



ARTIST PORTFOLIO

Marina Gržinić*

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and

Aina Šmid

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The Crisis of Representation in Contemporary Art

The portfolio is connected with the artists Marina Gržinić and Aina Šmid and their exhibition titled *RADICAL CONTEMPORANEITY. Marina Gržinić and Aina Šmid: 35 years of work revisited (1982–2017)*, at Kunstraum (Art space) Lakeside in Klagenfurt, Austria. The curator of the show was Aneta Stojnić, and it was on view from Mid-May to Mid-July 2017. Stojnić defines radical contemporaneity, as “highly performative in the sense of producing a specific impact in the current socio-political reality, their mode of production is prompted by the sharp and accurate sense of the contemporary context that gives each of the works a specific account of what we will call *radical contemporaneity*. This means that not only have they been working with boiling political questions, but they kept dealing with them as they are happening, always taking the risk to provide analyses of traumatic presents, conscious of a historic momentum yet with a clear understanding of the processes of historicization.”¹

The exhibition *Radical Contemporaneity* connects two main lines of thought. One is about the context of 35 years of continuous work by Marina Gržinić and Aina Šmid in video and media art in relation to history and the present. We started in 1982 in Ljubljana, and at that point the work was connected with the alternative or subcultural spaces and productions within socialism in the former Yugoslavia. We are an outcome of the counter-cultural movement during socialism, though this movement was never a dissident one. On the contrary, the subculture of the 1980s was a movement that sought to overtly politicize socialism. So, the current exhibition is a re-politicization of our work. Due to the hyper-neoliberal commercialization of art and culture today, our attempts are to expose contradictions by asking: “what is political art vis-à-vis hyper-divisions, violent racializations, and erased counter-cultural histories?”

¹ <http://www.lakeside-kunstraum.at/index.php?id=269&L=1>, accessed June 2017.

The other path is what we termed in collaboration with Aneta Stojnić, to be attentive not to fall out of history. Slovenia, a turbo-neoliberal state, developed a peculiar system of practicing nation-state sovereignty from its very inception – this system is erasure. Slovenia erased approximately 20,000 people from the other former Yugoslav republics, people who had been living in Slovenia after the country's declaration of independence in 1991. These primarily non-Slovene or mixed-ethnicity people, and a significant number of Roma people, had their basic rights taken away with their removal from the registry of Permanent Residence in February of 1992. Therefore, the Erased People of Slovenia lost all social, civil, and political rights. This action was of a purely administrative nature and thus excluded any possibility of appeal. Furthermore, after two and a half decades the Erased People still have not received a satisfactory compensation ruled in their favor by the international EU court.

What matters is that erasure as a procedure of necropolitical sovereignty and institutional neoliberal governmentality became a 'normalized' procedure in Slovenia, expanding from state to culture, from art to the social field. It became a method of cleansing of history and subjectivities. Without consequences or critique, it established a standard for the way that first the nation-state and subsequently the state funding institutions decide who should live and who must die (literally or socially, symbolically). This is what is defined as necropolitics, an administration of intentionally produced death in different formats: social, real, cultural, and historical. An unstoppable system of erasures, all without sanctions. The public institutions of art and culture are almost completely privatized; the director(s) that run the public institution(s) of contemporary art in Slovenia have been there for 20 years or more, accompanied by their circles of friends and artists. Journalists in daily newspapers are part of the institution of contemporary art's projects, serving as the editors of books published by these very institutions – the journalists then write about these same art projects in the dailies by which they are employed. This is what Achille Mbembe described in 2001 in the African context (what he refers to as the 'postcolony') as private indirect power. It presents a closure of any space of critique and reflection, and a seizure of the public space of interpretation by necropower.

Who are we nevertheless? Marina Gržinić is a philosopher, critic, curator and video artist. She is currently a research advisor at the Institute of Philosophy at the Scientific and Research Center of the Slovenian Academy of Science and Art in Ljubljana and a professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. Aina Šmid is an art historian and independent journalist. Since 1982, we have collaborated on over 40 video art projects, including independent video documentaries, television productions, and media installations. In 2003 we had a retrospective at International Short Film Festival Oberhausen (Germany). In 2009 we published a book in English about our work with the title *New-Media Technology, Science, and Politics. The Video Art of Marina Gržinić and Aina Šmid* (edited by Marina Gržinić and Tanja Velagić, published by Löcker Verlag, Vienna).²

² <http://grzinic-smid.si/>, accessed June 30.

