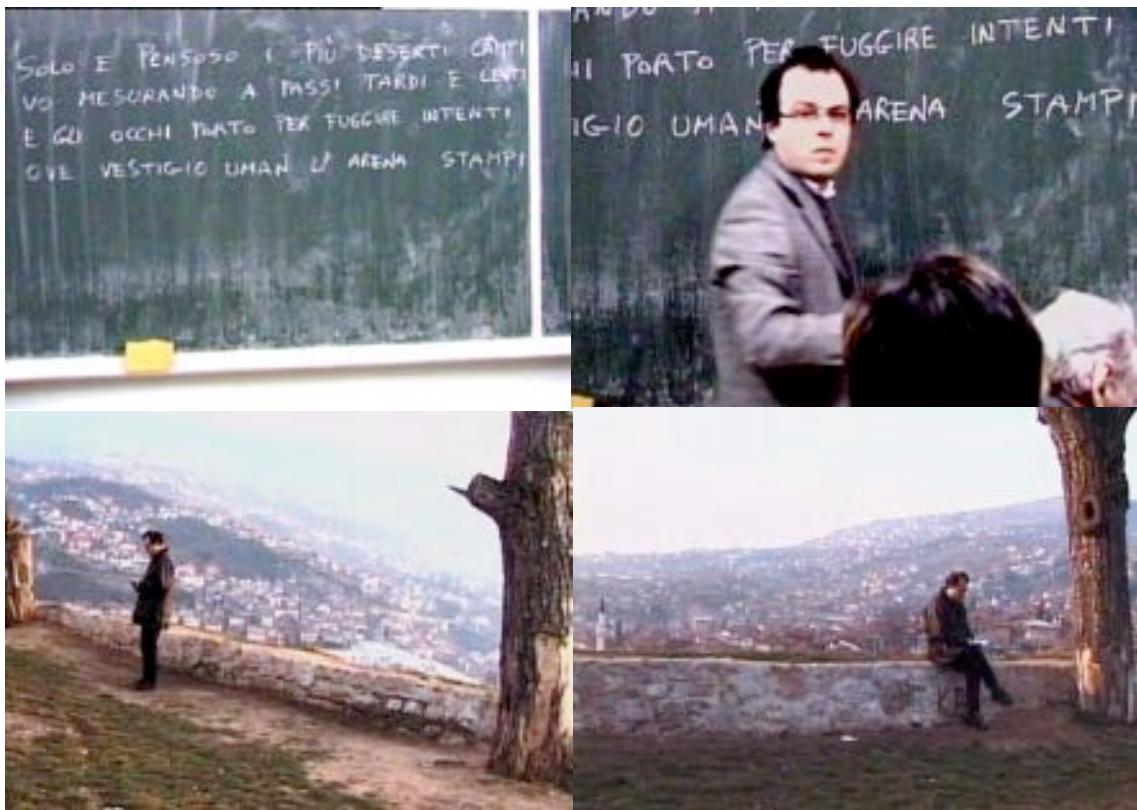
Communication with and among the participants, and to help their integration with their social environment were the aims of the project realized through showing the videos in different public sites in the town: a book-shop, a restaurant, the French Cultural Center, the Student Cultural Center, the airport... and through broadcasts on the local TV station. The choice of the public sites was made in collaboration with the participants and their wishes.

With my help and instructions, each of the participants shaped his/her story him/herself. The realization of video material took 50 days. Different cultural background caused big differences in the way participants involved them in the creative process. Some of them did shooting themselves, wrote a story or statement and creatively dealt with the video structure. For others, telling the story in a direct way was the only possible expression. Thus, the videos differ from each other a lot.



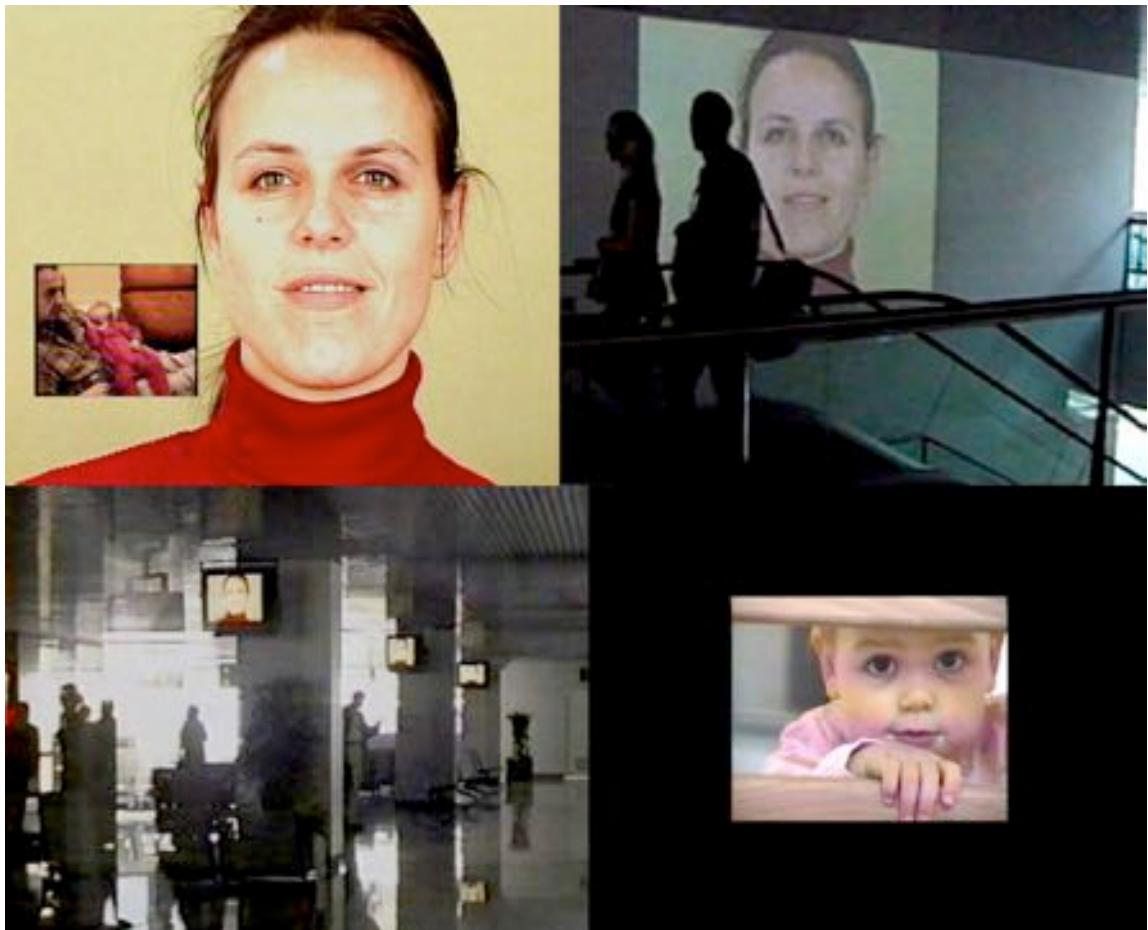
*Sarajevo International*, 2001, stills from the video created in collaboration with Yvana Enzler. Above: installation of the work in a Sarajevo bookshop, May 2001.

Yvana Enzler, born in 1952 in Switzerland, diplomat, came to Sarajevo in 1998, and not by chance. The video speaks of her search for her roots: Yvana follows the female line of her family and expose her own complex religious and national identity. It is a story of three women ancestors, her great-great-grandmother born in a Jewish Sarajevo family in the early 19th century, her great-grandmother, catholic from Vienna that married and went to live in Belgrade and finally her grandmother, orthodox. Yvana's complex identity is a metaphor for the identity of Sarajevo. She shows photographs from her family album alternating them with pictures of Sarajevo that correspond to different religious identities.



*Sarajevo International, 2001*, stills from the video created in collaboration with Marco Noce.

Marco Noce, born in Italy in 1963, came to Sarajevo in 1998 to teach Italian as a lecturer at the Sarajevo University. In 2001, aside from his university job, he worked as an officer at the Italian Embassy, volunteered for the Sarajevo Italian Society, was voluntarily teaching two Italian language courses, and was the founder of a nongovernmental office for cultural exchange between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Italy. His video story starts with a sonnet of Petrarch, an introduction to the reasons for Noce's coming to Sarajevo. Marco Noce, through Petrarch's sonnet and his personal intimate experience, speaks about the feeling of guilt and shame that arise in connection with Sarajevo, and about the feeling of uneasiness shared by many other people who have been lucky enough not to have personally experienced war. Marco is a poet who in order to tell his thoughts combines reading a chat with his wife Laura and a very personal lecture on Petrarch for his students.



*Sarajevo International*, 2001, stills from the video created in collaboration with Krista Maresch; installation site of the work at the Sarajevo Airport, May 2001.

Krista Maresch, born in 1968 in Austria, professor of the German language, met some young people from Sarajevo in Vienna, only to move to Sarajevo three years later. Krista's video symbolically uses home-video recordings, and speaks of the existence of a dual perspective: one is of Bosnia in Vienna, young people who came there as war refugees; the other is a picture of Sarajevo in the post-war period, misunderstandings between the ones who emigrated during the war and the ones who had stayed in Sarajevo. The video speaks of the differences in mentality and about the efforts to bridge these differences. Krista decided to show her video at the Sarajevo International Airport. In May 2001 her video was part of the program of the closed circuit television at the Sarajevo Airport. It was on the air once an hour.



*Sarajevo International*, 2001, a still from the video created in collaboration with Imad Ziyada; installation site of the work in the British Council Library in Sarajevo, May 2001.

Imad Ziyada, Palestinian born in Baghdad in 1966, civil engineer, today runs his own design studio in Sarajevo, where he has lived since 1996. Imad did not come to Sarajevo in the way one would expect, through the Arabic lobby in Sarajevo, but thanks to his friend, Vjeko Saja, catholic whom he met in Baghdad in the 1980s. Imad does not have a passport, only a travel document. He is in fact a refugee from Iraq to Sarajevo. He could not find a job in Iraq after the embargo of 1990. In his video Imad tells his life story, a story of friendship and on how to make your dreams come true. Imad sends regular financial support to his family in Baghdad. His video was shown in the British Council Library, since he met his best friend in the English language course in the British Council in Baghdad.



*Sarajevo International*, 2001, Six out of 12 locations in public and semi public places in the town of Sarajevo where the individuals video stories were shown, May 2001.





A Group Photograph with Beba the Cow, happening on December 7, 2003, Zagreb.

## CHEESE AND CREAM

An Initiative to Protect the Milkmaids of Zagreb (Since 2002)  
A Project by Kristina Leko in collaboration with BLOK  
Actions, Events, Research, Archives, Website, Exhibition, Roundtable, Campaign  
[www.sirivrhnje.org](http://www.sirivrhnje.org) (also [www.cheeseandcream.org](http://www.cheeseandcream.org))

While working on the project *On Milk and People*, I became familiar with many issues important to farming families. I learned a lot on issues related to agricultural policy, the dairy industry, and economical restructuring. I became deeply aware of social changes that would result from the process of accommodating the European Union regulations in Croatia and, respectively, in my hometown of Zagreb. As I understood that one of the consequences would be the disappearance of the milkmaids in the Zagreb open markets, I decided to start an initiative that would help the milkmaids of Zagreb survive, as they are a paradigmatic part of Croatian social reality.

Is it possible to join the European leveling of economic standards in a way that preserves important elements of local cultural identity? In 2002, in collaboration with the not-for-profit organization BLOK, we began our initiative aiming to protect the milkmaids of Zagreb as a cultural heritage. Since the summer of 2002 we organized several happenings, undertook research on the condition of the milkmaids, presented their situation in an exhibition and launched a small media campaign. In order to test and affect the public opinion \a website was created. In order to influence the administrative and political decision making, ten officials from different institutions were invited and participated in a round table entitled «Could Zagreb Milkmaids possibly join the EU?».

More than 500 women come regularly, mostly once or twice per week, to Zagreb to sell their milk products on a number of open market places. They earn a living for their families including over 2000 people. During September and October 2003, we interviewed 448 milkmaids on 6 market places in Zagreb. Through our questionnaire consisting of 41 items, we gathered information on the milkmaids' personal, family and financial situations. The database that has been created we have offered to the general public, to institutions and individuals willing to join the initiative, and help the milkmaids.

The Cheese and Cream exhibition in December 2003 was the central event through which we tried to bring the issues of the milkmaids to the general public discussion. Two happenings had a goal to assure media attention for our initiatives. Beba the Cow was brought to the center of the town for the exhibition opening and three milkmaids were handing out cheese and cream to the gallery visitors for free. The usual market situation was transferred to the gallery room in the presence of the media. Beforehand we developed contacts with journalists and established a network of our small media campaign. The aim was to keep milkmaids in the center of the public and media attention for a week. Our main media partner was the „Good morning Croatia“ TV program.



*Vive le fromage au lait cru!*, happening, Zagreb, 7.12.2003. In collaboration with the three milkmaids: Renata Kostibol, Jagica Levak and Anica Horvat.



Milk 2002 Action, Dolac Market, Zagreb, 31.8.2002. It was the first happening of the project. Three milkmaids were handing out fresh cheese & cream for free, while people signed in our book and thus expressed their support for our initiative to save the milkmaids from extinction.



*Collecting signatures on the market place in the center of Ljubljana, Slovenia, October 2003. The event was organized by The City of Women Festival. Together with the milkmaid Visnja and project producer Vesna, we were collecting support signatures for the Zagreb Milkmaids in our Book of Requests for the 22<sup>nd</sup> Century.*



The front page of the project website is *The Declaration on Milkmaids*. By signing the Declaration, which can be read in 5 languages, one helps to ensure the future of our initiative. Now, there are approximately 3000 signatures online. The web site includes 474 personal web pages of the Zagreb milkmaids who sell their products on the six biggest open markets in the city. Each milkmaid is present with several photos of herself and her products, and optionally with an audio statement and/or short video clip. Search possibilities through the categories of the weekday and the market place enable one to locate or find her/his milkmaid. It is a complex and precise database since the schedule differs for each milkmaid. There is a growing collection of stories on cheese and cream and on milkmaids that has been written online. Through this feature, the web site became a structurally important part of the exhibition. Each visitor was invited and offered help to contribute his/her story, comments and memories on milkmaids and related issues.

The Cheese and Cream exhibition was created and functioned as an open office to the project where support signatures were collected, as well as people's stories on milkmaids, and where the milkmaids issues were discussed with different audiences. Beside myself, there was always another person in the gallery to accommodate the visitors: to explain the position of the milkmaids, to make sure the visitors sign the Declaration on Milkmaids, to show them the web site and to motivate and help them to write their milkmaid stories online. Another important exhibit was a serial of over 600 wall mounted photo portraits that were to be taken away by the milkmaids, if they visit the show. At the end of the exhibit, the missing photos showed that 15% of the milkmaids visited the gallery.



The exhibition was created and functioned as an open office to the project where support signatures were collected, as well as people's stories on milkmaids, and where milkmaids could get their portrait photos.

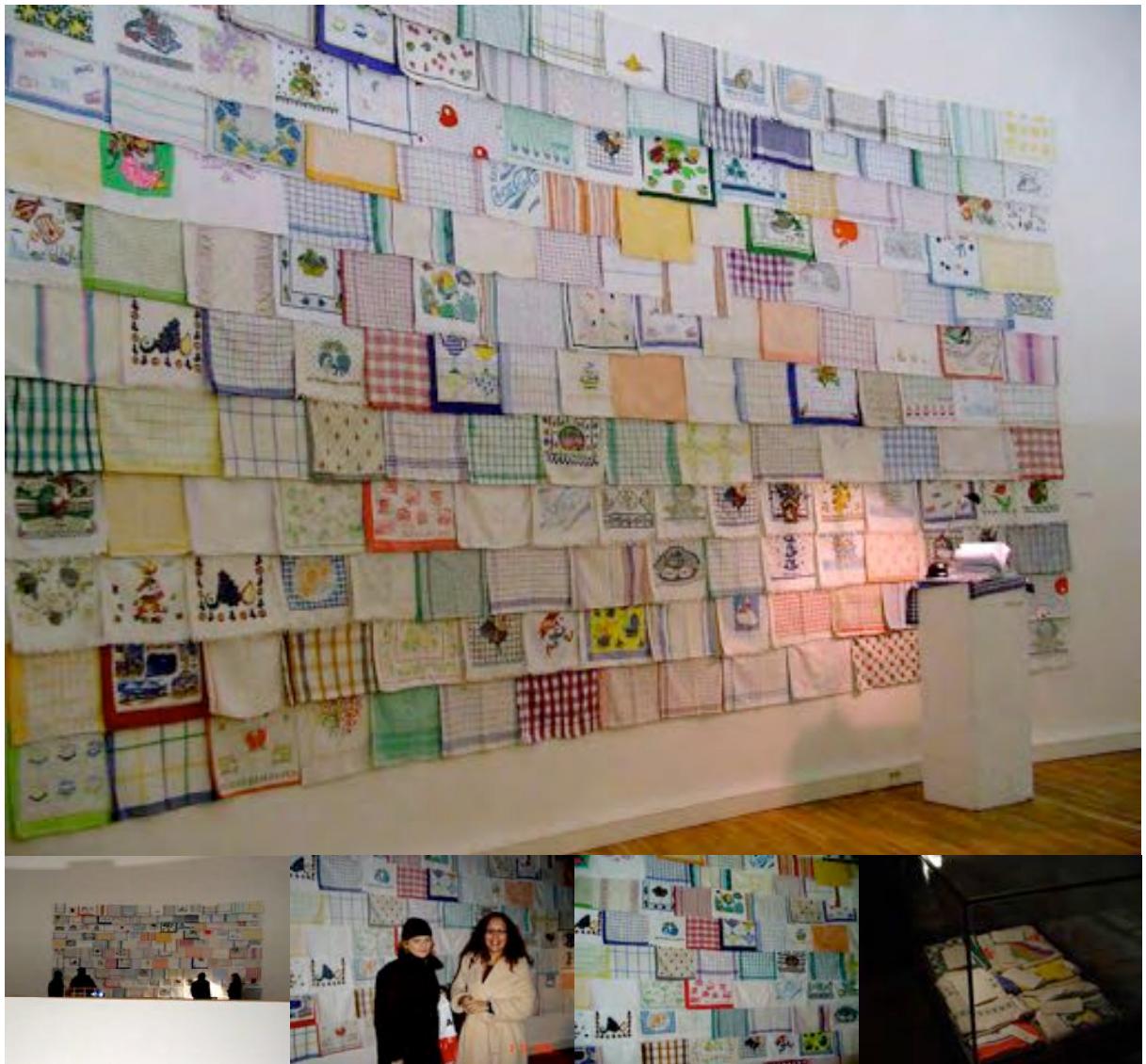


Round-table "Could Zagreb milkmaids possibly join the EU?", December 12, 2003, KIC, Zagreb.



*Cheese and Cream*, three channel video installation, and *The Dishtowels of the Milkmaids of Zagreb*, PM Gallery, Zagreb, 2003.

The *Cheese and Cream* exhibition was the conclusion to an intensive year-long documentation and research period. In order to introduce the issues of milkmaids to a wider non-artistic audience, the show was created as an open office to the project but it also aimed to show what our initiative did concerning the protection of milkmaids: different actions, research, archives, website, as well as my artworks: videos, photographs and objects.



*Cheese and Cream*, exhibition view, PM Gallery, Zagreb, 2003. *The Dishtowels of the Milkmaids of Zagreb*, a collection of over 200 dishtowels, and *The Book of Requests for the 22<sup>nd</sup> Century*, a signature book.

