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## ART INTERVENTION IN INDUSTRIAL CULTURAL HERITAGE OR, HOW DOES SOCIALLY USEFUL ART COME ABOUT?

The article is oriented to art projects and interventions in industrial cultural heritage in certain cities in the Republic of Croatia, which are trying correctively to motivate the powers-that-be to consider both theoretically and practically the various aspects of conservation and/or conversion to other uses of individual heritage structures.

Key words: industrial heritage, art intervention, *Rikard Benčić* Factory (Rijeka), Labin, Sisak Ironworks, Electric Bulb Factory, Glyptotheque, *Nada Dimić* Factory, Steam-powered Flour Mill, Badel, Gorica (Zagreb)

*The journey to work, the workplace,  
the cinema lobby, all of that is one grand gallery.*  
Branko Golić, Qualified Fitter and Turner, former  
Sisak Ironworks (according to Crtalić 2011:14-15)

The title question “How does socially useful art come about?” is adopted from the multimedia artist Kristina Leko (2010:36), who has been prominent on the Croatian art scene with her *community art*. Since certain artists shrink from the so-called social usefulness of their own works, believing that art, due to its autonomy, does not have to be socially engaged – that is, with particular political and ethical objectives – the multimedia artist Ivana Keser opened up the question of whether the artist is an activist or an atavist (cf. Gržinić 2007/2008). It is noticeable in the framework of social projects that some Croatian artists have also responded to the local issue of revitalisation of industrial heritage and, therefore, we will orient this article to notation of art projects and interventions in industrial cultural heritage in certain Croatian cities,<sup>1</sup> which endeavour correctively to motivate the powers-that-

<sup>1</sup> Since the reviewers of this article pointed out that the syntagma *Our Dark...*, which I had used in the first version of this article as an ironical reversal of the syntagma in the title of the Croatian anthem *Our Lovely (Homeland)*, was more suitable to the yellow press and politicking, I have deleted

be to consider both theoretically and practically various aspects of conservation and/or conversion to other uses of particular industrial heritage structures. So let us embark on a brief textual journey with only a few of the selected examples of art projects and interventions in industrial cultural heritage, while they still have not caved in upon themselves.

### **The Rijeka T-Building [T-objekt] as the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art**

We are starting out from Rijeka which, aside from the conversion of Hartera,<sup>2</sup> has long been considering the possibility of converting the former metal-working *Rikard Benčić* Factory into the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (cf. Todorović 2002:17). In the context of our topic on art projects and interventions in industrial cultural heritage, it is necessary to mention Tanja Dabo's *Urbana intervencija* [Urban Intervention] in Rijeka in 1999, as part of which the artist intervened on that factory's doors without handles. There had only been one door without a handle on the enormous wall of the *Rikard Benčić* factory, while Tanja Dabo's intervention consisted of her stealing a plaque reading *Rijeka Modern Gallery, Management* during the evening hours when the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art [the MMSU] was closed, and moving that door without a handle – onto the factory wall covered with barbed wire. This took place at the actual future location of the MMSU and, with its lack of functionality and aesthetics (cf. Dabo 2008:32). Today, in 2011 – twelve years after the intervention referred to – everything remains the same, only there is no wall and no barbed wire there anymore because, as the artist points out, it is now a parking lot. Otherwise, Tanja Dabo was called in for an official interview and examination in connection with that action, or, in her own words from a conversation in 2008:

As far as I know, the situation with the relocation of the MMSU to the premises of the former *Rikard Benčić* Factory is almost the same as it was in 1999. However, the situation that prompted me to undertake the *Urban Intervention* is almost being repeated now: the selection of the new director is under way, and everything

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it from this article. However, considering the creative licence that I feel when writing (this article), I have located it in the first footnote since I really do not see any reason for which it cannot have a place in a scholarly type journal, bearing in mind that we live in a country of 4,437,460 inhabitants, of whom 450 000 are unemployed in real terms.

The article was written for the 11th Croatian-Slovenian Ethnological Parallels *Industrial Cultural Heritage* (Krško, October 29-30, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Naturally, as far as Rijeka is concerned, one must definitely mention the year 2005 when a group of enthusiasts initiated the Hartera Festival with the objective, as they state on their web-page, of “sensitising the public to the idea that the space of the failed Paper Factory be assigned to cultural and public content” (“Hartera, Rijeka”, http).

continues to be as it was before: the political machinery will decide on the person who will head up the Museum, while the machinery in that process is made up of a minor number of people “from culture”. (...) The institution’s indignation was not due, as one might think, to the intervention itself but rather to the text published about it in *Zarez* (“Who Stole the Modern Gallery”, Rade Jarak, April 30, 1999). (Dabo 2008:32)

Tanja Dabo’s urban intervention was a corrective comment on the policy of (de) installation of the director of the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, as well as a comment on the situation, already prolonged at that time, regarding the uncertainty of moving the Museum to the *new* building.<sup>3</sup>

Naturally enough, there is a large number of industrial heritage sites in Rijeka crying out for conversion; to mention the Torpedo Factory launch ramp, for example, which should be placed in the context of revalorisation of industrial architecture, particularly along with individual harbour warehouses – especially those in the so-called Zagrebačka Obala and Visinov G/gat areas (cf. Bilić 2002:46). As stated by the architect Bojan Bilić, these are exceptional buildings “whose reconstruction could alter the image of the harbour city, which Rijeka increasingly ceases to be” (Bilić 2002:46).