The works for the portfolio are a series of posters where we emphasize topics like colonialism, class, racialization, anti-heteronormativity, violent structure of power and subjugation, and ghettoization. Formally, we are using the techniques of advertising and incorporating photographs, the testimonial footage of refugees and protests, and text. The visuals are not used as propaganda tools; on the contrary, the visuals try to capture the crudeness of social structures and power; the accent of the works is placed on the viewers' role in creating the space of meaning, inviting them to explore the spaces between representation and reality and to become producers of meaning rather than consumers of culture. The references in the works are used semi-clandestinely in conjunction with militant politics. These works refer directly to the aesthetic and political features of what was known as Third Cinema in the 1970s.

In an interview for *Art Margins* (May 2017) Raino Eetu Isto, PhD Candidate at Department of Art History and Archaeology, University of Maryland, College Park, pointed to the question of a possible recognizable subject of our work that could be named as being central to numerous videos and visuals we did from 1982 to today.³ This question allowed me to re-conceptualize the relation of art and politics. We take the medium of video (and the visuals that are in close relation to it) as the central platform for politicization of subjectivities, militancy, emancipation, and rethinking the relation between community and labor. We want to change video from a boutique gallery tool into a "deployment of subversion". That also means that while reflecting political topics, video as a technology has to construct its own new conceptual genealogy, reflecting a different experimental history. This has become necessary today because of changes in video's digital production and critical art-historical vocabularies. We ask questions such as what it means to perform class struggle, or to expose processes of racialization or conditions of ultimate emptiness. Our interest is in visualizing and conceptualizing the social antagonism that cuts through video and connects the medium to the wider social and political implications of contemporary capitalism. In the last instance, it is also possible to withdraw, to take a distance. Finally, we want to document the poverty of the medium in relation to contemporary conditions of production. The theoretical, critical, and political text is of exceptional importance in the work, performed and spoken directly into the camera. This text demands an emancipatory politics by producing knowledge that opposes the Occident's persistently hidden history of coloniality. The text is also a ready-made that functions as a disjunctive platform for practicing different readings. The text proposes the critical interpellation of the viewer through the practice of performative reading; it offers the possibility of an analysis of pertinent theoretical-political positions.

Of course, this is a disturbing moment for experimental digital moving-image work, as spectators generally can no longer listen or focus. However, the theory in the work is intended as an alternative vehicle of intervention, and also for civil disobedience. Most of the spoken theory in the works comes from the wider

³ <http://www.artmargins.com/index.php/interviews-sp-837925570/796-what-matters-is-revolution>, accessed June 30.

political-theoretical context. What is significant is not that we want, through video, to turn politics into a domain of video art, but just the opposite: we want to use the medium of video to analyze the conceptual foundation of contemporary politics and its processes of neoliberal governmentality and necropolitical sovereignty. Today's neoliberal politics seeks to foster an unwillingness to speak publicly about social contradictions. To do this it uses a complex of economic, legislative, judicial, and discursive practices – the procedures of governmentality – to stifle all debate and normalize every situation of power, appropriation, and enslavement. The crisis of representation in contemporary art (and not only in video) is connected, therefore, with the extent to which we are able to relocate the conflict, the social contradiction, back to the work. Precisely because the politics of representation is still such an open question, we must ask: How can we treat the creation of video work as an explicitly political practice?