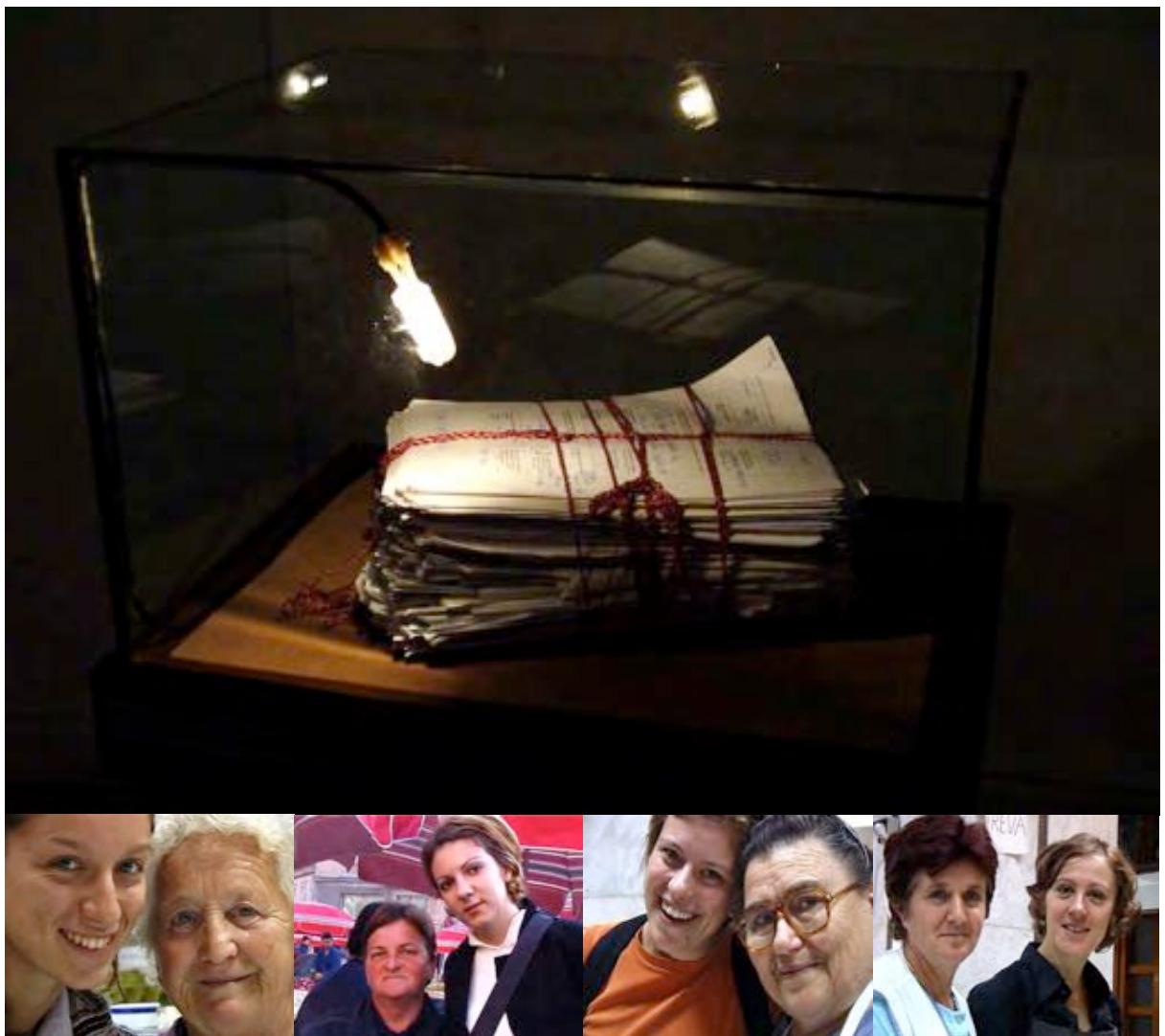
There were several exhibits in the show: *Cheese and Cream*, a three channel video installation, with total duration of 80 minutes, showed a collage of short statements of approx. one hundred milkmaids; *Dishtowels of the Milkmaids of Zagreb*, a collection of over 200 dish-towels belonging to the milkmaids, collected by exchanging old for new while distributing the exhibition invitations on the markets; *Book of Requests for the 22<sup>nd</sup> Century*, placed in front of the dishtowels, with approx. 1200 signatures; *448 Questionnaires*, containing our data base on milkmaids.



*Cheese and Cream*, 2002/03, three-channel video installation, stills from the video channel 1.



Cheese and Cream, 2002/03, three-channel video installation, stills from the video channel 1.



Above: *Cheese and Cream Questionnaires*, detail of object-installation: 448 questionnaires with data on 448 milkmaids, and quotations from the interviews; printed paper, handwritings, tricolor string; created in September/October 2003.  
Below: Beside myself, here is the team that worked on the milkmaid-questionnaires for 7 weeks: Dalija Cvetkovic (on the photo with the milkmaid Katica), Jelena Jelinic (with Marica), Petra Pokrovac (with Danica), Vesna Vukovic (with Ivanka).

---

COMMUNITY ART EXHIBITION AND VIDEO PROJECTS



Beweis Nr.4: Jede/R Mensch Ist Ein/E Künstler/In, Secession, Vienna, 2006. The project participants during the set up of the installation, April 28, 2006.

## **BEWEIS NR.4: JEDE/R MENSCH IST EIN/E KÜNSTLER/IN.**

A Communication Project, Social Experiment and An Environment

By Kristina Leko

Graphic Cabinet, Secession, Vienna, 2006

In Collaboration with The Friends of The Secession, Volkshilfebeschäftigunginitiative and the following individuals: Dr. Paul Ferstel, Elisabeth Hochhold, Nicole Kapaun, Martin Kufner, Benedikt Ledebur, Dr. Martin Maxl , Patricia Nejes, Milica Petrovic, Franziska Poisinger, Maria Polak, Nicole Riegler, Dr. Johannes Schlebrügge, Beate Shala, Carina Sieber, Leo und Renata Sikoronja, Andra Spallart, Friedrich Tietjen, Dr. Ulrike Tropper, Bernhard Winkler

An environment in the historical form of an art salon. The graphic cabinet of the Secession was transformed into the living room of an hypothetical art lover and collector. A wall text in the entry stairs invited the audience to explore the installation where artworks created by ordinary people faced so called 'real' artworks. The audience was invited to check for themselves if they could tell which artworks are which, and if the theorem that everyone is an artist has been proven.

A collaboration with the Volkshilfe. The origin of the unprofessional artworks in the installation is as follows. In collaboration with The Volkshilfe Initiative for the Unemployed, I offered a self-empowerment, drawing-painting-and conceptual art workshop on the theme of self-portraiture to the individuals there. With ten participants, we worked for two weeks, with our work-flow organized similar to an art class. I helped each individual to produce personalized artifacts.

A collaboration with The Friends of the Secession. The professional art works in this installation originate from nine members of the Friends of the Secession. The installation includes their personal furniture, art objects and artworks from their collections. The Friends of the Secession were addressed with the invitation to help prove the theorem. I invited them to help design the setting that will host in the best way the artworks produced in the Volkshilfe workshop.

The objectives of the project. The context and the final goal of the project was made transparent to everybody involved, so that each person could act accordingly and help prove the theorem. All the project participants met in the final phase. On April 28, 2006 from 11 a.m. till 1 p.m. a happening took place. All the participants worked together on positioning the artworks and objects within the installation. A group photograph was taken. The presumption was that the reflection of the social experiment which took place would affect the final design of the set up. Later, the installation included soundtrack of this happening, which made transparent the process.



Installation view, Graphic Cabinet, Secession, 2006.



The project participants during the set up of the installation, April 28, 2006.

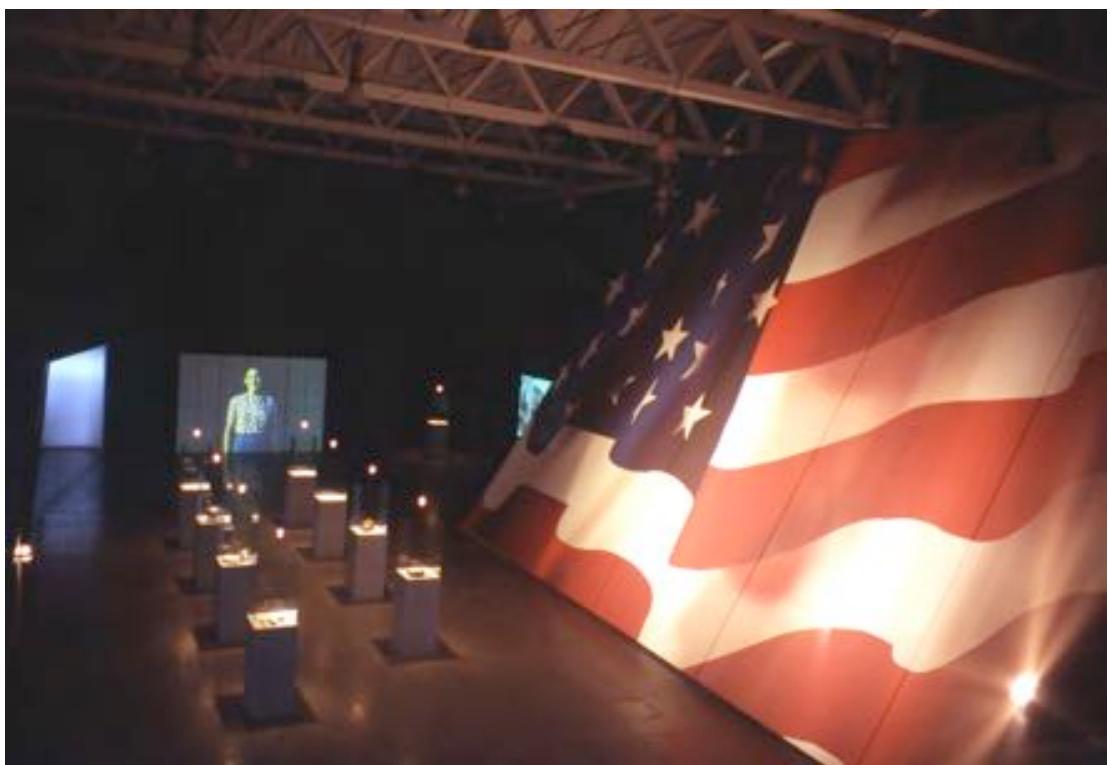


The project participants during the workshop in The Volksfilfe Initiative for the Unemployed, March 2006.



Beweis Nr.4, Documentation, 2007, installation, photo documentation of the project, wall paper. Installation view, Galeri für Zeitgenossische Kunst, Leipzig, 2008.





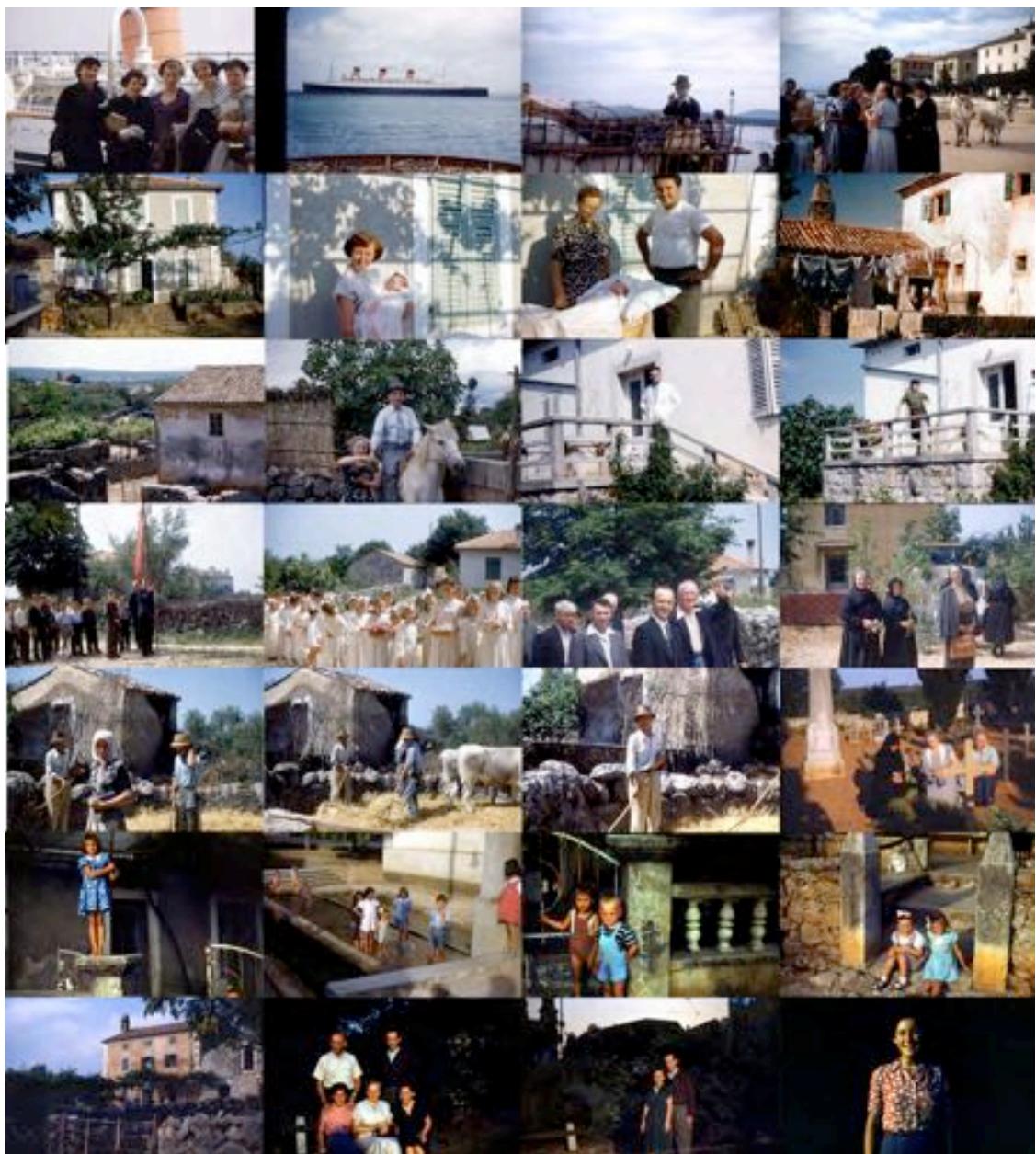
Amerika exhibition, MoCA Zagreb, 2005, first gallery, video projection No.1, 8 min. Wall text says:  
"Slides that Margaret Zgombic took in 1952 during her first visit to the old country of her parents.  
It was the first visit of a group of American citizens to the communist Yugoslavia after the war."

## **AMERIKA**

Expanded Documentary Cinema by Kristina Leko with Marcella Bonich,  
Nori Boni Zorovich, Miriam Busanic, Margaret Zgombic and Ljubica Zic  
Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb 2005

It is collaboration with five elderly women of Croatian origin living in Astoria, Queens, NY, in a center of the Croatian immigration to the USA. During my 2002/2003 residencies in PS1 in Queens, I got involved with the Croatian community in Astoria, volunteering in Croatian Sunday school. The change in prospective on the USA that I got from that environment was rather impressive. I did an extensive research on the community and its history, and found several women who wanted to participate a project that would tell a story of the new world through their life-stories. There are several key-issues in relation to which stories and materials are structured: freedom, hunger, labor, money, family, democracy, communism, capitalism, belief, American dream, and the old home. My project participants belong mostly to the first generation of immigrant working class; they originate from the Adriatic Sea islands and poverty.

During the early 1960ies the northern Adriatic coast of Croatia was depopulated. As Yugoslav communist authorities started to issue passports, the population flooded to Italy where camps were organized to accommodate and direct them mainly to the USA, also as a part of the cold war at the time. The exhibition gives an insight into the life of an immigrant working class opposing the clichés of the USA as a land of milk and honey. Also, the purpose of the exhibition, as it comes out of the working ethics and methods used, is to strengthen the identity of the Croatian community in Astoria. The fact that the exhibit was shown at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb means a lot regarding the community's self-estimation. My wish is not only to offer a point of identification to the community, but also to stimulate communication within it. For the exhibition venue in Queens, together with the five women, we will offer a meeting place where everyone is invited to help and take part. It should develop in a community platform that will gather different film, video and photo materials. I hope that once collected, the material will find its way to be adopted into a community cultural archive, a web site or info point. I feel that my work do not differ from genre social paintings of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, except for the medium. An expanded documentary cinema, realized with intensive creative involvement of the participants, where the content develops polyphonically through several rooms via video projections, audio-pieces, videos screened on monitors, texts, three-dimensional objects and photo/text/document archives. It is an eclectic compendium of how to document reality, and how to tell a story, created through juxtaposition of different kinds of presence; different mediums/types of narration. The variety of material is needed in order to deal with the complex relation between individual existence and social reality. In half an hour walk-through, one can get the basic story, or one can spend several hours watching videos, reading and searching the archives.



A selection of images from the  
projectionNo.1.



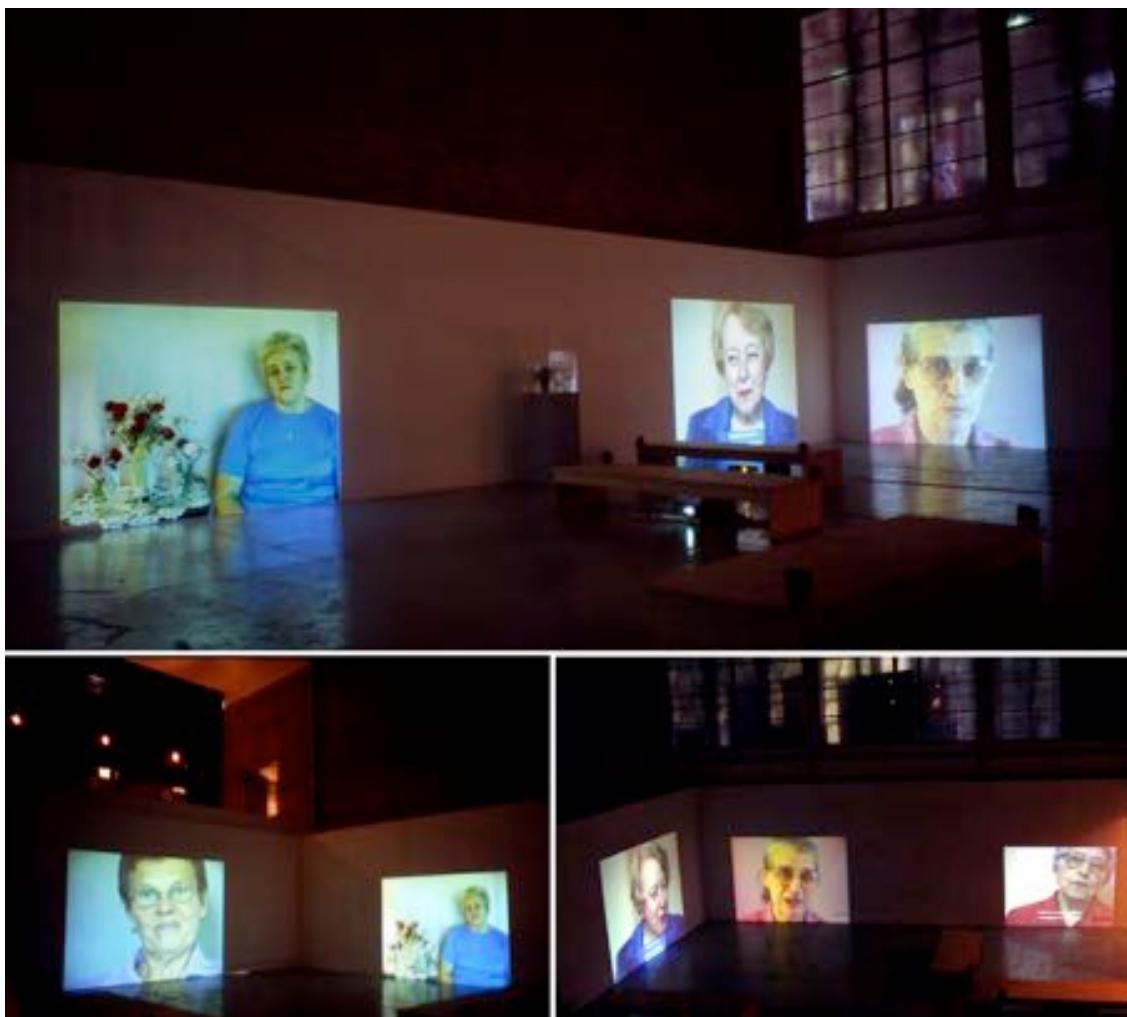
*Amerika* exhibition, MoCA Zagreb, 2005, first gallery, video projection No.3, 6 min. Wall text: "The first family album of Ljubica Zic, covering the period from her immigration day until her first visit back home five years later." A selection of photographs from projection No.3.



*Amerika* exhibition, MoCA Zagreb, 2005, first gallery. The objects exhibited on the pedestals are accompanied with hand written first person singular notes. An example: "We were in a group, on a ferry traveling to Italy, pretending to be tourists. We all ordered huge meals in order to spend the money we had. We knew we were not going to need it ever again... In Trieste, we went to the police office, and raised our hands. At home, when saying goodbye, my father gave me a quarter sent to him from the U.S. a long time ago. And so, this is the money I had on myself when we entered the U.S."



Amerika exhibition, MoCA Zagreb, 2005, first gallery, object and sound installation throughout the gallery space. Wall text: "Strike of the employees of the 52B-52J Union in January 1996. Remixed excerpts from the audio diary recorded by Marcella Bonich during her month on strike. On the headphones: an excerpt from the diary – Ms. Bonich arguing with strike breakers." Objects: Ms. Bonich's working uniform accompanied with a hand written related note, and a poster.



*Amerika* exhibition, MoCA Zagreb, 2005, second gallery, five channel video installation. This is the central video piece of the exhibition. Five video projections show simultaneously talking faces of the five women. They share with us selected aspects of their lives, as they refer to issues such as: departure, hunger, the old country, labor, money, children, freedom, the American dream, etc.



Amerika exhibition, MoCA Zagreb, 2005, upper gallery I, Five Biographies, mdf boards, 420x260x4 cm each, acrylic paint, chalk.

The biographies of the five project participants have been transformed into five one-page first person singular statements, hand written with five different handwritings on large format boards. One of the texts:

*A school teacher and a bank clerk, I was faced with physical labor for the first time in my life in 1987, at the age of 52, as I became a cleaning lady in Manhattan. When I retired in 2002, a music teacher from Macedonia got my job.*

*28800 square feet is the daily quota for building maintenance of the 52B-52J Union. It would be a line one yard wide and more than two miles long, that I used to run through and make shiny every evening. Chairs, libraries, armchairs, sofas, waiting rooms, phone sets, computers, 103 rooms, 200 tables, 200 garbage-cans, 13 to 17 big black garbage bags weighting 80-100 pounds. Every day half a ton of mostly paper would pass through my hands.*

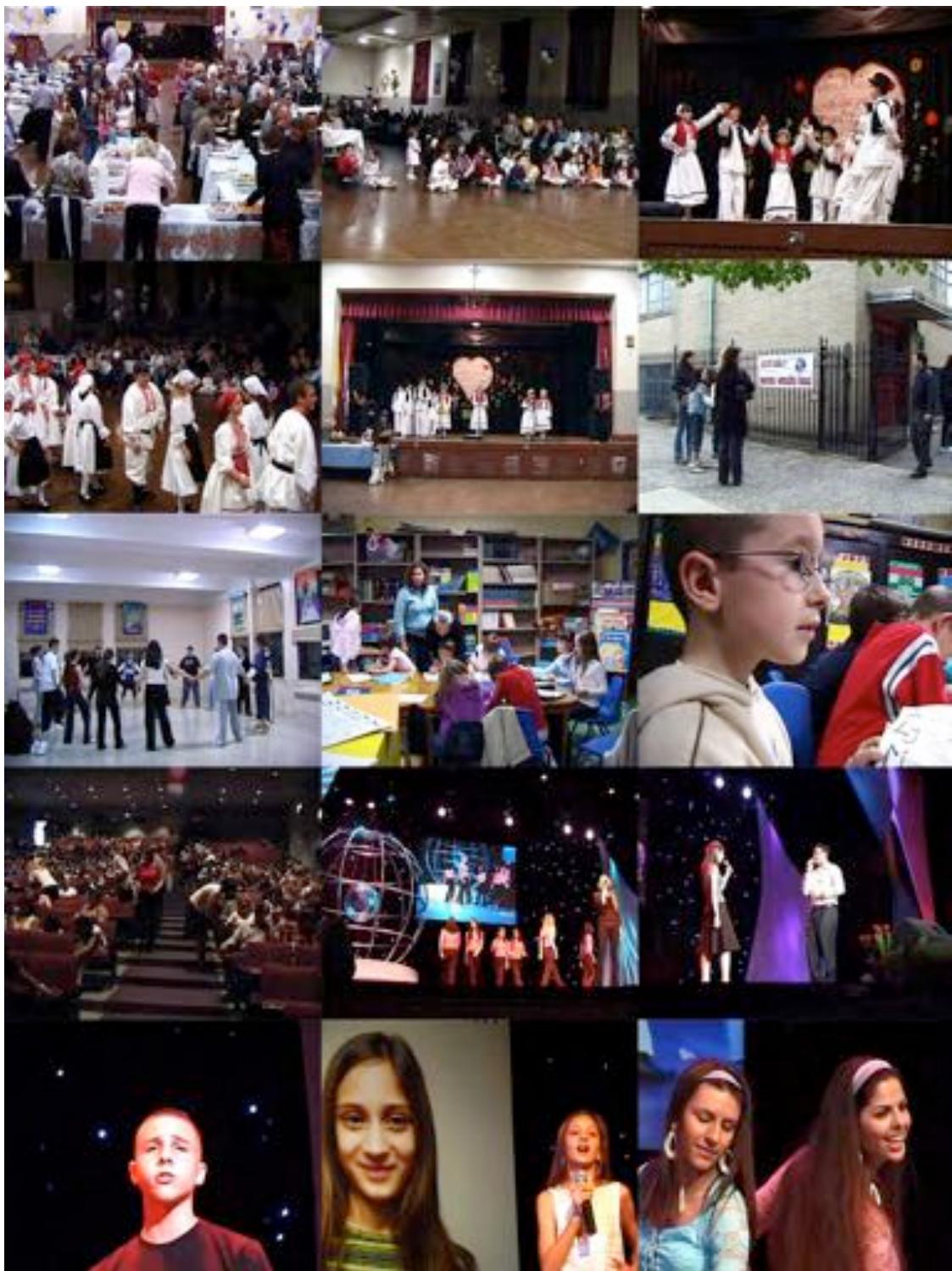
*Although the amount of work to be done in this country almost exceeds the limits of endurance, people work and work and work. We all need money. Then, later on, we pay for it with health.*

*Despite pushing myself to the very edge of my physical limits, just like most of the people here do, I also had, for the period of 13 years, along with my full time cleaning lady job, another job or two. For 22 months I worked 16 hours a day. I would go out at 8 a.m. and return home at 1 a.m. I took care of children, elderly people, and other people's households.*

*Then, in 1991 I found another additional Saturday job. Although it did not bring any money, I devoted myself to it with great love and pleasure. The Croatian Saturday School was the only professional satisfaction that I got in this country. For my work in the school, I was awarded a medal by the President of Croatia in 1999.*



Amerika exhibition, MoCA Zagreb, 2005, upper gallery III. Room dedicated to the Croatian community of Astoria, NY. Here: a 10-monitor video installation documenting the life of the community. Wall text: "During 2004, the following institutions and events were video documented by the artist: a rehearsal of the Klapa Astoria and a rehearsal of the MPB Croatian church choir, the participation of the Croatian community in the Migration Day celebration in the Cathedral of Brooklyn, the Mother's Day Celebration in the Most Precious Blood School Gym in Astoria, the Croatian Children and Youth Festival in Jamaica, Queens, an evening in the Rudar Club, Astoria, a traditional Nerezine's holy mass in Latin in the MPB Church, Astoria, Sunday holy services in Croatian & an interview with Father Zubovic, Sunday gatherings in the MPB School, the work of the Croatian School in Astoria and the Croatian School in Douglaston, a rehearsal of Hrvatski Plamen folklore group, a walk through Astoria and a visit to the Adriatic Meat Market." The copies of the different documentary videos were given as presents to the community members.



A selection of stills from several videos documenting the life of the Croatian community in Astoria.



Amerika exhibition, MoCA Zagreb, 2005, first gallery, video projection No.2, 4 min.; a selection of images from the projection. Wall text says: "From the photo album of Miriam Busanic. 33 photographs of the procession on the island of Ilovik in 1953 and several photographs of the children from Ilovik in a refugee camp in Italy in 1962, before their immigration to the U.S."



*Amerika* exhibition, MoCA Zagreb, 2005, upper gallery II. Reading room and photo archive of the exhibition created and set up together with the project participants. Over 1200 photographs (scanned reprints) from the family albums of the participants are selected and mounted by the project participants themselves. Several books and magazines dedicated to the Croatian community in Astoria and to different family histories have been selected by the project participants to enrich the room designated to the accompanying educational program.





No subject (A Conversation with Working People), a participant of an empowerment-drawing workshop in SDZ Merseburg.

## **NO SUBJECT (A CONVERSATION WITH WORKING PEOPLE)**

A Communication Project and Cultural Archive, Halle, Germany, 2004/05

A Multimedia Installation, Expanded Documentary Cinema, Shrinking Cities Exhibition,  
Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst Leipzig, 2005/06

By Kristina Leko in collaboration with: AWO Leuna, Arbeit und Leben Training Center  
Schkopau, and Sozialdienstleistungszentrum, Merseburg

The project was developed in the region of Halle over a one-year period. Three social institutions were involved in the project, as portrayed through the involvement of their beneficiaries. I offered the three institutions a presentation within my future exhibition room<sup>1</sup>, as well as producing video documentaries for their different presentation purposes.

*No subject* is an archive of experiences, statements, thoughts, and reflections of three groups of working people related to the notions of work, working class and unemployment. It was realized through workshops, meetings, and discussions with people in situ, in three social institutions situated in the industrial region of Halle. Involved institutions were: The Education Center "Arbeit und Leben" where non-qualified unemployed youngsters get their second chance to complete an education; "Arbeiterwohlfahrt" Social Center in Leuna where a group of women which was forced in 1990 to an early retirement gather; and a Merseburg based social service center for the unemployed, run by the unemployed. In collaboration with the three social groups a multimedia installation consisting of video and sound documents, photographs, written and hand-written documents, drawings, objects and personal belongings, where individual biographies meet their social context, was created. Three video documentaries about the three institutions are part of the installation, and were created as gifts to the institutions in order to serve their documentation and marketing purposes.

Beside creating video documents, and thus enabling reflection on a general and particular social situation, for me, this project was very much about how to be useful. My feeling of usefulness culminated through the drawing workshop held in Merseburg.

---

<sup>1</sup> December 2005 – January 2006, in the context of the *Shrinking Cities* exhibition.



No subject (A Conversation with Working People), participants of the drawing workshop in SDZ Merseburg.

Sozialdienstleistungszentrum (SDZ) came into being in 2005 and represents a new type of social solidarity. It is the first institution of its kind. The employees, long term unemployed, work as 1€-jobbers giving free or 1€-services to the other unemployed: breakfast, lunch, children's playroom, secondhand clothing, grocery store, hairdresser, laundry, cosmetic treatment, help with job applications, and advice on social issues. The goods are provided through donations from local companies. When I offered SDZ to make a video documentation about them, the employees decided they did not want any cameras around. So, in order to present the institution I made a sound documentary. The sad fact that the video was not welcome, as some felt ashamed of their position, led me to offer another free service of mine: A workshop on large format self portrait drawing with self-empowerment as its goal. There were thirteen participants: SDZ employees and customers. For a week, we worked in a small room, three people at a time. Each person spent at least five, and some even nine hours drawing. The atmosphere at the workshop was somehow special. The photos you can see here were made during the working process in order to show to the person how well he or she was progressing. Then, as I printed the photos to mail them to the participants, I suddenly realized this was in fact proof that everyone is an artist. Later, nobody had any objection to the photos being published. Some were even proud. And I wished there would be more proofs like this in this world.



No subject (A Conversation with Working People), workshop in SDZ Merseburg.



No subject (A Conversation with Working People), expanded documentary cinema, installation views, Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig, 2005. The area dedicated to the SDZ Merseburg: a sound documentary, drawings.



Above: No subject (A Conversation with Working People), expanded documentary cinema, installation detail, photo-reprint, from the photo-archives of the project - photographs of the reconstruction of the Educational Center Arbeit und Leben. Below: Installation view, Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig, 2005. Photo-reprints, objects, handwritten notes, multi-channel video installation, sound documentary, drawings.



Above: No subject (A Conversation with Working People), expanded documentary cinema, installation view, installation area dedicated to the Educational Center Arbeit und Leben. Below: found object from the Center, Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig, 2005.



No subject (A Conversation with Working People), expanded documentary cinema, installation views, Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig, 2005. The installation area dedicated to the AWO Leuna: a three channel video installation, a sound installation, photo-reprints, objects, handwritten notes.



No subject (A Conversation with Working People), expanded documentary cinema, 2005. Video stills from the video documentary about AWO Leuna.



Two Biographies (from the project No Subject), installation view, Hellerau, Dresden, 2010. Collection Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst Leipzig.

## TWO BIOGRAPHIES

Text based installation  
by Kristina Leko, 2004/2010

The installation is based on the textual material collected and created in 2004/2005 in the region of Halle within my participatory artistic project No Subject (In conversation with working people). The project took part in three social institutions where the biographies of ca 20 project participants were written down, for the archive of the project. These stories were not presented in the textual form within the original project presentation (multi media environment). The installation presents two authentic texts written by two women, both very much representative for the region and Eastern Germany in general. One woman is in her early 60ies, and had to retire at an early age in 1990, caused by the change of the political system and restructuring of the local chemical industry. The other one is in her early 20ies, unemployed, and dreaming about moving to the West Germany, due to unemployment and hard living conditions.

Wochende 10/12/2005 Also hier ist Dennis Schäfer. Meinst du  
du meine Freund. Ich brauch nur meinen Freund. Ich glaube  
er braucht mich auch.  
Noch zwei Jahren Schule habe ich am Berufsvorbereitungsschul gemacht  
für die Berufsbildung zur Handelswirtschaftsschule. Die Ausbildung  
findet nicht so gut. Damit kann man nichts anfangen. Über hau-  
ten wo man nahmen was man bekommt.  
Mein älterer Bruder ist 15 und besucht nun seine Eltern ausser nicht.  
Hier mit ihm Schämen kann Gebärden sprache und können ihm in der  
Schule nicht helfen. Er muss alles allein machen. Er ist mein kleiner  
Engel. Ich bin auch immer für ihn da.  
Mein anderer Bruder ist 20 und hat auch viel durchgemacht. Als kleines  
Kind war er ein Themen, hatte Kreuzes Füße und besuchte das letzte Schuljahr  
keine Schule. Erst jetzt kann Freunde wieder sehr viel für Er ist auch  
ein paar Jahre zurückgeblieben. Ich kann aber sagen dassich da Nomak  
für aus meinem Familienhaus.  
Mein Freund arbeitet in Leipzig bei Porsche im Werk. Er baute die  
Technik zusammen. Er hat eine Ausbildung als KFZ Mechaniker ge-  
macht will aber es was nicht immer in seinem Leben machen. Er möchte  
vielleicht unternehmerisch arbeiten oder es mit Geld zu tun hat. David von Traum  
Scheinfach alles erfüllen zu können einfach auf keinen anderen auf sich  
selbst nicht. Bei uns waren es mal schön weniger nehmen konnten und  
nicht mehr gehen und einfach kaufen was wir wollen und was wir alle erhält.  
Gemeinsamlich hier zwischen mir aus Halle von allmeng. Aber nur  
auf meinem Freund. Durch ihn habe ich den Willen alles zu erreichen.  
Mit ihm würde ich einfach ein neues Leben aufbauen. Ich hoffe  
nur dann wir glücklich werden.

Two Biographies (from the project No Subject), installation view, Hellerau, Dresden, 2010.



Two Biographies (from the project No Subject), details, 2010.





*On Milk and People*, detail of the installation created in collaboration with the Ostojcic family, ICA-Dunaujvaros, Hungary, 2003.

## **ON MILK AND PEOPLE**

A Project by Kristina Leko

In Collaboration with Ten Farmer Families from Croatia and Hungary 2001/03

Ten Short Films /Exhibition /Travel to Hungary

Five Croatian and five Hungarian families involved in dairy production took part in the project. I filmed one entire day in each family.

The exhibition in the Institute of Contemporary Art Dunaujvaros, Hungary (ICA-D) included ten short films (one on each family), an object-installation for each family and a one-hour video collage of interviews with members of farmer families. The exhibit gave an insight into the daily life and routine of small family farms, as well as a social and political comparison of the two countries which share similar history of communism, and similar transitional problems.

My intention was to actively involve farmer families in the creative process and to create a happening that they would have a benefit from. All the families received a small participation fee, as well as travel and per diems paid.

Croatian families traveled to Hungary to set up the show together with Hungarian participants. For some of them, it was their first travel abroad. The farmer families selected the exhibits, their household objects and personal belongings, and did the set up of the show themselves. My ten short films were screened inside their object installations.

In the other room of the exhibition the interview-tape was projected. Here the focus was on social and political conditions of the farmers' life and work situation, as compared in the two countries. The ICA-D staff, together with The Agricultural University of Gödölo prepared a collection of written advisory material addressed to Hungarian farmers. It dealt with organizing and running a farm; it listed available subsidies, gave financial tips...



*On Milk and People*, exhibition view, object and video installation created in collaboration with the Kolesaric family, Croatia, ICA-Dunaujvaros, Hungary, 2003. Two video stills from the video No. 1/10, featuring the Kolesaric family, Zoljani, Croatia.



*On Milk and People*, ten short video documentaries, 2002–2003. Stills from the video No. 9/10, with the Ostojcic family.



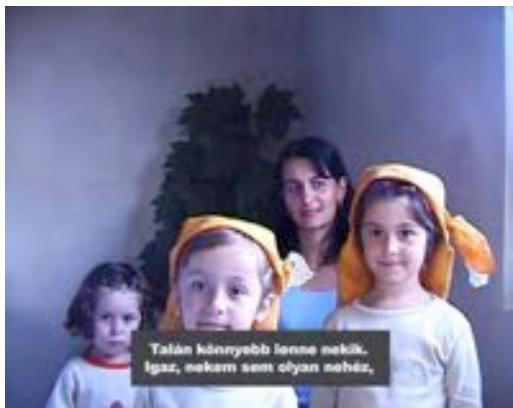
On Milk and People exhibition views, first exhibition room, ICA-Dunaujvaros, 2003.



*On Milk and People*, ten short video documentaries, 2002-2003. Stills from the video No. 10/10, with the Blazevac family.



*On Milk and People*, ten short video documentaries, 2002-2003. Stills from the video No. 8/10, with the Samardzija family.



*On Milk and People Interviews, 56 minutes, 2002, stills from the video.*



*On Milk and People*, exhibition room with the interviews. Video projection, wall text, printed material. ICA-Dunaujvaros, 2003.

The second exhibition room offered a focused analysis of the social position of the small family farms through video interviews and written material. The wall text consists of two quotations from the interviews. It is an example of several matching cases, where a Croatian and a Hungarian farmer complain about being blackmailed in the same way from their agricultural agencies. On the table there was reading and advisory material for farmers to take away, prepared by the ICA-D staff and students from the Agricultural Faculty of the University in Gödolo.