Marina Gržinić

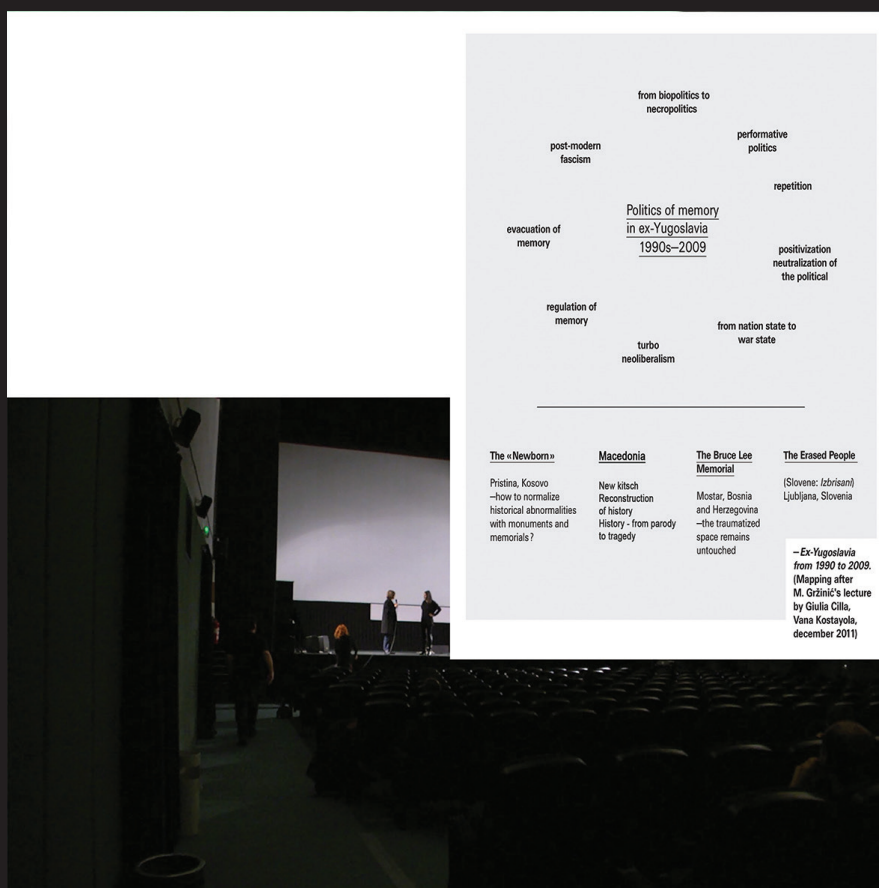


Image 1: Seizure - Rewriting Counter-Histories, No. 2, (2015)

ReARTIKULACIJA

UMETNIŠKO-POLITIČNA-TEORETIČNA-DISKURZIVNA PLATFORMA 01
OKTOBER-NOVEMBER 2007 WWW.REARTIKULACIJA.ORG REARTIKULACIJA@GMAIL.COM

REARTIKULACIJA [3-4] (12) DRUGA KULTURA
KRITIKA NACIONALNEGA PROSOŠANJA ZA Andreja Kopac: KOCJUA IN MOLOTOWKA ZA SLOVENSKE
KULTURO 2008-2011 UMETNIŠKE

NOVI FALŠZEMJ [4] (13-14) HARD CORE
Seška Šeki Tatlic: ZNAMENJE PASIZMA Mojca Plunčec: SODOBNA UMETNOST IN ESTETIKA

DEKOLONIZACIJA [5] (14-15) ZGODOVINA
Kirsten Forkert: KDO JE POTEM TUKAJ NAIVEN? Ivana Marjanovič: KRITIČNO BRANJE

ZAVZEMAMO PROSTOR WIR GREIFEN RAUM

Intermedialna ZAVZEMAMO PROSTOR WIR GREIFEN RAUM Raziskovalna skupina za zgodovino in sedanjost temnopoltih v Avstriji je bila predstavljen v 108th transparentni, postavljenega na stranicah Pabstler Vitec v Ljubljani, Avstrija št. 30, 1. do 15. 8. 2007, v okviru razstave Specializirane intervencije v družbene, kulturne in politične prakse. Digitalni arhivski procesi se ponavljajo z izključnim vzpostavitvijo in postavljanjem Avstriji, kar se izkazuje v medijem vzpostavitve avstrijske politike in družbe, da postajajo krajine tabu in sponzorirani in mediji.

QUEER [6] (16-17) HIPERKOMODIFIKACIJA
Nataša Sukič: KO ZMANJKA STOLOV ZA OTRO MISO Sebastian Lohme: SISTEMI MOČI
LEZBIČNI BAR [6-7] (18-21) GLOBOKO GRLO
Nataša Welikojac: NIKAKOR! Stegjn Boynik: TEORIJA NACIONALIZMA IN SODOBNA
BEOGRAJSKA (DRUGA) SCENA [7] (22) KRITIČNA PRAKSA
Ana Vujanović in Marta Popivoda: ODPRTI SLOWAR- PROSPER VER. 3.1. 01/07
Barbara Klanč: TOPLE VODE SE PAC NE ODKRIVA, TOPLA
VODA JE
POZICIONIRANJE [8-9] (23) KIBERPIPA
Raziskovalna skupina za zgodovino in sedanjost Ošala Lakner: ROBERPIPA
temnopoltih v Avstriji: CAFE DEKOLONIAL - SAC. JUR
MEHLSPEIS LEISE SERVUS...
SVOBODNI MEDJI [10-11] (24) BEOGRAJSKA (DRUGA) SCENA
Mojca Plunčec: MEDJSKA ZADNEDGA Sinša Ilie: MESTIJO SLIKE
CASOVNI STROJ [11]
Oleg Kulik



Image 2: Seizure - Rewriting Counter-Histories, No. 6, (2015)



Image 3: Radical Contemporaneity No. 1, (2017)



Image 4: Radical Contemporaneity, No. 2, (2017)

Credits – images

Image 1: Gržinić & Šmid, Seizure – Rewriting Counter-Histories, no. 2, digital print, color, 2015.

Image 2: Gržinić & Šmid, Seizure – Rewriting Counter-Histories, no. 6, digital print, color, 2015.

Image 3: Gržinić & Šmid, Radical Contemporaneity, no. 1, digital print, color, 2017.

Image 4: Gržinić & Šmid, done in collaboration with graffiti artist Balša, Belgrade, Radical Contemporaneity, no. 2, digital print, color, 2017.