*On Milk and People*, ICA-Dunaujvaros, January 2003. Project participants and gallery staff were eating in the gallery every day during the set up of the exhibit. Simple Hungarian dishes were delivered to us from the nearby factory restaurant.





*Me, Jadzia, 2000*, stills from the video.

## **EXCHANGING BIOGRAPHIES**

Video Communication Project  
Laznia Center for Contemporary Art Gdansk Poland 2000

The video "Gdansk Dolne Miasto" (56 min.) was created during my "Exchanging Biographies" project which took place in the neighborhood of the Downtown Gdansk, Poland. The neighborhood has been known for many social problems (high rate of violence and crime, drug and alcohol abuse, unemployment, and illegal immigration from the former Soviet Union).

I wanted to offer a possibility of creative expression to the children from the neighborhood. Together with organizers, we hoped to initiate a community platform that would start dealing with some of the problems children are facing there. Eleven girls took part in a weeklong session. Our theme was autobiography: past, present, future. We were writing, reading and talking about our experience and wishes. Then, we were filming for three days, and in that period we were assaulted and robbed in the street...

The video was recorded on the places chosen by the girls, according to their judgments and feelings. Some of them used the camera themselves. The video "Downtown Gdansk" was presented in several public screenings in the Laznia Center of Contemporary Art, situated in Downtown Gdansk as well. The screenings attracted relatively big audiences of school kids and their parents. "Me, Jadzia" is my favorite story from that longer videotape made in Gdansk.



*A Visit*, 2002/03. Above: the photo made in collaboration with the three residents, 2002. Below: Installationview, The Volkshilfe Retirement Home, Graz, lobby.

## A VISIT

### Austrian Triennial on Photography 2002/3

Here, my collaborators were three senior residents of a Volkshilfe retirement home in Graz where I spent a week in September 2002:

Mr. Karusa (94), Mr. Gross (89) and Ms. Murke (81). Through individual meetings and conversations, together we selected their most important professional and private experiences. Then, we chose an object to represent each of their important life-stories. Together we created a set for a photo of them where all of the objects were clearly visible. The photo was and still is exhibited in the café and reception area in the Volkshilfe Residency for Senior Citizens in Graz, above the piano, where Mr. Karusa used to play late afternoons. I wanted to benefit from the infrastructure of the Austrian Triennial on Photography in motivating its audience to come and visit the retirement home and meet old people: tram no.7 till the last stop and then a free taxi to the residency. Not many people came, all together maybe 50, but this is already a lot, because normally nobody comes. Even family members do not come for visit often enough.

We also organized conversations about the photo where senior citizens exchanged their experiences and opinions related to the stories i.e. key objects from our photograph: a piano, a brush, a train, a soldier's hat, a letter...



M. Karusa, M. Gross, Ms. Murke, dr. Werner Fenz, and myself on the occasion of the discussion about the photo organized in the Volkshilfe Retirement Home, January 2003.





Miners' Memories, community project, 2008., photographs from the media archives created through the project.

## **MINERS' MEMORIES**

Expanded Documentary Cinema / Community Project / Community Media Archives, 2008  
By Kristina Leko in collaboration with ex-miners and their family members  
Labin Municipal Gallery, Croatia

Project participants: Mladen Bajramovic, Sergio Baskjera, Ibrahim Cizmic, Spiro Dmitrovic, Sergio Faraguna, Senad Hujdurovic, Hasnija Karlovic, the student theater workshop "Era", Ahmed i Elmasa Kavgic, Karla Kravanja, Denis Licul, Branka Lovrin, Vaso Majinovic, Marijan Milevoj, Mara Mrdjanovic, Marijan Nikic, Zeljko Radeljevic, Beco Redzic, Dusan Savic, Leona Stemberger, Josip Stemberga, Kristina Tencic. Modelling workshop: David Smithson.

The project deals with the history of coal mining in the area of Labin in Istria, one of the most tourist regions in Croatia. It also deals with the present situation of this ex-mining community, as all the mines in the area were closed down in the 1990ies. Although the local history of coal mining spans over four centuries, it took only 15 years to forget about it. The historical sites related to the mining are neglected and devastated, as if the community is ashamed of its past.

Labin has played an important role in the labour movement. In 1921, through riots against fascism, as Istria became part of Italy, The Labin Miners Republic was established. It was put down after 40 days through a military action. Later in the communist era the mine workers of Labin continued to be an important force of the society. The big strike of 1987 announced and also stimulated the collapse of the regime.

Through this project we wanted to address the issue of neglecting the cultural heritage related to the coal mining. In the media archive of the project we collected documents, photographs, testimonies. Four video documentaries with testimonies about different crucial points of the community history were created (closing the mines, strike from 1987, present living conditions of the retired mine workers, "Once upon a time", a dramatic text written by a mine worker in the 1960ies). Through the exhibition we managed to open up discussion about the issue in the community, as well as to raise the awareness of the special value of this tradition.

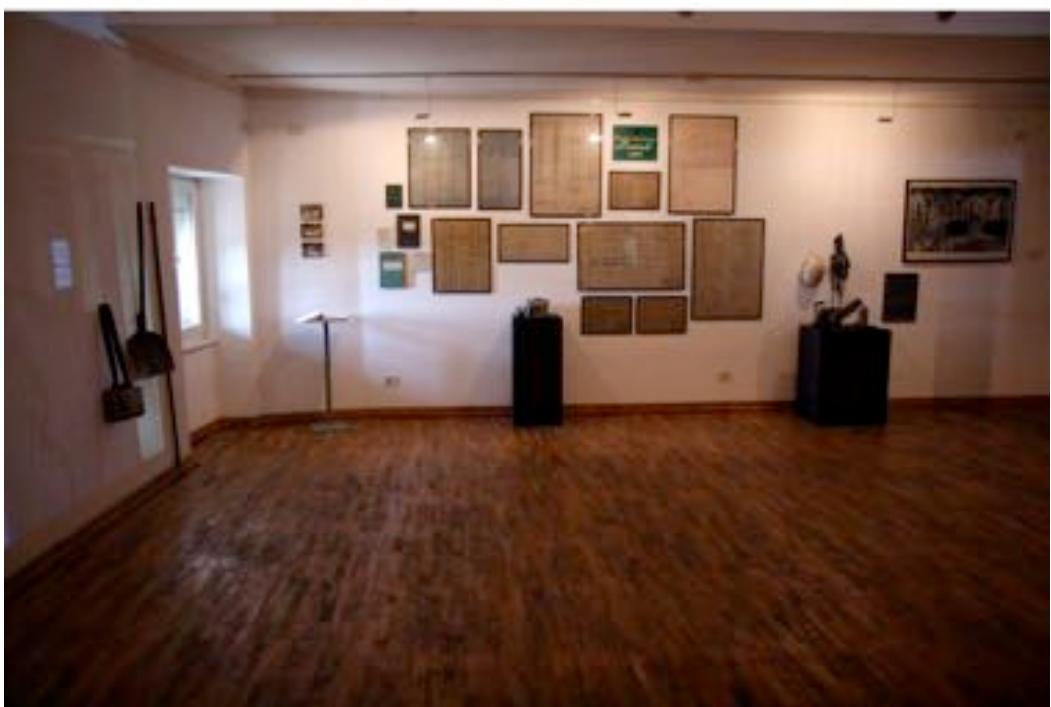
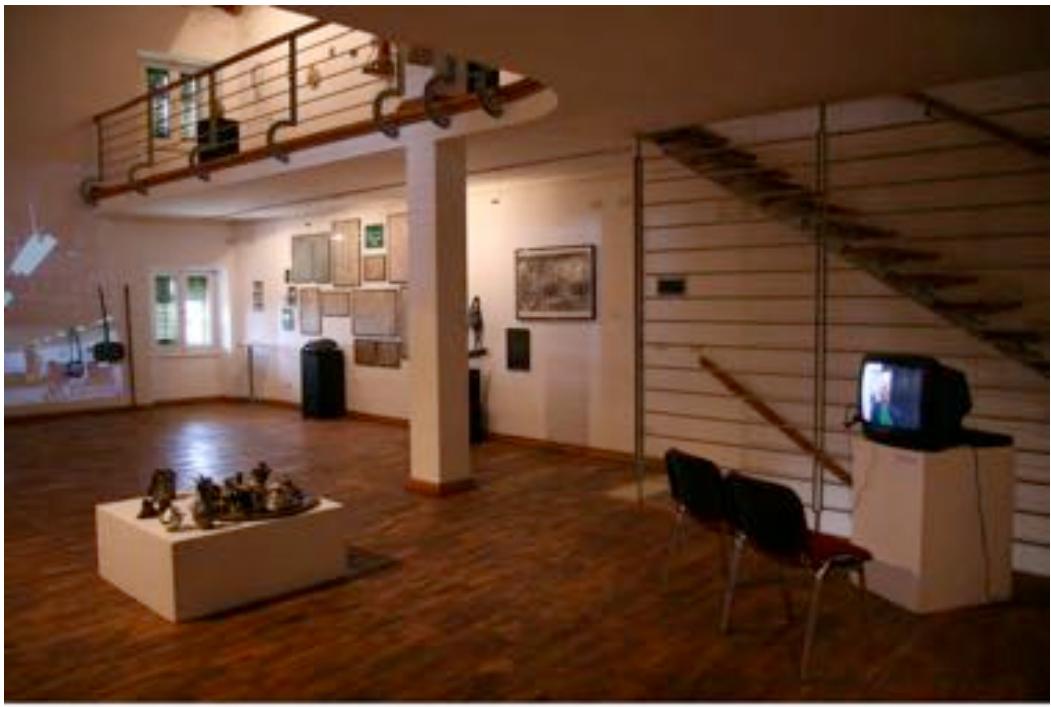
The aim of the project is to create a platform through which the ex-miners will influence and take part into designing public spaces. The project will continue through several workshops where interested community members will be able to work together on the proposals for different monuments on a number of historical sites.



Miners' Memories, expanded documentary cinema, exhibition views, video documentary about the closing down of the mines, 40 min., Labin Municipal Gallery, 2008.



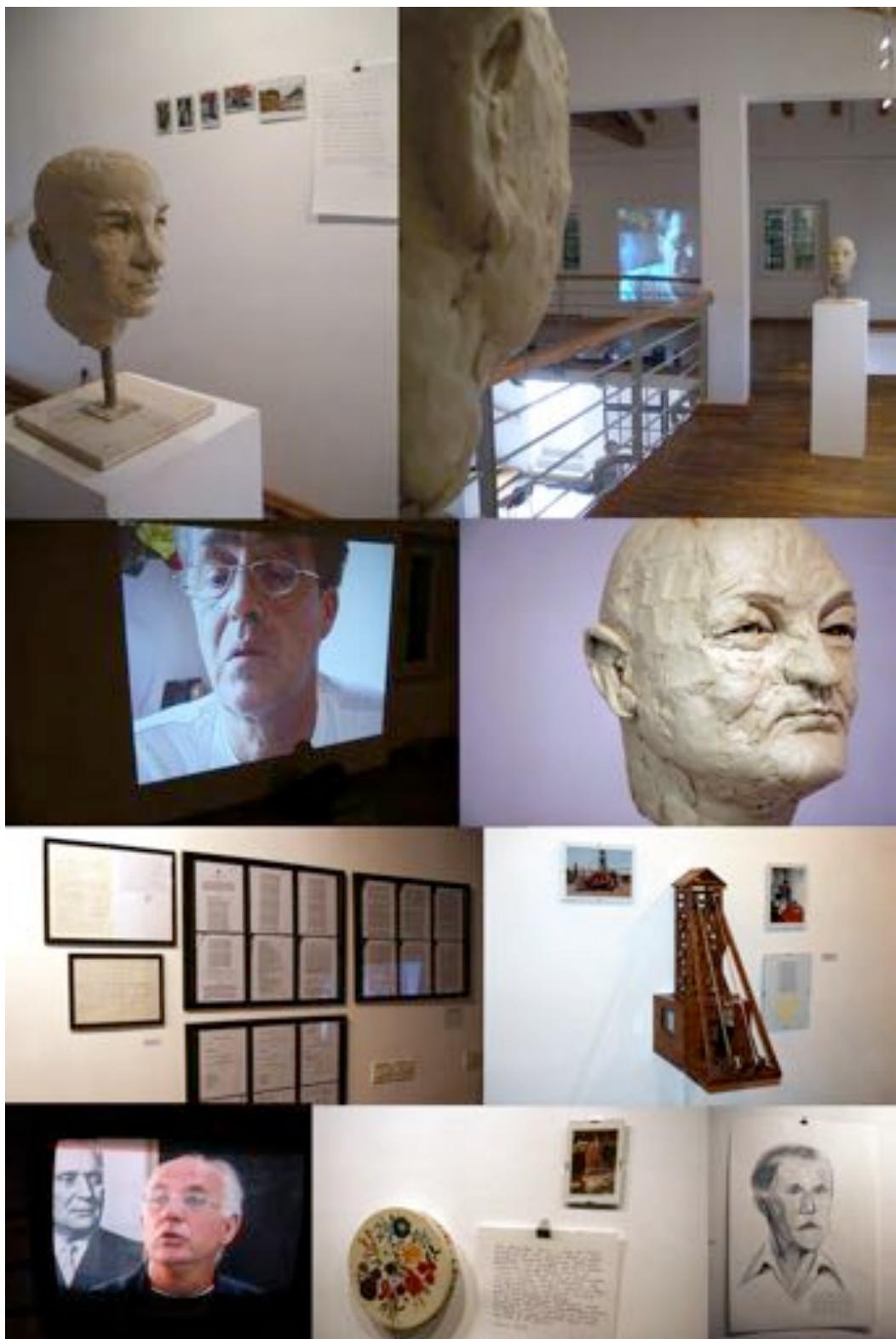
Miners' Memories, a selection of photographs from the community media archives created through the project, 2008.



Miners' Memories, expanded documentary cinema, exhibition views, video: testimonies about the strike from 1987, 30 min., Labin Municipal Gallery, 2008.



Miners' Memories, expanded documentary cinema, exhibition views, personal objects, photographs and documents of mine workers and their family members accompanied with handwritten statements, two portraits modeled within the project workshop by a student and an ex-mine worker, Labin Municipal Gallery, 2008.



Miners' Memories, expanded documentary cinema, exhibition views, video: testimonies on present living conditions of the ex-mine workers, 40 min., Labin Municipal Gallery, 2008.



Miners' Memories, expanded documentary cinema, exhibition view, video installation: "Once upon a time", 20 min., a local student theater workshop staging a drama written by Spiro Dmitrovic, mine worker, in the 1960ies, stills from the video.



Miners' Memories, photo documentation of the working in the community, modelling workshop and video shootings, 2008.



Miners' Memories, a selection of photographs from the community media archives created through the project, 2008.



A Short History if Mining, installation view, Muscarnok, Kunsthalle, Budapest, 2010.

## **A SHORT HISTORY OF MINING**

Installation, wall collage-image, digital print, take-away leaflets,  
sculptures, wall writing, 2008/2010

A Short History of Mining is an installation based on a community art and documentary project realized in collaboration with: Mladen Bajramovic, Sergio Baskijera, Ibrahim Cizmic, Spiro Dmitrovic, Sergio Faraguna, Marino Fonovic, Anton and Igor Grzinic, Senad Hujdurovic, Hasnija Karlovic and theater workshop Era, Ahmed i Elmasa Kavgic, Karla Kravanja, Denis Licul, Branka Lovrin, Vaso Majinovic, Marijan Milevoj, Mara Mrdenovic, Marijan Nikic, Zeljko Radeljevic, Beco Redzic, Dusan Savic, Leona Stemberger, Josip Stemberga, all former miners and their family members, Kristina Tencic, project assistant, David Smitshon, project's visual arts workshop coordinator, Sabina Salamon, curator, The Labin City Gallery.

The installation features the material collected within the project workshop which was originally presented as an exhibition in the local city gallery. The large format digital print consists of texts, photos and documents that the project participants wrote, created or provided for the exhibition. The two sculptural portraits are made by the project participants as well.

The installation mediates the local history of mining which is very significant and important within the history of the former Yugoslavia. It starts with the year 1921, and the big miners' strike, so called The Labin Republic, it touches the period of communism, with a big strike that announced the fall of Yugoslavia, and it ends with the memories and statements of ex miners who have been retired at early age, as the last mine was closed 10 years ago.



Short History if Mining, installation details, Muscarnok, Kunsthalle, Budapest, 2010.

De miatt a puccsot kövítik a belarusz olcsónőkkel, 1920-ban szintén mindenkit. Röviden körüljárva: Iohannellován elszabadították, és meghibernaltak az utolsó ferenc János császárról készült kincsöt. A hosszú ülőidőrök során 1921-ben a belaruszoknak köszönhetően, 1921 március 2-én kiszabadult a hétvenkét hírszerzőtől. Az itáliai socialista szervezet meghívta a "szenvedélytől" a szab. hozzájáró, úgy a termelők, művészek, üzletemberök részéről is. Az 1921 március 8-án folytatott többi tüntetésen is részt vett. Újra az ötvenötödik években, amikor

ezeket a szab. hozzájárók mellett, hogy beltekre törökölnek, az idegenekre törökölnek. Ezután a hosszú ülőidőrök során 1921 március 2-én kiszabadult a hétvenkét hírszerzőtől. Az itáliai socialista szervezet meghívta a "szenvedélytől" a szab. hozzájáró, úgy a termelők, művészek, üzletemberök részéről is. Az 1921 március 8-án folytatott többi tüntetésen is részt vett. Újra az ötvenötödik években, amikor



Short History if Mining, installation views, Muscarnok, Kunsthalle, Budapest, 2010.

number of members in the unions' executive boards and presidents in both organisations of associated labour. (Dimitar the administrator in both organisations of associated labour and mining health...)

5. Ahmed Kargić worked his way up in the mine from being an assistant digger to becoming a foreman where the miners were especially fond of. During the great 1947 strike miners elected him a president of the committee whose task it was to produce the book of regulations concerning salaries. The completion of this book of regulations ended a one-month strike. The miners sought a rise in salaries in the production sector and wanted to distribute the money among themselves. However, Kargić awarded everyone involved in the production process, from cleaning ladies to managers, and did so in proportion with the leadership of their jobs. When the Central Committee Committee ordered all the committees to return to work, Kargić – though being a communist himself – remained with the miners. Later on a senior engineer questioned him on the matter, but Kargić responded: "Tell me, what came first, the working class or the Communist Party?"

6. 1949 was the year of hypertension, lack of money on the market causing the unemployable state of miners. Disconnected miners became organised and took their demands to Zagreb, to the Federal Executive Council of the Parliament of the Socialist Republic of Croatia, the Labin miners in the Parliament Hall in Zagreb in 1949.

7. In the years before the strike, before the strike, we worked a lot and the times were good. We competed who will dig better and dig more. On Sundays, we often used to beat output records and worked for free. Those profits were then invested in Angelina, independent, ready. We believed we were doing something good for everyone. Many of those "Sunday" profits were contributed towards funding the construction of Ulka Mountain Tunnel. We were told that in return we would have to pay no toll for the rest of our lives. Then the tunnel was sold. I do not know who is the owner now, I just know it is some foreign company; and we all pay the toll now. (Vlasto Majlincic, former miner, Bosnian, in Labin since 1972)

8. Đorđe Čović wrote his wife Božica in 2008 in the apartment which he was ever by staying in hunger strike. Before his housing problem was solved, he wrote many complaints, once there also one mailed to the Federal Executive Council in Belgrade. \* Dear Comrade, I am writing this letter with the hope that you'll take my complaints into consideration. I have a housing problem. [...] The social worker in my labour organisation advised me to apply for the first job placement offered by my labour organisation and further family provided me her aid and assistance in the year of my troubles. I followed her advice and accepted work as a cleaner with my family, and as soon as I moved in I informed that same social worker, Sonja Šuput, only to find out that she managed to reserve that apartment for herself, in spite of the fact that she already owned a house, that her husband is a private entrepreneur, and although she was already in possession of a two room apartment which our own labour organisation gave her to use. [...]

9. Two pages from the official organ of the Josip Broz Tito Coal Mines "Rade Minar" from 1978. The headlines read: A working competition held in honour the 25th anniversary of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. A record from the previous competition was broken, 179 competitors in the Labin coal mine produced an output of 302 coal wagons, while 174 competitors in Piščan produced an output of 273 wagons.

10. Frequency increases, bulk transportation and automation, were aimed at pressuring HEP (the Croatian Electric Utility Company) from quickly shutting down the coal mines without taking care of the miners in the mid 1990s. The Croatian Government advised the Croatian Electric Utility Company to arrange investment provisions for all the employees, through 3 new companies. For several years we fought to solve the miners' problems. It was a positive period and it was difficult. (Ivan Blagić and Matijaš Mihalj, union commissioners at the time)

11. "Rade Minar" from 1987 reports on the consequences of the one-month strike: message: "The miners of 2000 are back. Plus reduced by 26000 tons. Three-month production. Shipping amounted 29,267 tons of coal.

12. Under pressure from the workers, unions and the local community, with the support of a movement in bankruptcy, we jointly succeeded in drawing the attention of county and state structures. Eventually we reached the prime minister and gained the government's support. Before the law had been passed, we even had to threaten a hunger strike. Moreover in 1990 a special law was passed, enabling miners to retire early, get retirement pay, purchasing the years of service, along with a program providing for the mothers of workers. (Ivan Blagić and Matijaš Mihalj, union commissioners at the time)

13. A page from the 2007 local newspaper that several miners have registered themselves as owners of the property of the Josip Broz Tito Coal Mine Topčić, all based on court pronouncements in the aim of reclaiming the miners' rights to protection, disability pay and compensation for work connected injuries.

14. A photo from Špela Džedović's phone album, Povile School of Miners, 1955. \* I was born in 1937. I lost my mother as a small child and had to leave home at the age of 15. I first joined the Povile School for Miners, and at the age of 16 I began working in a mine. In 1957 I became a qualified face worker. We worked in groups of three. The job was exhausting and dangerous. In 1960 I had an accident while, during a mountain deposit, my hands were injured. I had to leave for a recovery. After that event, great fear gripped me and I was recruited as a car mechanic. (Špela Džedović) \*

15. The newsletter of the Josip Broz Tito Coal Mine Kula 1959. The headlines read: By reading we learn, by learning we acquire knowledge, and by applying knowledge we better manage our companies... Are we always right?... Do you often say: If I was the manager?... What motivates you towards greater working motivation?... \* These newspapers demonstrate how miners were taken care of and how culture and learning were important among the miners. At the time, the state was taking care of cultural education, while miners and workers were held in high esteem. (Špela Džedović) \*



GRENZE/GRENS

Suderwick, DE/DInxperlo NL, 2014



## STANDORT 001

Dorpskerk, Dinxperlo, Raadhuisstraat, NL



## PROJEKTBESCHREIBUNG UND STANDORTE

Neun Tafeln im öffentlichen Raum vermitteln Erzählungen der BewohnerInnen von Suderwick und Dinxperlo zum Thema Grenze. Da es sich um eine alte europäische Grenze handelt, die im historischen und sozialpolitischen Sinne ein lehrreiches Beispiel darstellt, möchten wir das Projekt als eine Ausstellung im öffentlichen Raum gestalten, die sowohl als Fahrradtour als auch als Spaziergang wahrgenommen werden kann.

Die Ausstellung richtet sich an die Bevölkerung beider Ortschaften sowie an Besucher (Touristen). Jede Texttafel ist eine Textcollage, in der mehrere Personen, Deutsche und Niederländer, zu Wort kommen. Der Text fließt vom Deutschen ins Niederländische und zurück und die englischen Übersetzungen sind online aufrufbar (QR-code an Tafeln).

Die Erzählungen geben einen Einblick ins Leben auf und an der Grenze heute und damals. Der Schwerpunkt liegt auf nationalen und konfessionellen Trennungen und der Vergangenheitsbewältigung in Bezug auf diese Trennungen und auf dem Zweiten Weltkrieg. Weitere Schwerpunkte sind ländliches Leben, Bezug zu Natur, Pflanzen und Tiere sowie die Rolle der Frau in der Gesellschaft.

Die Auswahl an neun Standorten, an denen die Texttafeln ausgestellt sind, ist in Zusammenarbeit mit den oben genannten Vereinen getroffen worden. In 2016 setzte sich eine gemischte Bürgerinitiative durch, dass das Projekt im Schulcurriculum der lokalen bilingualen Schule aufgenommen wurde. Zwei Heimatvereine kümmerten sich um Verlängerung der Genehmigungen.

- 001 Raadhuisstraat, aan/an "Dorpskerk", Dinxperlo, NL
- 002 Einmündung/kruising Kwikkelstraat in Heelweg, Dinxperlo, NL
- 003 Heelweg, Careaz Dr. Jenny, Dinxperlo, NL \*
- 004 Heelweg, aan de smokkelaar/am Schmuggler, Dinxperlo, NL
- 005 Sporker Straße, am/aan Dorfplatz/Dorpsplein, Suderwick, D
- 006 Ende/einde Keupenstraat/Aaltenseweg, am Grenzstein an der Keupenbrug/aan de grenssteen aan de Keupenbrug, Dinxperlo, NL
- 007 Zwischen/tussen Hagtweg/Emsingweg, Grenzübergang am Grenzgraben/grensovergang aan grensgraven, Dinxperlo, NL
- 008 Lange Fohre, am/aan "Surkse Backhüs", Suderwick, D
- 009 Hahnenpatt 15 A, am/aan het GrenzBlickAtelier, Suderwick, D



## STANDORT 002

Einmündung/kruising Kwikkelstraat in Heelweg, Dinxperlo, NL



## STANDORT 003

Heelweg, Careaz Dr. Jenny, Dinxperlo, NL





## STANDORT 004

Heelweg, aan de smokkelaar/am Schmuggler, Dinxperlo, NL



## STANDORT 005

Sporker Straße, am/aan Dorfplatz/Dorpsplein, Suderwick, D



## STANDORT 006

Ende/einde Keupenstraat/Aaltenseweg, am Grenzstein an der Keupenbrug/aan de grenssteen aan de Keupenbrug, Dinxperlo, NL



## STANDORT 007

Zwischen/tussen Hagtweg/Emsingweg, Grenzübergang am Grenzgraben/grensovergang aan grensgraven, Dinxperlo, NL



Um dieses Körner, hatten wir paassien, hadden allemaal een naam. Vroeger waren hier 40 boerderijen die koriën hadden, nu zijn er 3 nog overgebleven. Wij wilden niet groter worden, dus hadden we geen koriën meer zijn. Maar wij houden van deze velden, daarom en elke keer en willen hier geen industrie hebben.  
Vielleicht würden dann die Pfirsichbäume endlich mal wieder tragen. Zu Namelade gehöchst oder ins Weckgläser eingeschacht mit zwei braun gefurchten Steinen darin als leicht bitterem Aromaverstärker. Die Alten erzählen, dass es damals mit den Pfirsichen nie Probleme gegeben hat. Da war aber der Webber auch noch vernünftiger.  
In 1962 kwam de eerste tractor. In 1970 de eerste auto. Nu hadden al onze plannen losgelopen en waren nog niet eens zondag weg geweest. Uitstandig zijn we midden in de jaren 70 vier dagen weg geweest.

## STANDORT 008

Lange Fohre, am/aan "Surkse Backhüs", Suderwick, D



## STANDORT 009

Hahnenpatt 15 A, am/aan het GrenzBlickAtelier, Suderwick, D



Der Wochenmarkt in Dinxperlo ist bei den Deutschen beliebt. Unsere Kundenschaft sind überwiegend Deutsche, die aus Bocholt und aus dem Ruhrgebiet kommen. Wir sprechen alle Deutsch. Manchmal sprechen wir sogar die niederländischen Kunden auf Deutsch an.

Die Grenzlage ist immer schon günstig für die Geschäfte gewesen.

Destijds begon men met het herstel van de bruggen. Toen wij met een groep aan het begin van de jaren '60 voor de eerste keer de andere kant van de grens bezochten, kwam een oude man op ons af, die ons vroeg "Hebben jullie mijn fiets teruggebracht?" Duitse soldaten hadden hem zijn fiets afgenomen. Dat heeft mij erg veel pijn gedaan. Zo heb ik dat in jaren '60 ervaren en nu soms nog. Als christenen moeten wij echter het verleden, de religieuze verschillen en nationaliteiten achter ons laten. Voor ons christenen bestaan er geen buitenlanders, die mogen voor ons niet bestaan.

Siebt die Schule, siebt auch das Dorf. In Dinxperlo geboren, in Deutschland aufgewachsen, habe ich immer zwischen Suderwick und Dinxperlo gelebt. Anfang der 1960er Jahre bekam ich meinen Traumjob, die Leitung der Grundschule in Suderwick. Jahrelang konnte ich dort dafür sorgen, dass wir grenzübergreifende Projekte machen.

Leider haben wir keine Schule mehr in Suderwick. Ist es nicht das traurigste Ereignis, wenn ein Schulgebäude abgerissen wird? Eine Europa-Schule in Suderwick oder Dinxperlo würde allen gut tun.

Wij hebben altijd de kleuterschool in Dinxperlo bezocht – ik in de jaren '70 en mijn kinderen in de jaren 2000. Daardoor spreken alle kinderen in Suderwick Nederlands en daarop zijn wij trots. Maar er is nog veel nodig om dichter bij elkaar te komen. Een voorbeeld: bij het ophalen van de kinderen bleven wij, Duitse moeders, altijd aan de ene en de Nederlandse moeders altijd aan de andere kant staan. In onze school is veel gedaan om ons tot elkaar te brengen. Fietsexams werden voor Duitse en Nederlandse kinderen gezamenlijk afgenomen.

De ouders schreven samen de examenverslagen.

Ik ben vanwege mijn huwelijk in West-Suderwick terecht gekomen in de tijd dat het bij Nederland hoorde. Om mijn uitzet zonder invoerrechten meer te kunnen brengen moest ik elke kleinigheid noteren. Uiteindelijk kwam er een officieel besluit: niet goedgekeurd: zoveel kan een jonge vrouw niet bezitten. Een Nederlandse douanier, die vlakbij woonde, zei me toen: breng het maar, ik regel het wel.

An der Grenze bin ich groß geworden. Zu Kriegszeiten waren wir verhungert, wenn es nicht die Bauern gegeben hätte und ihre Luftschutzbunker. Diese guten Menschen haben mir immer geholfen, obwohl mein Vater Deutscher war. Nach Jahren in Köln bin ich dann hierher zurückgekommen, denn ich habe nach Holland geheiratet. Als meine Tochter Anfang der 1960er Jahre zu sprechen anfing, habe ich ihr auch ein paar deutsche Wörter beigebracht. "Mof", haben die Nachbarn gesagt. Von den Großeltern habe ich meine niederländische Nationalität. Er werd erg streng opgelebt en in de kruidenierswinkel hadden we maar één protestantse klant. Een keer was er een noodgeval, ik moest een buurvrouw met haar oude zieke moeder helpen. Toen de betreffende dame mij zag, sprak zij angstig: Jij? Maar uiteindelijk mocht ik toch helpen. Godzijdank is dat nu niet meer zo.

Vater las immer aus der Bibel vor und sagte uns, was gut und was böse war. Als Kinder kamen wir überhaupt nicht in Kontakt mit den Katholiken. Es gab Zeiten, in denen Katholiken in der Regel 10 bis 12 Kinder hatten und Reformierte 3 bis 4 Kinder. Heute sind kinderreiche Familien selten. Damals hatten wir als Reformierte keinen Weihnachtsbaum - heute haben alle einen. Der Glaube hat viele Probleme verursacht, das steht auch in der Bibel.

Nederlanders spelen graag in de Duitse lotto. In 1994 was er een grote jackpot en de loten werden onderhands doorverkocht naar de grote steden als Amsterdam en Rotterdam. We konden de loten niet aanslepen. Vroeger hadden wij een café. Ook de cafeklanten hebben er toe bijgedragen dat de reserves ten opzichte van elkaar langzaam kleiner zijn geworden.

## **GRENZE/GRENS**

Text-Tafeln im öffentlichen Raum  
mit Erzählungen der BewohnerInnen  
in Suderwick/Dinxperlo, 2014

ein partizipatorisches Kunstprojekt  
von Kristina Leko, Künstlerin  
in Zusammenarbeit mit:  
Heimatverein Suderwick,  
Stichting Bewaar't Olde Dinxperlo und Grenslandmuseum  
Deutsch-Niederländischer Geschichtsverein /  
Nederlands-Duitse Geschiedenisvereniging und  
Bürgerinitiative Dinxperwick e.V.

sowie in Zusammenarbeit mit folgenden Personen:

Werner Brand, Bernd Brennemann, Dien Bruijns, Bertie Bussink,  
Freek Diersen, Ansgar Drees, Annelies Hegemann, Inge Heidemann,  
Gerard Hergaarden, Johannes Hoven, Angelika Hoven, Clara Jansen,  
Hanni und Jan Kranen, Wilhelmina Kastein, Wilhelm Kemink, Hanna Krämer,  
Gerrie Janne Lammers, Astrid van der Linde, Kläre Paffrath,  
Lydia Rademacher, Theo Rijks, Willeminien Rijks, Antonius van der Brom, Joop van Reeken,  
Verena Winter van Reeken, Helmut Schlüter,  
Ursel Schlüter, Dianne Schreur-Lammers, Hildegard Schouwenburg, Friederike Stilkenbäumer

Neun Tafeln im öffentlichen Raum basieren auf Gesprächen mit oben genannten Mitwirkenden. Die Begegnungen fanden in den grenzüberschreitend zusammenarbeitenden Senioreneinrichtungen Bültenhaus Suderwick (Wohn- und Pflegeprojekt des Evangelisches Johanneswerks) und Careaz Dr. Jenny Dinxperlo und in beiden Ortschaften im Februar 2014 statt.

Ein Projekt von Grenswerte [www.grenswerte.eu](http://www.grenswerte.eu) gefördert von EUREGIO.  
Mit weiterer Unterstützung durch die Stadtsparkasse Bocholt.



Senioreneinrichtungen Bültenhaus Suderwick (Wohn- und Pflegeprojekt des Evangelisches Johanneswerks) und Careaz Dr. Jenny Dinxperlo.

Früher gab es arbeitende und singende Menschen auf den Feldern.  
Heute sitzt der Bauer am Computer, die Lohnbetriebe machen die Arbeit mit Maschinen. Damals hatte Arbeit einen niedrigen Preis und jeder musste arbeiten und etwas erzeugen, um davon leben zu können. Man musste sparsam wirtschaften. Heute trägt man große Hektarzahlen ein und das Subventionsgeld ist schon auf dem Konto, egal ob auf dem Feld etwas wächst oder nicht. Ist das ehrlich?

Wanneer je je een dwerg voorstelt, een aardmannetje, geslachtsloos, met de gave in zijn werk te kunnen berusten en nauwelijks wensen te hebben, dan zou Gustav in je gedachten kunnen komen. Altijd bezig in zijn tuin, omgeven door zijn planten, is het hem bijna gelukt er zelf een te worden. Boeren zijn zorgende mensen met een bijzonder instinct voor de bronnen van het leven. Vaak stopte Gustav, wanneer wij zijn tuin passeerden, ons iets toe. Het leek wel alsof deze goede man altijd al knecht op de grote boerderij bij die fijne mensen was geweest. Toen hij oud was geworden hebben zij voor hem gezorgd en nu rust hij al jarenlang in hun familiegraf. Wij moeten hem dankbaar zijn voor dat hij heeft bestaan.

Wir hatten immer gute Arbeitskräfte aus Holland. Arbeitsmäßig hielten wir Bauern hier alle zusammen. So teilten wir uns mit unseren katholischen Nachbarn Sämaschine, Kartoffelpflug und Deckbrullen schon um 1946. In der Regel hat man aber keine Knechte anderer Konfession beschäftigt. So war das.

Wanneer ik aan mijn omgeving denk, dan denk ik altijd net zo goed aan mensen en dieren, tuinen, weilanden en akkers en de wereld aan de andere kant van de grens. Het vlakke groene land biedt een weids uitzicht. Op het eerste gezicht zijn er geen verschillen en wanneer je naar de taal van de oude bewoners van de beide buur dorpen luistert, dan blijken er nauwelijks verschillen te bestaan.

Wat verschillend was, is samengegroeid. Het dialect van mijn gelooftestad, die 10 kilometer verderop ligt, klinkt heel anders.

Auf den Feldern war man nie alleine. In den Zäunen mussten die Pfortchen eingebaut werden, und manchmal wurden Treppen aufgebaut, sodass der Zollbeamte über den Zaun gehen konnte. Die Zöllner waren immer präsent, haben mit uns gelebt. Die Haustür hatte keiner zw. Es wurde nie gestohlen, nie eingebrochen.

Wij hadden destijs Rabau appels, en juuperen. Met koolrapen, stoppelrapen en voederbielen voerden wij onze dieren. Onze dieren, koeien, kalveren en paarden, hadden allemaal een naam. Vroeger waren hier 40 boerderijen die koeien hadden, nu zijn er 3 reuzenboerderijen. Wij wilden niet groter worden, dus konden we geen boer meer zijn. Maar wij houden van deze velden, dieren en planten en willen hier geen industrie hebben.

Vielelleicht würden dann die Pfirsichbäume endlich mal wieder tragen. Zu Marmelade gekocht oder in Weckgläser eingemacht mit zwei braun gefurchten Steinen darin als leicht bitterem Aromaverstärker. Die Alten erzählen, dass es damals mit den Pfirsichen nie Probleme gegeben hat. Da war aber das Wetter auch noch vernünftiger.

In 1962 kwam de eerste tractor. In 1970 de eerste auto. We hadden al onze zilveren bruiloft gevierd en waren nog niet één zondag weg geweest. Uiteindelijk zijn we midden in de jaren '70 vier dagen op vakantie gegaan. Toen zei een buurvrouw: Jullie zijn als boeren niks meer waard, als jullie de boerderij zo achter jullie kunnen laten. Toen zei mijn man: Het was toch fijn - vier dagen heb ik nauwelijks aan dieren gedacht. Maar dat klopte ook niet!

Es gab Zeiten, in denen man die Nationalität nicht wählen konnte. Mit 13 wurde ich vom Arbeitsamt für ein Jahr einer kleinen Landwirtschaft hier zugewiesen. Dann kam der Krieg. Da die Menschen in den Städten hungrig waren und die Leute, die ich hier kannte, so warmherzig waren, wollte ich zurückkehren. Seit 1950 bin ich hier glücklich.

*Ik ben van een grote Duitse stad hierheen verhuisd om dichter in de buurt van mijn Duitse kinderen en mijn Hollandse kleinkinderen te zijn, die allemaal in Holland wonen. Deze plaats herinnert me vaak aan mijn grootouders, die zeven kinderen hadden. Oma had altijd één goede jurk, één voor warme en één voor koude tijden. Opa had één Lederhosen voor door de week en één zondagspak. Alles wat ze bezaten, zou in een kleine kast passen maar ze waren zeer tevreden met hun leven.*

*Als Zugewanderter aus Nordholland habe ich fast mein ganzes Leben in Dinxperlo verbracht und in der Schule gearbeitet. Ich wollte immer auf die andere Seite schauen und Leute treffen. Den Karnevalszug, den es nicht mehr gibt, habe ich seit den 1970er Jahren immer mitgemacht. Mit der Suderwicker Schule, die es auch nicht mehr gibt, haben wir viel zusammen unternommen.*

*Wij hebben samen gewerkt en samen feest gevierd. Je had je buurman nodig. Er waren buren voor nood, voor het vervoer.*

*Wij hadden 21 noabers, tot in de jaren '60. Nu zien we ze nog nauwelijks. Onze buren zijn geen boeren meer, die gaan naar hun werk en krijgen daardoor andere kennissen. Zij hebben vrienden, die niet in het dorp wonen. Zij vragen ons ook niet meer als noaber. Vroeger kwamen ze vragen: wil je onze noaber worden?*

*Dat gaf een grote verantwoordelijkheid. Wanneer er een koe kalfde, een kind werd geboren, bij de doop, de oogst, een bruiloft of een begrafenis: alle buren hadden een vaste taak. Bij mijn huwelijk zaten er 120 noabers aan het middagmaal. Dat was in grote potten klaargemaakt, allemaal gedaan door de buren.*

*Viele Jahre zuvor habe ich zufällig ein Haus am Heelweg gekauft, weil es so günstig war. Ich hatte keine Pläne, hierherzuziehen.*

*Als ich aber doch aus meiner niederländischen Großstadt nach Dinxperlo kam, habe ich in fünf Jahren und an beiden Seiten der Grenze mehr Freunde gefunden als dort in dreißig Jahren.*



Fotodokumentation des Projektes. Begegnungen  
in beiden Ortschaften - Suderwick und  
Dinxperlo, Februar 2014.

In Suderwick, Deutschland, und Dinxperlo, Niederlande, läuft die Staatsgrenzlinie entlang einer Straße. Dort gibt es eine Stelle, an der auf beiden Straßenseiten jeweils eine Wohn- und Pflegeeinrichtung für Senioren, chronisch Kranke und Behinderte steht. Eine Brücke in der Luft, die eine Taverne mit Kaffee und Kuchen in sich beheimatet, schwebt über der Straße und somit über der Grenze.

Vor Ort konnte ich umfassende Interviews mit über 20 älteren Leuten führen. Jedes Mal habe ich nach Sitten und Gewohnheiten, die es nicht mehr gibt, gefragt. In den Antworten meiner InterviewpartnerInnen ging es jedes Mal fast ausschließlich um die Grenze. Netten, freundlichen Menschen mit langen Lebenserfahrungen bin ich begegnet und habe mit ihnen über Kriegszeiten, Nachkriegszeiten, über die Zeiten der Urgroßeltern und über die Zukunft ihrer Enkelkinder gesprochen. Aber immer wieder erzählten sie erst einmal über die Grenze, egal welche Fragen gestellt wurden.

In Suderwick/Dinxperlo ist die Grenze viel wichtiger als irgendeine andere Themenstellung. Die Geschichten der Grenze dringen darauf, von den Leuten erzählt zu werden. Die Grenze gibt es zwar nicht mehr, aber es fühlt sich so an, als ob sie vermisst wird. Dass es aber noch immer viel zu viele Grenzen in den Köpfen der Menschen gibt, sagen auch viele.

Für eine/n Außenstehende/n werden in den beiden Ortschaften die Parallelen zwischen der Geschichte Europas des 17. Jahrhunderts und der des 20. Jahrhunderts deutlich und eindrucksvoll vermischt. Konfessionen. Kriege. Krieg. Vor Ort hatte ich die Ehre, mehrere Personen kennenzulernen, die langjährige grenzübergreifende und konfessionsübergreifende Arbeit leidenschaftlich, oft inoffiziell und ehrenamtlich, geleistet haben. Überwiegend aus einer Generation, für die der Zweite Weltkrieg bzw. dessen Auswirkungen noch lebendige Erinnerungen täglich hervorbringen. So konnte es zur Lebensmission werden, Niederländisch in einer Dorfschule zu unterrichten, um nur ein Beispiel zu nennen.

Wenn an einem solchen Ort ein Pfarrer sagt, dass es für Christen keine Ausländer geben kann, hat es eine andere Glaubwürdigkeit, und ich neige dazu, dortigen Grenz-Lebenserfahrungen der Menschen paradigmatische Eigenschaften und einen tieferen Sinn zuzuschreiben. Die beispielhafte Eigenart der Region ist schon vor 40 Jahren mit der Gründung der Euregio anerkannt worden. Und heute leben wir in einer Zeit, in der wir - als-Europa - afrikanische Flüchtlinge an unseren Grenzen begrüßen. Mit diesem Gedanken im Hinterkopf könnte oder vielleicht sollte die etwas veraltete Grenze in Dinxperlo/Suderwick zu einem lehrreichen Standort der Begegnung und Reflexion zugleich auf- und abgebaut werden.

Mit der Absicht, das Projekt in diese Richtung zu profilieren, habe ich lehrreiche Gespräche, die ich mit Projektmitwirkenden vor Ort führte, in kurze Texte und Statements umgewandelt. So sind neun Texttafeln entstanden, die an neun Standorten in Dinxperlo/Suderwick auf- und ausgestellt werden sollen.

Neun Text-Tafeln, neun Textcollagen laden alle Interessierten ein, sich mit der Grenze und Grenzen sowie ihrer Ortschaft, der umgebenden Landschaft, ihrer Geschichte/n und Zukunft anhand der Erzählungen der BewohnerInnen auseinanderzusetzen. Zu einem inhaltsreichen Spaziergang oder zu einer Fahrradtour möchten wir herzlich einladen!

Kristina Leko, Künstlerin

Als ich 1982 zum ersten Mal nach Suderwick kam, bestand die Grenze noch und die Zöllner kamen an beiden Enden des Dorfes ihrer Kontrollaufgabe nach, zumal, wenn eine Auto ein fremdes Nummernschild hatte. Meine spätere Frau und ich kamen in den Jahren danach fast jedes Wochenende aus Bonn (BN) oder dem Rhein-Sieg-Kreis (SU) nach Suderwick und mussten meist eine intensive Kontrolle über uns ergehen lassen, wenn wir nach Dinxperlo zum Einkaufen fuhren.

Unsere Generation hat nach 1990 miterlebt, wie die Grenze abgebaut und die Zöllner an die ostdeutsche Grenze versetzt wurden. Aus Erzählungen, wie sie auch in diesem Projekt gesammelt worden sind, wissen wir, dass frühere Generationen andere Grenz-Erfahrungen mitgemacht haben. Wenn man vor den 1. Weltkrieg zurückgreift oder gar bis in die Zeit vor der französischen Revolution, bekommt man ein ganz anderes Bild, das sich auch in den Familiengeschichten der Suderwicker Bauernfamilien widerspiegelt: Damals war die konfessionelle Grenze

weitaus bedeutsamer als die Landesgrenze. In den letzten 2 Generationen wurde stark daran gearbeitet, die äußere Grenze zum Verschwinden zu bringen, aber die Grenzen in den Köpfen müssen weiter kreativ bearbeitet werden. Dazu trägt auch dieses Kunst-Projekt hoffentlich bei, indem es zu grenz- und generationenübergreifenden Diskussionen anregt: Was können wir in den nächsten 2 Generationen tun, um die konfessionellen, nationalen, planerischen usw. Unterschiede so zu nutzen, dass sie das Leben in unserem Zwillingsdorf an der Grenze nicht behindern, sondern bereichern und befördern?

So könnte dieses Projekt einen kleinen Beitrag dazu leisten, das aus Dinxperwick eine Europawerkstatt im Kleinen wird. Ob daraus dann so eine schöne Blüte wie eine Euregio- oder Europaschule in Dinxperwick hervorgehen kann, das muss die Zukunft zeigen. Nicht nur in der Kunst sind Träume erlaubt...

Werner Brand, Erster Vorsitzender  
der binationalen Bürgerinitiative Dinxperwick e.V.

Das Kunstprojekt GRENZE / GRENS von Kristina Leko ist grenzüberschreitend in vielerlei Hinsicht, denn es verbindet nicht nur zwei Dörfer (Suderwick und Dinxperlo) bzw. zwei Länder (Deutschland und die Niederlande), sondern auch Vergangenheit und Gegenwart. Erinnerungen werden für den Besucher der Texttafeln lesbar und somit „erlebbar“. Aus einem statischen Text entwickelt sich im Leser ein dynamisches Bild. Das Vergangene überschreitet eine virtuelle Zeitgrenze und bewegt sich in die Jetztzeit, wo es eine neue Lebendigkeit erfährt. Die Erzählungen der in diesem Moment noch hier lebenden Menschen berühren das Herz - und werden so zum magischen Mittel, das vielleicht Grenzen in den Köpfen weg zu zaubern vermag. Hier gewinnt Kunst eine besondere Nähe und auch Offenheit - und sie wird „mitnehmbar“: Die Erinnerungen der Erzähler verwandeln sich zu neuen Erinnerungen der Leser bzw. der Kunstbetrachter. Die Kette der Erinnerungen wird somit grenzenlos! Das GrenzBlickAtelier freut sich, dass dieses besondere Kunstprojekt hier in Suderwick und Dinxperlo als grenzüberschreitendes Europa-Kunstprojekt eine Zeit lang eine Heimat finden wird. Wir möchten hier an das Japanische Sprichwort erinnern: „Hebt man den Blick, so sieht man keine Grenzen“. Wirft also der Betrachter seinen Blick auf die Texte der Erinnerungen, wird er die Grenze nicht mehr sehen, weil sich Erinnerungen mit Erinnerungen vermengen.

Verena Winter van Reeken & Joop van Reeken, GrenzBlickAtelier  
<http://www.grenz-blick.eu>

Der Hellweg oder de Heelweg? Das Grenzlandmuseum zeigt die Geschichte der beiden Grenzgemeinden Suderwick/Deutschland und Dinxperlo/Niederlande, getrennt durch den Hellweg. Heute weiß kaum noch jemand, was sich im Laufe der Geschichte abgespielt hat. Ich halte es für sehr sinnvoll, jüngere Menschen mit dieser Geschichte zu konfrontieren. So können sie das, was sich in der Vergangenheit abgespielt hat, in ihren derzeitigen Überlegungen mit einbeziehen und bedenken und Einwände der älteren Generation besser begreifen. Die aufgestellten Tafeln mit den Geschichten der älteren Generation helfen der jüngeren Generation, die Geschichte besser begreifen zu können, und führen dadurch zu einem besseren Verständnis zwischen jung und alt.

Es müsste sich doch eigentlich jeder die Frage stellen, wie es zu einer solchen Situation, wie wir sie in Suderwick vorfinden, kommen konnte. Suderwick war ursprünglich Teil der niederländischen Gemeinde Dinxperlo. Nach der Reformation und dem damit verbundenen Frieden von Münster wurde die Grenze neu abgesteckt. Der Teil, der heute Suderwick heißt (zuider wijk, südliche Siedlung), kam zu Deutschland.

Schwierigkeiten gab es dann, wenn ein Krieg ausbrach. Im ersten Weltkrieg wollte Dinxperlo neutral bleiben und überließ die Straße, die sowohl von Deutschen als auch von Niederländern benutzt wurde, den Deutschen. Diese beschriebene Straße, der Hellweg, ist die Verbindungsstraße, die die Möglichkeit bot, dass Leute von Westfalen zum Rheinland fahren konnten und umgekehrt.

Der Stacheldrahtzaun wurde gegen den heutigen niederländischen Bürgersteig errichtet; denn die Niederländer wollten neutral bleiben. Im zweiten Weltkrieg errichteten deutsche Soldaten den Zaun gegen den heutigen deutschen Bürgersteig. Diese Situation mussten die Bewohner von Suderwick 10 Jahre lang ertragen.

Da diese Straße sehr übersichtlich war, konnte man, wenn kein Zöllner zu sehen waren, durch die Stacheldrahtversperrung kriechen, um seine Verwandten zu besuchen oder das, was es in Deutschland nicht gab, von niederländischer Seite zu holen (Schmuggel).

Wer mehr Grenzgeschichten aus dieser Zeit erfahren möchte, kann das, indem er das Grenzlandmuseum in Dinxperlo/NL besucht.

Hildegard Schouwenburg,  
Vorsitzende des Grenzlandmuseums Dinxperlo/NL  
<http://www.grenzlandmuseum.nl/>

Um es vorweg zu nehmen, das Kunstprojekt von Kristina Leko bringt den Menschen aus Suderwick und Dinxperlo die Geschichte und gesellschaftliche Entwicklungen nahe. Aber auch Besucher, die gerne an die kurios verlaufende Landesgrenze kommen, werden an „olde Tieden“ erinnert. Sie erfahren dabei so ganz nebenbei, was heute in Europa möglich ist oder woran noch gearbeitet werden muss. Ohne die Grenze wären Suderwick und Dinxperlo ziemlich unbedeutend. Jede Aufmerksamkeit für die gut miteinander harmonierenden Grenzorte ist unweigerlich mit dem europäischen Gedanken verbunden und ein Ansporn, grenzüberschreitend aktiv zu bleiben.

Kristina Leko sortiert auf verständliche Art und Weise aus schlichten Erzählungen über das Leben an der Grenze, wie es die Bewohner dort empfunden haben. Eindrucksvoll macht sie deren Geschichten, Gedanken und Empfindungen „sichtbar“ und erlebbar. Das Projekt ergänzt die vorhandenen Denkmäler, das Grenzland-Museum und andere Erinnerungsstücke an alte, längst vergessene Zeiten. Dies ist eine gute Gelegenheit, sich auf eine abwechslungsreiche und interessante Spurensuche nach der Vergangenheit einzulassen, die man so nicht oder nur selten in Geschichtsbüchern findet. Dabei kann man gleichzeitig erleben, wie man heute einträchtig nebeneinander den europäischen Gedanken lebt. Ich hoffe, dass viele Menschen sich aufmachen, sich zu erinnern und zu besinnen. Sie sollen sich aber auch dabei begegnen. Mögen viele alte wie junge Niederländer und Deutsche ins Gespräch zu kommen und sich näher kennen lernen. Ich bin überzeugt, dass dann nicht nur in der Vergangenheitsform gesprochen wird. Die Erfahrungen aus der Geschichte verhelfen der Gegenwart und vor allem auch unserer Zukunft im Haus Europa zu einem guten Miteinander.

Eine persönliche Anmerkung noch. Mir fällt auf, dass viele Erinnerungen und Schilderungen sich ähneln. Mich haben sie zu der Frage inspiriert, ob ich mich anders erinnern würde oder ein anderer Mensch geworden wäre, hätte meine Wiege anstatt in Suderwick in Dinxperlo gestanden. Auch solche Gedanken kann Kunst bewirken. Möge das Projekt jeden beflügeln, sich als Europäer zu fühlen.

Johannes Hoven, Heimatverein Suderwick e.V.  
<http://www.heimatvereinsuderwick.de/>

Stilte spreekt

Vanuit mijn beeld en ervaring van -de grens- tot nu toe zit een wereld van verschil. Als ik terug denk aan de tijd toen ik 10 jaar was (1956) dan staat me het beeld nog voor ogen van sterk gescheiden landen; gescheiden volken; gescheiden culturen; gescheiden regelgeving hier in Dinxperlo-Suderwick. Dit alles zichtbaar door 2 slagbomen en een stuk -niemandsland- hier tussen in. Bewegende mensen in uniformen die op mij als jongen van 10 jaar ontzag inboezemden en een "unheimisch" gevoel gaven van: hier zo snel mogelijk wegwezen.

Mijn ouders konden dat gevoel bij mij niet wegnemen want de noodzakelijkheid van een -Heilpraktiker- bezoeken aan de "gunne kante" (en daar waren er veel goede van aan Duitse zijde) ging voor. Hoe afstotend werkte toen de grens! Of toch voor smokkelaars niet?

Hoe anders is het nu in de beleving en geeft het een goed gevoel om te ervaren dat de tastbare fysieke belemmeringen er niet meer zijn. Dat nu juist grensoverschrijdende ontmoetingen gestoeld zijn op begrijpen, verstehen, op meerwaarde van, voor, en tussen mensen onderling. Om bruggen te slaan en gedachtig "Europeaan" te worden.

In mijn ontmoetingen met burgers aan beide zijden van de grens ervaar ik een gezamenlijk gevoel van beleving. Bij hoe het was, het is, en wat nog komt. De herinnering, de ontmoeting doet goed en geeft een aanzet tot een nog betere ervaring. Dat is hartverwarmend en doet je even stil staan om dit tot je door te laten dringen.

Mooi is ook dat kunstenaars iedere keer weer bevlogen raken van "het heimische" van de grens. Op hun "beeldende manier" staan zij even stil om dit voor ons te laten spreken.

De brug Van-Mens-tot-Mens is hier ook een mooi voorbeeld van, maar ook inmiddels meerdere andere stilte getuigen spreken deze "Europese taal" hier op de grens in Dinxperwick (fd.).

Ook het weer heel andere kunstproject van Kristina Leko met tekstkunstpanelen in dorp en landschap is weer zo'n waardevolle bijdrage en heeft duidelijk zijn -Grenzwerte-. In tekst, beelden en gevoelens laten ontstaan in wat een -grens- in zich had en heeft ... en dan stilaan te weten:

gisteren is geschiedenis,  
morgen is een geheim,  
vandaag is een gift!

Een goede beleving!

Freek Diersen, Dinxperlo  
Voorzitter Internationale adviescommissie gemeente

---

WORKS IN PUBLIC SPACE DURING THE 1990IES



*Speaker System*, 1994, left: photo installations, facade of the Home of the Croatian Artists, facade of the CDU headquarter. Above: cardboard installation in the entrance area of the Home of the Croatian Artists.

## SPEAKER SYSTEM

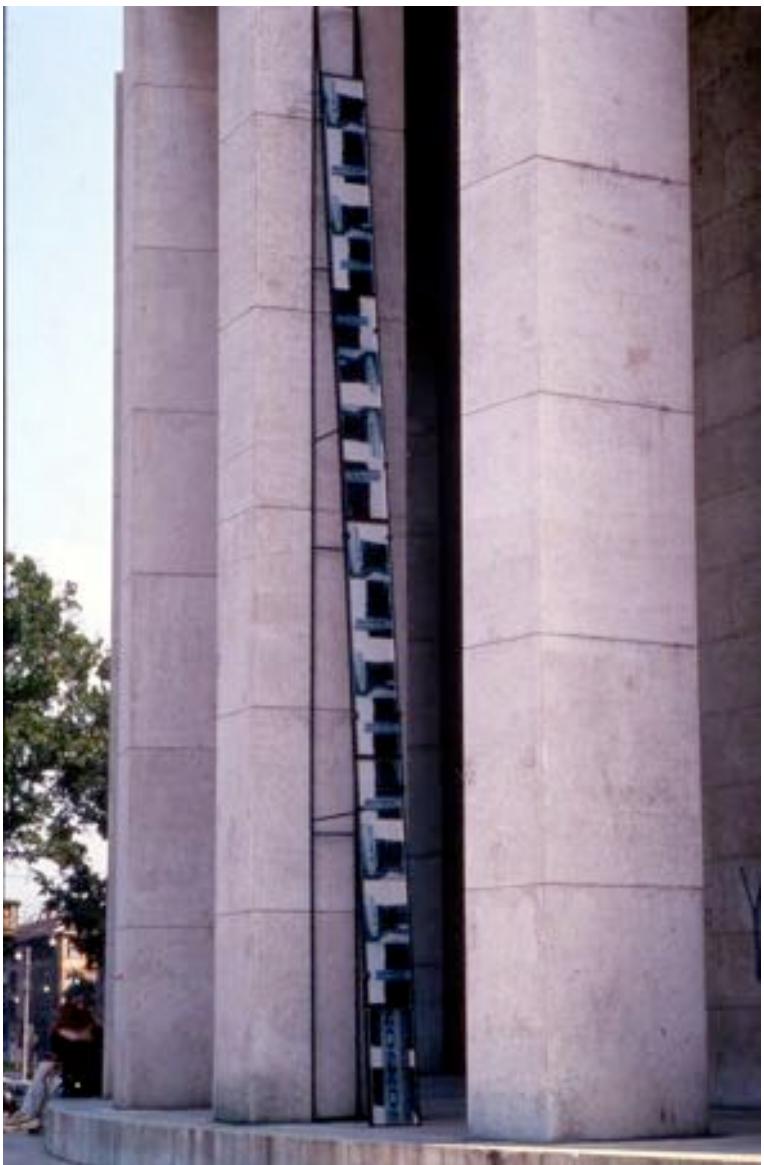
A series of interrelated installations in gallery, public and semi-public spaces, flyer distribution

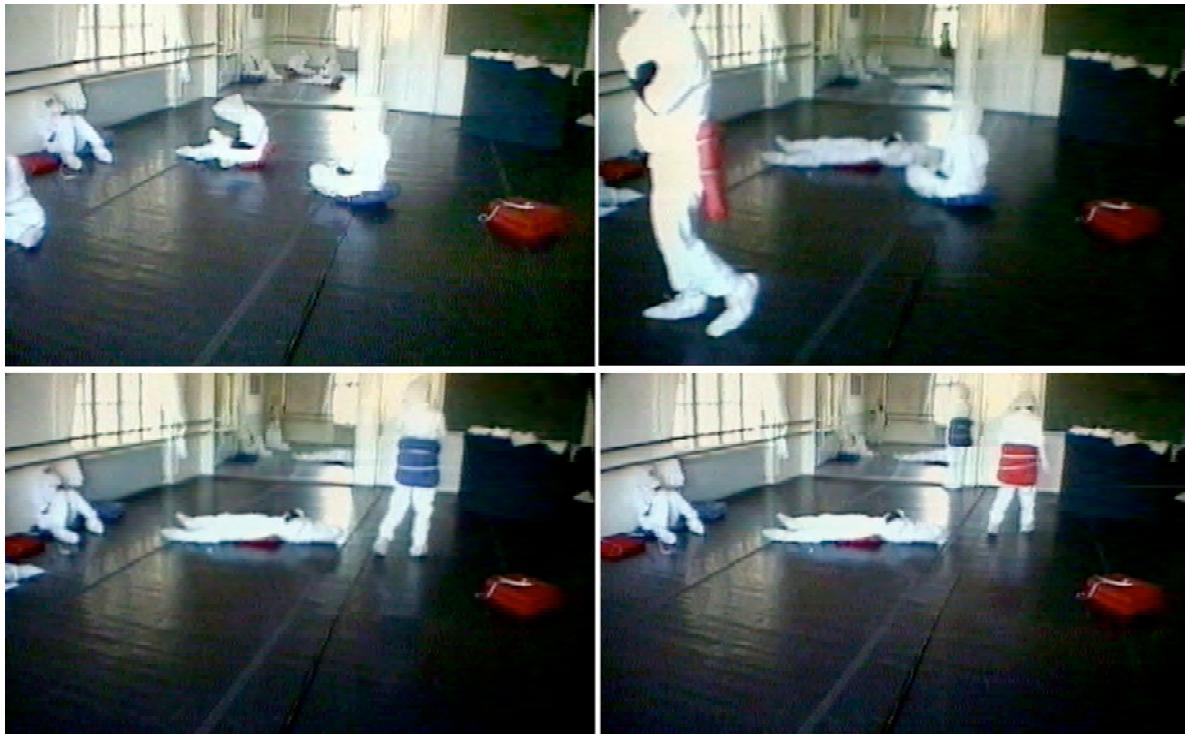
Within the exhibition *Keep that Frequency clear*, Zagreb, HDLU, 1994

*Speaker System* included a series of photo and cardboard-box installations in the gallery space, in the open public space outside the gallery, and in indoor spaces in the neighborhood (Student Health Care Center, headquarter of the governing party).

The installations were made of fabricated replicas of Sony packaging boxes, on which a text was added. This quote of Wim Wenders on the European identity being threatened by the expansion of the American film industry and Japanese electronic industry was the focal point of the work. I was distributing flyers with the text in the Students' Medical Clinic and the CDU party headquarters, and read the text on the radio. If European moving pictures disappear, Europe would become part of the Third World, says Wenders.

In those years, I was photographing the Sony logo wherever I traveled, but also in Zagreb, when the first unofficial Sony retailer appeared in Zvonimirova Street, owned by the family of dr. Franjo Tuđman, then president of the State and at the same time of the governing party. This store and its three-dimensional Sony logo, which I had photographically multiplied for the installation on the façade of the Home of the Artists', within the *Speaker System* project, was located two hundred meters from the CDU headquarters. Thus, *Speaker System* spoke on two levels about the politics of power and its structures.



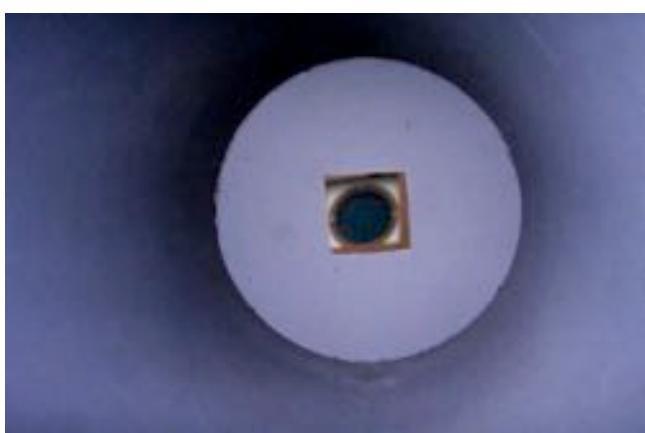


*Visually Based Perception Training*, 1997, workshop and closed circuit video installation, School for Ballet and Dance, Zagreb. One of the workshops/events of the VBPT project.

#### **VISUALLY BASED PERCEPTION TRAINING**

concept, different artworks, workshops  
in public and semi-public spaces  
Within different events and exhibitions, 1995–1997

Visually Based Perception Training is a project proposal, an artistic program written in 1994–95, aimed to research the relationship between visual input, perception and knowledge. It was supposed to be realized in the public and non-gallery spaces as a part of the program of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb. However, it never received the necessary funding, and it was partially realized on different occasions between 1995–97. For the concept of the project I was awarded the Zagreb Salon award, a triennial review of the Croatian fine arts. Visually Based Perception Training included: Focusing Machines, a sculptural installation, aimed to discover unimportant and hidden details in the public space in Zagreb (partially realized); rotation of the inventory, furniture and everyday objects among several public institutions within the city center (not realized), workshops (the participatory part of the project, realized partially).



*Visually Based Perception Training*, 1995, Focusing Machines,  
temporary sculptural installation, Zagreb.

### **VEDUTA (STADTANSICHT)**

Closed circuit video installation, public and gallery spaces

Within the exhibition Zagreb Salon 1998

Curators Igor Zabel, Ana Devic

In this contextual installation the old city gate, including the altar to the city of the Madonna was the focus.

This work belongs to a series of closed circuit installations inspired by the changing status of the religion in our post communistic society. The camera was set up to monitor the old city gate, through which many people pass through to get into the old city, lots of tourists come to sightsee, and where lots of people are coming at all times to direct their prayers to the Madonna at the site, which has a miraculous potential. The video image was transmitted to the gallery room where a ready made object, found within the praying area was multiplied: a Coca-Cola bottle with a red rose in it.



Veduta, 1998, closed circuit video installation, Zagreb. Top: gallery installation. Bottom: still from the video image that was transmitted to the gallery.



#### **FLOWERS**

Closed circuit video installation in public and gallery spaces  
Within the group exhibition Who by Fire  
Curators Janosz Soboszlai, Livia Paldi  
ICA Dunaujvaros 1997-98

In this contextual installation three public institutions are involved: the city hall, the communal gallery and an evangelic church. Inspiration for the work was the changing relationship between the church and the state, which was going through radical changes in the 1990ies in the eastern European countries. The camera is set up to monitor the altar area in a recently build evangelic church in a new part of the town. The situation from the altar was transmitted to the center of the town: to the city hall reception desk, and to the gallery room. On both locations, the readymade situation from the church, a vase with red carnation flowers, a symbol of communism, was set up next to the video monitor. Additionally, the gallery installation included a video documentation showing the complete interior in the church.



*Flowers*, 1997-98, closed circuit video installation, Dunaujvaros, Hungary. Top left: still from the video image from an evangelic church, view on the altar. Top right: City Hall, where the video signal was transmitted to. Middle and bottom: Situation at the reception desk in the City Hall where the video signal was reproduced. On the next page: gallery installation, ICA-Dunaujvaros, 1997.



*Madonna to Fish*, 2001, closed circuit video installation, Zadar. Installation view from the atrium of the Franciscan Monastery.

#### **MADONNA TO FISH**

Close circuit video installation, public and semi-public space  
Within the festival Zadar uzivo 2001  
Curator Iva Radmila Jankovic

For the Madonna festival, August 15, which is extremely popular and important in southern Croatia, an under water installation was set up, where a Madonna figure was illuminated, and where fish food was regularly spread at the site to attract the fish. The audience was invited to come to the Franciscan Monastery for three days in the evening to observe the fish encountering the Madonna.

---

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WORKS SELECTION



Above: The Magic Cake. Underneath: Installation site, the Pastry Shop Gunduliceva in Zagreb. On the right: the production team of the cake, the Zagreb Pastry Company. Photo by Boris Cvjetanovic.



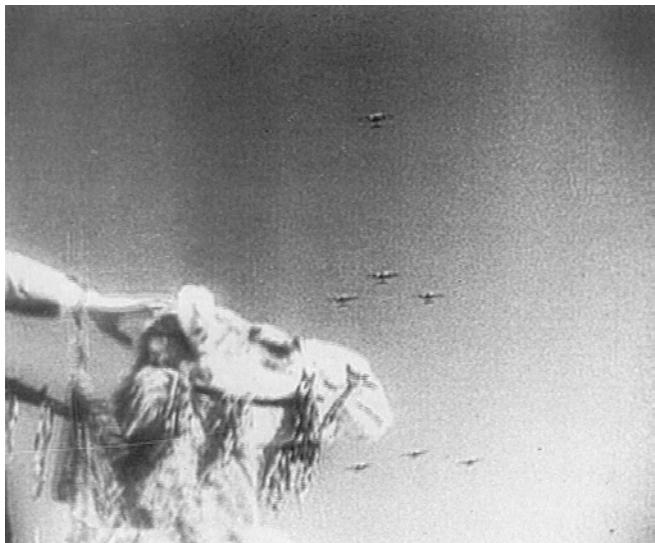
Zagreb 1999. Slastionic Kristina.

B.C.

### A MAGIC CAKE

Object / Multimedia Installation in a Pastry Shop in Zagreb 1999

In 1999 I made a magic cake that was officially being produced and sold by a manufactory in Zagreb during three months period in the pastry shop in the center of the city. The Cake has its own video-story and complex sound installation. It is a work dedicated to a person, made primarily for personal use although presented extremely public. "It will cause the final happy ending of my unhappy love story", I said to myself working on the project.



## HISTORY OF A CAKE

Video 20 min.

In this video work I tell my love story in four languages (Croatian, French, German, English) clarifying its political and historical context i.e. the reasons why it didn't work at the time. Beside the documentary images of the cake production, the found-footage material from the World War II has been used, the three most beautiful images of the WW II: a camel in North Africa 1942, the first meeting of the Allies in Teheran 1943, and the liberation of Paris 1944. For a while, I felt that my personal destiny was nothing but an outcome of big historical events. Above and on the following page. History of a Cake, video stills: North Africa, 1942, Teheran 1943, Paris 1944.



#### **Personal Distribution of my Magic Cakes**

In the year 1999/2000 I had been distributing my cakes for free in different occasion (ex. Film festival in Split, Oreste project at the Venice biennale), buying them off from the pastry manufacturer while waiting my happy ending to occur. It actually did occur two years later. Above: With my cakes and myself in the middle, Valerie B. and Marina G. in Venice 1999. Right. Neli and Ana.

Valerie B. and Marina G. in Venice 1999. Right. Neli and Ana.



*Les nouvelles de Zagreb*, installation view, four-channel video and object installation, Biblioteque Gabrielle Rois, Quebec, 2000.

### **LES NOUVELLES DE ZAGREB**

Video-Diary, 1999/2000, 56'

This video project was developed for the biennale of art in situ in Quebec, as an installation for the Gabrielle Rois public library. In this video diary, I tried to put together all the relevant information on my country and myself personally. I wanted to make an artwork through which one would be able to learn almost everything on politics, economics, culture, and public life in my country, but also get familiar with my private issues, my life, and the life of my family. It is juxtaposition of found footage material from the Croatian Television News and of my reports, my personal "news" recorded in my kitchen.



The diary gives an insight into a period from August 1999 till March 2000, where I recorded my reports once per month. It denotes social changes, and reflects those on my personal situation and on life of people around me (my mother, grandmother, friends). It was a period of important political changes in Croatia: our Social Democrats got in power after 10 years in opposition, and the president Tudjman, whose authoritarian governing marked the period of the 1991-1995 war as well as the years that followed. Above. Stills from the video.

### **THE FLAG ROOM**

A one-room video and object installation 2005

In 2002/2003 I spent one year in the USA, and witnessed the last preparations for the war in Iraq. It was very difficult to understand what was going on and to fit in. Since I wanted to share this extraordinary experience with my friends but also with my audience once I was back in Europe, every time I would watch TV, I started recording what I was watching. That way 80 hours of TV programs from February and March 2003 was collected. Parallel to that, I started reading different books in order to inform myself about the history of the country where I was a guest. Howard Zinn's book "A People's History of the United States" is my favorite book related to the matter, a history of the biggest nation written by an union activist with a socialist point of view. In the flag room, the audience could browse through my video archive, and read the book.

One-room installation: TV & video set, 20 VHS tapes recorded LP; Howard Zinn's book "A People's History of the United States", red sofa, painted walls, two potted plants.



*The Flag Room*, 2005, installation views, ACC Galerie Weimar.

**NINE STORIES AND ELEVEN DOLLARS**

Self published booklet, found objects, handwritigns, 2003

This is another work originating from my one-year stay in the USA. It is a self-published booklet which contains 9 short stories telling about my experiences in contact with people on the streets of NYC. As a newcomer, I was struck with the alienation and lack of trust between the individuals. Therefore, after a while, I started making notes of the events and encounters that touched me in one way or another. Nine stories entitled "Brief encounters with strangers", take-away booklets, are accompanied with two objects which originate from two events described in the stories: a one dollar bill, and a ten dollar bill. The two stories related to the dollar notes are presented as hand writings as well.

The booklet was first published in 2003 on the occasion of the exhibition *Balkan Consulat* in <rotor>, Graz. Its second edition, also in a German translation, came out in 2008 for the exhibition *Friendly Enemies* in Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst Leipzig. The booklet is my third self published booklet, which all have been hand bound with tri-color striped thread as a reference to the civic and democratic heritage of our times (égalité, fraternité, liberté).



Nine Stories and Eleven Dollars, installation views, Rotor, Graz, 2003.



Neun Geschichten und elf Dollar, 2003, Installationansicht, Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst Leipzig, 2008.



The Glass, found object, 1993.

## **MES OBJETS TROUVÉS**

A Collection of Found Objects with Historical References since 1992

Since 1992 I collect significant objects. My collection includes at the moment more than 20 items. It materializes thoughts, feelings and events of the last decade. *Un objet trouvé* is a crossing point where my personal biography meets the issues significant to the society I live in. By multiplying the objects, writing about them, and by exhibiting them, I try to tell who "I" am, who "we" are and what happened. The glass is a good example of how an object treasures the history. It was found in 1993, a sad year of war with death, sorrow and guilt everywhere. The text that follows is from a catalogue published in 2000. There is a series of 5 short texts/photos and two-channel video installation about *The Glass* (please, see: Gekauft in Graz). *The Glass* refers not only to the war experience but to the economical conditioning of Eastern Europe, and to our local history of shopping which was affiliated with crossing the borders either to Austria (in the 1980s) or to Italy (in the 1970s).



The Glass<sup>⁹</sup>. Object found in 1993.

One day I left a glass of water in my studio. When I found the glass a couple of days later, there were traces of evaporated water and a little dead spider in it.



The Purse. Object found in 1992.

This is the purse my grandmother had for years before I noticed it. She says she bought it in Trieste<sup>¹</sup> in 1971<sup>²</sup>. I noticed the object in 1992<sup>³</sup>, deeply impressed by its two tiny details. The two clasps.

<sup>⁹</sup> I was moving out on my own and in 1991 I bought this Ikea glass in the Austrian town of Graz - a town that became an affordable shopping centre for food and household goods in the recession period of the 80ies.

<sup>¹</sup> Trieste, Italy was the favourite shopping centre in the economically prosperous seventies for the middle-class masses from the north-west regions of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

<sup>²</sup> The year of the Croatian Spring - a mass democratic and national movement which was supported by Croatian political leaders but was knocked down and suppressed by the Yugoslav federal authorities.

<sup>³</sup> The year I took the purse to my place. I had to return it to my grandmother on several occasions. In the summer of 2000 the negotiations with my grandmother came to an end and after eight years I managed to obtain permanent ownership of the purse.



The Knife and its Trademark, found object, 1993.



The Juicer, found object, 1999. The Container for Earphones, 1993. The Kettle, 1992. A brick, 2000.



A partial presentation of the collection, HDLU, Zagreb, 2006.

## **UN MAGASIN EXPÉRIMENTAL (MES OBJETS TROUVÉS)**

Exhibition and Temporary Shop Studio of the Musem of Modern Art Zagreb 2000

*During the period from 19 December 2000 to 7 January 2001. I sat in the gallery every day, believing that I was sitting in a real live shop, that in the decades to come, the whole thing would grow into a chain of little shops that people would come out happy because they had managed to exchange their money for material proof of an advance in their cognition of the so-called material world, the world of objects. And that with the acts of purchase, every individual perception would be fixed at a level from it would never be able to regress. / from the catalog*

In this exhibition I showed my collection of found objects as well as all the multiples I made in last years. The exhibit was a total environment that included my works since 1992, as well as me personally explaining my objects, telling their stories, selling and exchanging the multiples.



Left: Installation view. The Juicer and Its Protection Forms. Found objects, 1995. Ceramic multiples of the juicer packaging, casted clay, 1997. Above: Exhibition view, the front room, and my customers with their objects, bought or exchanged, Josip Racic Studio of the Museum of Modern Art, Zagreb, 2001.

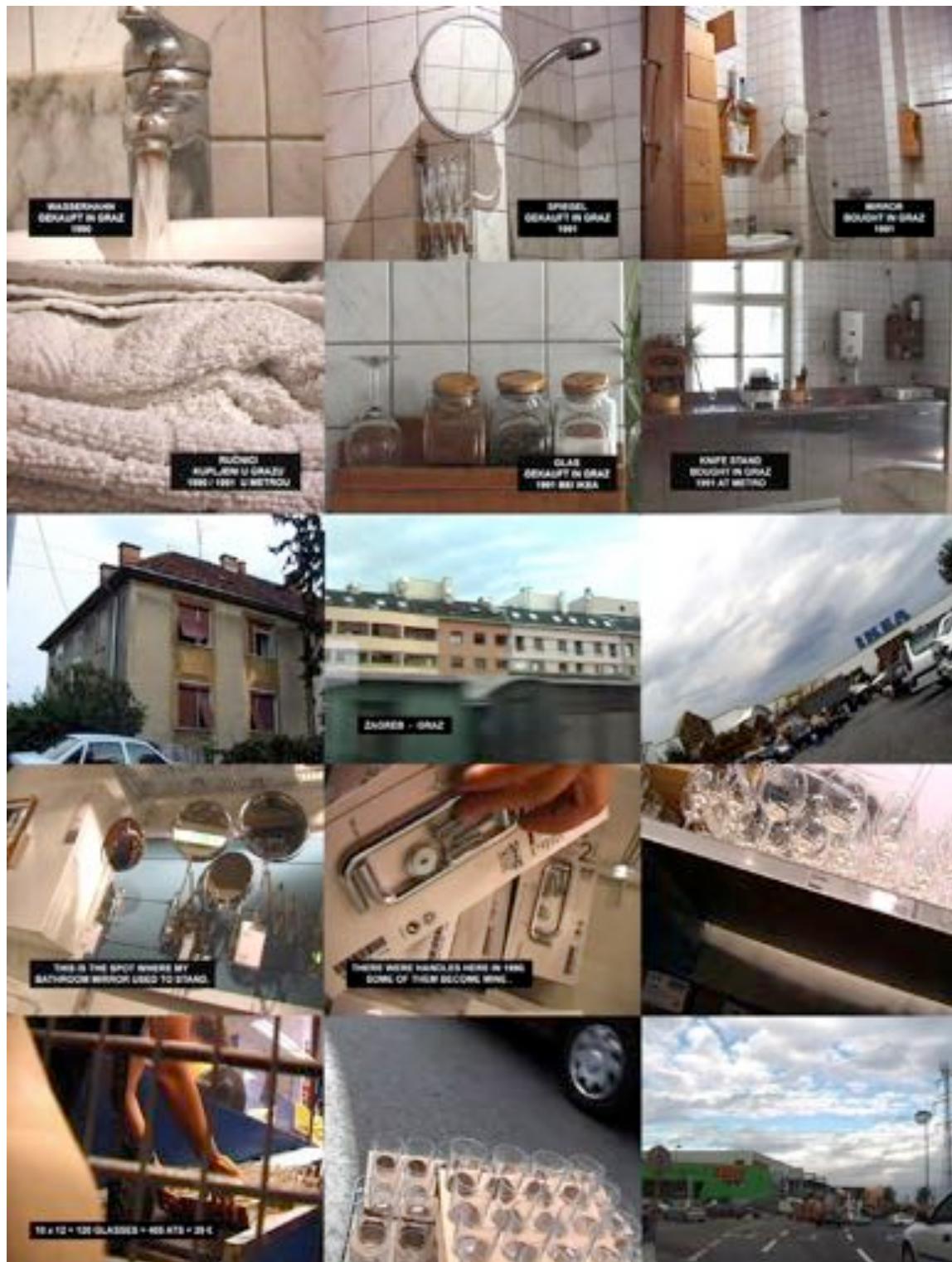
## **GEKAUFT IN GRAZ**

Two-Channel Video Installation, Objects and Digital Prints 1993 / 2001

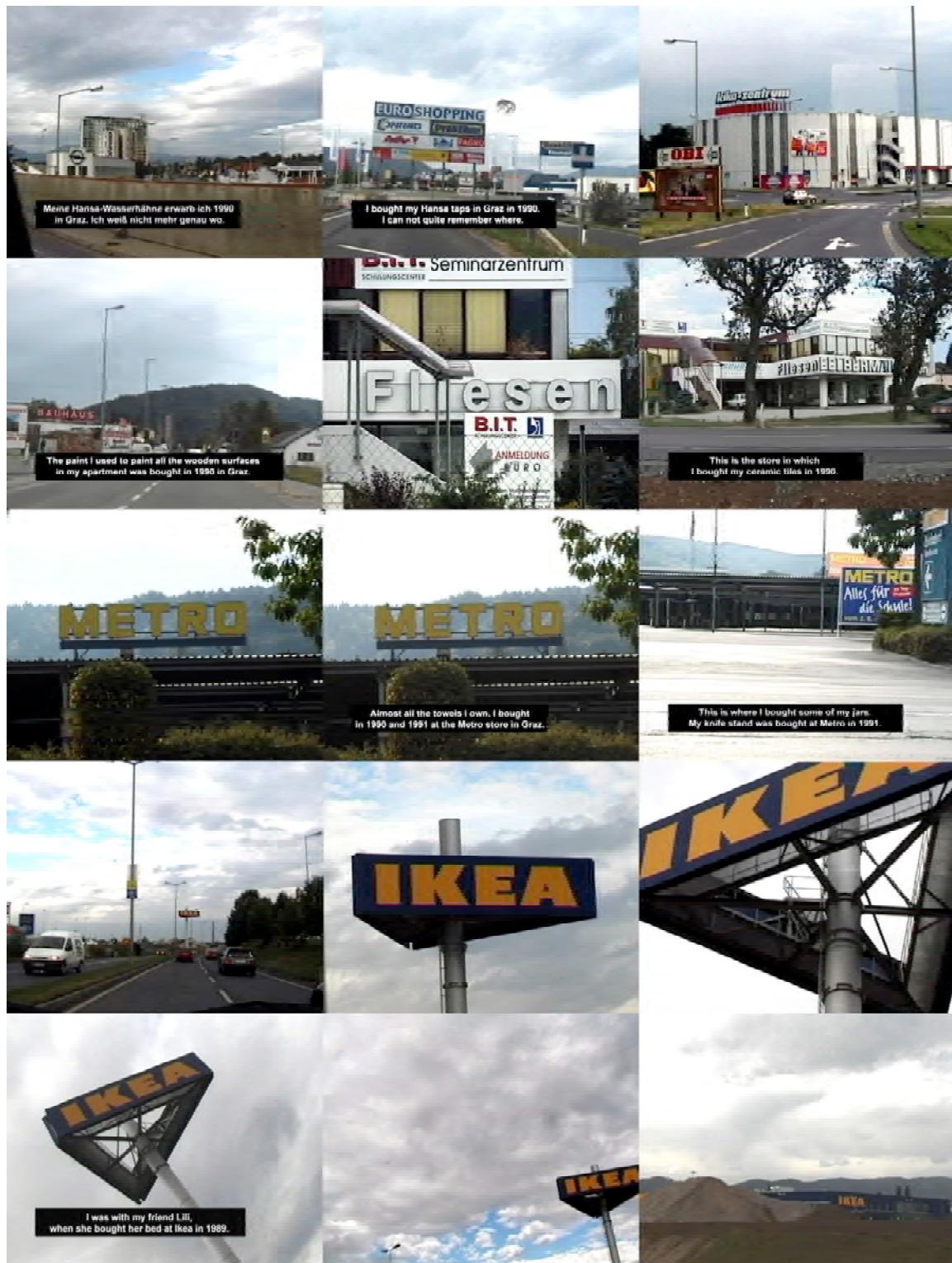
This complex room installation consisting of two channel video, objects (one found objects, a group of bought objects) and prints/texts is based on the story and complex historical references of *The Glass*, eventually the most important object in my *Mes objets trouves* collection. With this two channel video installation I tried to communicate the complexity of economical relationship between Eastern and Western Europe, consumerism, socialism and capitalism, and our eastern European hunger for shopping by using my private and intimate issues as examples. The main idea of the video was to symbolically erase the period of time marked by severe changes - the economical transition from socialism to capitalism, the impoverishment of the middle class and by the war in my country - through buying again the same glasses at the same place, ten years later. However, it did not work. I had to buy the different glasses. The ones that I wanted to buy were no longer available.



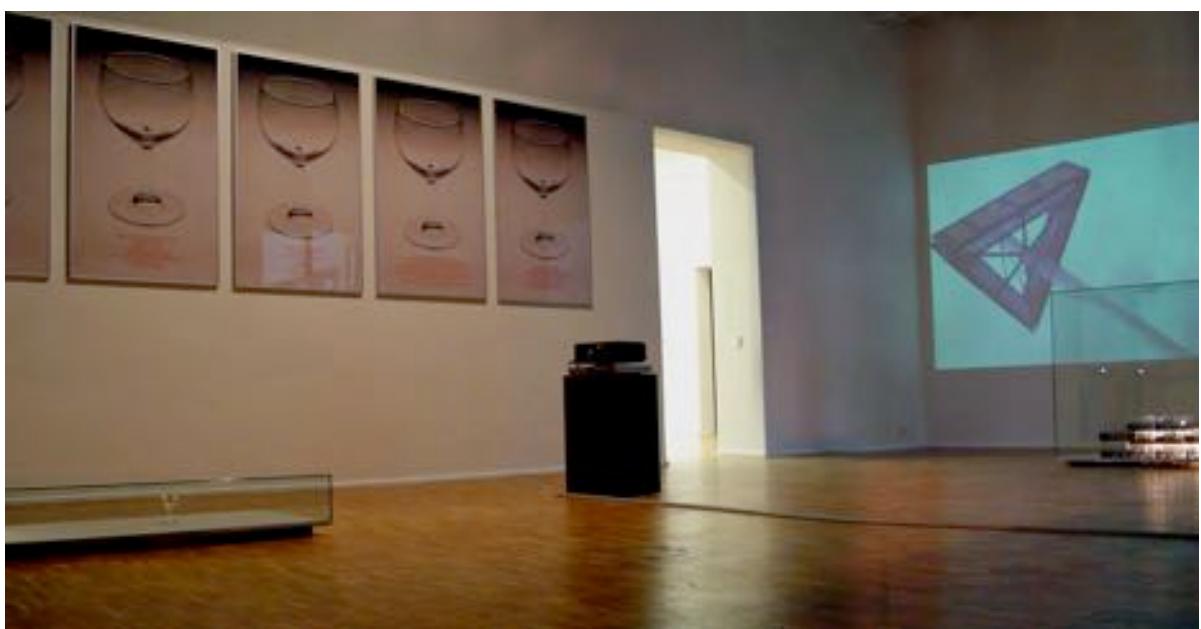
Gekauft in Graz, 2001, installation view, Gallerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst Leipzig, 2004. Detail of the work: video installation and objects.



Gekauft in Graz, 2001, stills from the video, video channel 1.



Gekauft in Graz, 2001, stills from the video, video channel 2.



Gekauft in Graz, 2001, installation view, GfZK Leipzig, 2004, video installation, objects & digital prints.





Snoring in the USA, Reading Room, Installationview, NGBK Berlin, 2011.

## **SNORING IN THE USA**

14-channel video installation, 2003-08

by Kristina Leko & David Smithson

BBK Vlissingen, July/August 2008

Art Pavilion Zagreb, April/June 2010

NGBK Berlin, March/April 2011

"Snoring in the U.S.A." is a poetic and ironic work, subtle in its critical approach. It is a visual essay exploring clichés from America, a multi-channel "road movie" shot from the passenger seat, showing some of the most important and globally well-known locations from the film history, i.e. from wild westerns and road movies (The Grand Canyon, Monument Valley, the Las Vegas strip, etc.), but also small towns, fast food restaurants, gas stations, drive in cemeteries, etc. However, the beautiful images of fascinating landscapes prevail (7 video-channels, 7 days), and they are alternated, juxtaposed with static black and white images of a couple sleeping and snoring in different hotel rooms (7 nights, 7 video-channels).

Filmed in 2003, this experimental documentary, also makes notes on an important historical moment, the invasion of Iraq and the war against terrorism, through documenting bits and pieces of radio-news while driving through the magnificent landscapes (the news mainly reports on the activities of President G.W. Bush), or tv-programs while zapping in the hotel rooms (an interview with Noam Chomsky on socialism, reports on anti-war demonstrations).

There are several possibilities on how to adapt the work for different spacial situations, as the installation can be presented with video projections or monitors. Optionally, the installation is expanded with a reading room. In any case, the multiplying sound of snoring (7 different sound tracks with snoring) dominates the exhibition space. It adds an ironical distance to the day-time recordings: the images of landscapes and everyday life in the USA. On the other hand, these moving images have a hypnotic character in their constant change, in their continuity and driving by monotony. What strikes the audience here is the feeling that there is actually nothing to see, that everything he/she is seeing, she/he has already seen before, and that, despite all that, it is still interesting and inviting. Then, one starts asking him/herself: Why is it so?

Photo credits: Installation views NGBK Berlin – Nihad Nino Pusija,  
Installation views Art Pavilion Zagreb – Marko Ercegovic.



Snoring in the USA, Installationviews, NGBK Berlin, 2011.



dieser Begriff wurde im Laufe des vergangenen ausgehöhlt, dass es schwer fällt, ihn zu definieren. Ich meine, die Sowjetunion z.B. wurde oft genannt, sie wurde so von den zweiten Weltkriegen der Welt bezeichnet, von den Verhandlungen und von der Sowjetunion. Beide nannten es setzten Gründen. Der Westen sprachmus zu diffamieren, dadurch dass es eine in Verbindung brachte. Die Sowjetunion, um aus der moralischen Zustimmung bei einem großen Teil der Welt zu erhalten, obwohl die ganze Sache so man sich nur vorstellen konnte. Traditionellen Sozialismus ist eine Bevölkerung die Kontrahafte Kontrolle über ihr eigenes Leben.

Snoring in the USA. Installationview. NGBK Berlin. 2011.



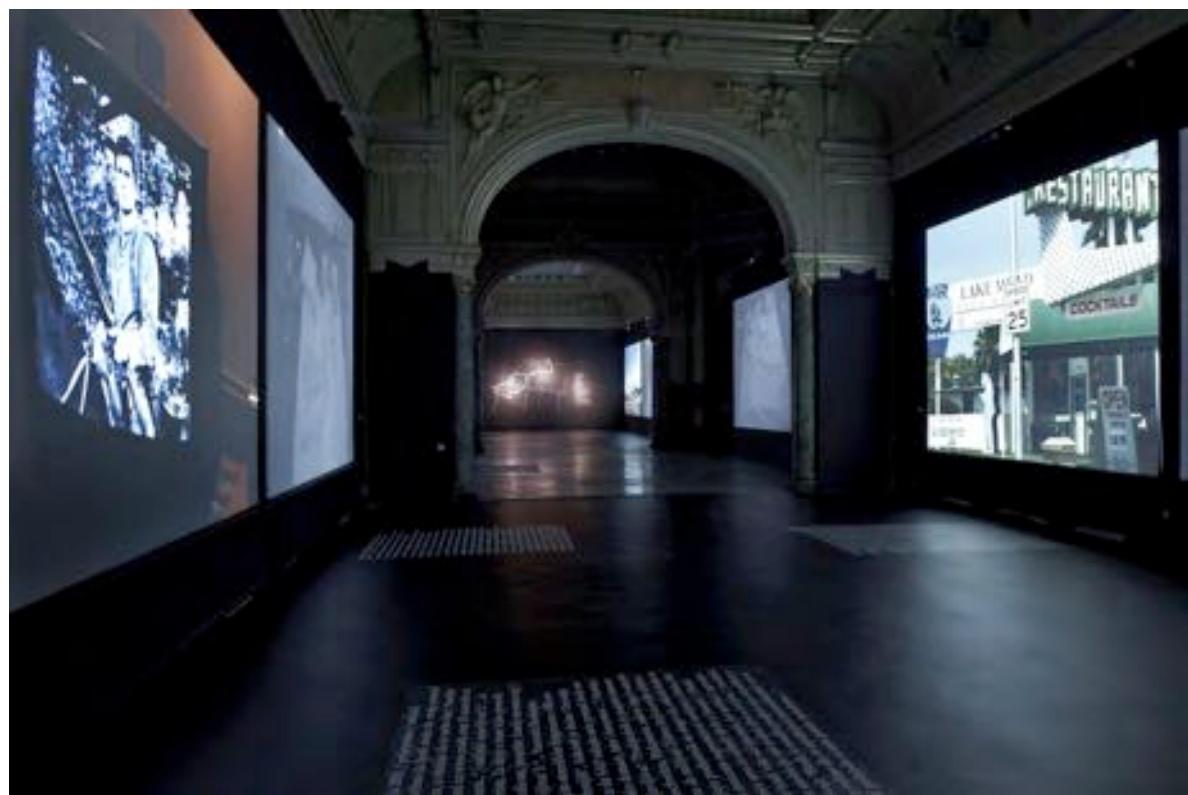
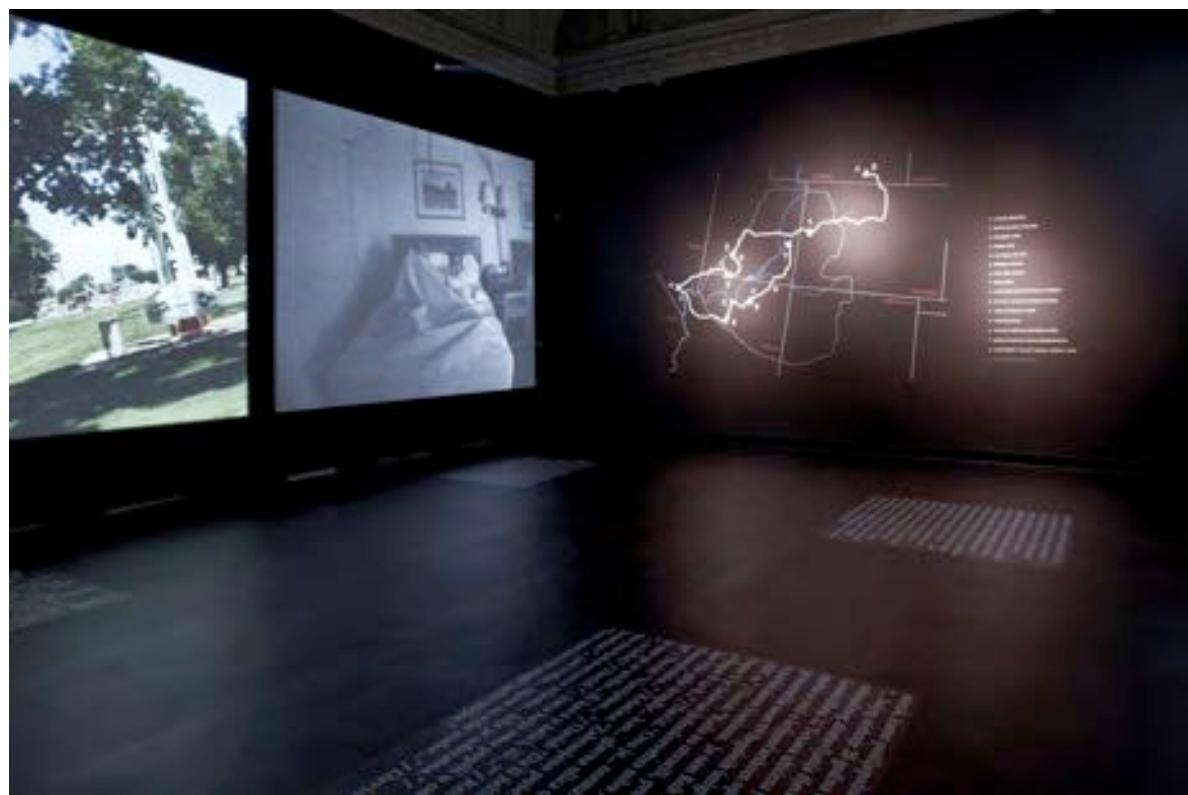
Snoring in the USA, Installationview, NGBK Berlin, 2011.



Snoring in the USA, a selection of stills from the night-time videos.



Snoring in the USA, Installationviews, Art Pavilion, Zagreb, 2010.



Snoring in the USA, Installationviews, Art Pavilion, Zagreb, 2010.



Snoring in the USA, a selection of stills from the day-time videos.



Snoring in the USA, a selection of stills from the day-time videos.

Copyright © Kristina Leko if not states otherwise.  
All rights reserved. All information, texts, images,  
and graphics used on the website are subject to  
protection by copyright as well as other legislation  
for the protection of intellectual property. The  
contents of this website may not be used for  
commercial purposes, be reproduced or be used in  
other electronic or printed publications, without  
prior consent of Kristina Leko.