In relation to art inventions in the Rijeka industrial heritage, the *revitalisation* project/action of Vlasta Delimar and Milan Božić, entitled *Vlasta Delimar i Milan Božić provest će noć...* [Vlasta Delimar and Milan Božić will spend the night...] (2003) should also be mentioned. It was subtitled with an indication of the place of spending the night in an erotic-energetic manner, as part of which, as far as industrial heritage is concerned, the single performance art night was spent at the premises of the Torpedo Factory launch ramp in Rijeka (Tenžera 2003, [http](#)).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The 2006 exhibition called the Festival of New Art, *FONA 2006*, was also a symbolic announcement of the possible final implementation of the move of the MMSU to the former factory premises. I directed a question on the status of the relocation of the MMSU to the T-Building of the *Rikard Benčić Factory* at the very beginning of January 2011 to Nikolina Radić Štivić, the head of the Department of the City of Rijeka Department of Culture, to which I received the following answer: “The City Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art encompasses reconstruction of the existing so-called T-Building into the museum, and the construction of a subterranean garage and public square. Building permits for reconstruction of the existing structure and construction of a subterranean garage and public square have been issued and the implementation projects have been completed. The original T-Building has been retained in the architectural design. Two enclosed exhibition areas will be built on and communications have been installed externally, while the depots and part of the exhibition areas are located in the internal part of the building (...)”.

<sup>4</sup> This is a concept of performance art on healing abandoned spaces by way of energy, in which Vlasta Delimar and Milan Božić invoke the concepts of Marko Pogačnik on healing the Earth, as presented in his book *Zmajeve linije* [Dragon Lines]. “To spend the night in a space that has lost all sense, and even more, all spirit, is a challenge”, Vlasta Delimar emphasised on the occasion of the revitalisation project. And while Marko Pogačnik places “energy pillars” at critical points throughout towns, thus healing the space, Vlasta Delimar and Milan Božić “heal” forgotten architectural facilities, monuments to “existential energy”, through the energy of male-female interfusion, by



Figure 1. Tanja Dabo: *Urbana intervencija* [Urban Intervention] (1999)

**Labin – Rudarske uspomene [Miners' Memories]  
and Podzemni grad XXI. [Underground City XXI]**

Moving from Rijeka into the hinterland of Istria – towards Labin, we mention Kristina Leko's (2008) Labin exhibition *Rudarske uspomene* [Miners' Memories] which, apart from the artistic dimensions also has the ethnographic quality of reviving the life of the miners, as a forgotten and invisible community today; in other words, the mine was closed in 1988. Kristina Leko organised this exhibition with Sabina Salamon, who was then director the Labin Town Gallery, and with the Labin miners, in order for them to revive together the mining heritage that also bears witness to the former multi-cultural nature of that town. One of the issues encountered by the exhibition, which was designed as an expanded documentary cinema (the central part of the exhibition consisted of a showing of conversations

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which they endeavour to stimulate the revitalisation of forgotten spaces left to the tender mercies of managements, institutes and commissions.

with Labin miners) in co-operation with the local community, was the fact that the Istrians today seem to be somewhat ashamed of their mining past (cf. Leko 2010:36-37). At workshops, some twenty former miners revived their memories of the period of their professional and existential identity, through reminiscences, notations, personal property, photographs, and objects from the mine, miners' newspapers, sculptures and drama texts. Several Labin enthusiasts added their private collections on mining; e.g., there were items there from the collection of Senad Hujdurović, the son of a miner who was later himself a miner at Labin, and was granted a disability pension and retired at the age of 38 ("Rudarske uspomene, 2008.", [http](#); Leko 2010a). On the local level, the project in question tried to reappraise the treatment of the neglected miner tradition as cultural heritage, and some of the participants established an association for fostering miner heritage soon after the exhibition ("Be a Happy Worker: Work-to-Rule!", [http](#)). Or, in the words of the artist about that project:

I worked there for only two weeks, atypically briefly for me. There are interesting details connected with miners. For example, they often did shock, norm-exceeding work on Sundays, competed between themselves, worked without pay, while the earnings would go to the hospital, the school, or even for the Učka Mountain traffic tunnel. As far as the tunnel was concerned, the agreement was that the miners would be able to use the tunnel without charge. The tunnel was sold, that is, given in concession to a French company, and no-one remembered how many days of Sunday work the miners had donated to the tunnel, and no-one remembered the promise made to them. In the booklet about that project that has just been completed, there is a reprint from the miners' newspaper from 1959 which, among other, quotes "You learn by reading, by learning you acquire knowledge...". The starting-point was that the miners also had to become educated, and someone showed concern about that, compiling a newspaper for them. There is absolutely nothing like that today. Who asks the question today, for example, about the possible cultural needs of women who work in the textile industry? (Leko 2010:36-37)

Regarding Labin, it is worthwhile to recall the *Podzemni grad XXI*. [Underground City XXI project], which visitors could see in the multimedia presentation at the 2002 *Krikni i rikni* [Freak out and Shout] exhibition by the Metal Guru multimedia group at the Zagreb Museum of Contemporary Art. The focal programme of the Labin Art Express group is transformation of the former coal mine at (Pod) Labin (Pozzo Littorio) and Raša (Arsia), which they say is "one of the largest technological attainments in world terms in the domain of mining from the beginning of the 20th century, into a futuristic underground city, an urban social sculpture in constant creation" (cf. "Underground City XXI Labin", [http](#); "Labin Art Express" 2002:189-190). The artistic leader of the Labin Art Express group, Dean Zahtila, speaks of how they started to think about realisation of the project only after the Faculty of Mining, Geology and Petroleum Engineering in Zagreb completed the feasibility study of the project, which had been commissioned by

the Istrian County during 2000, confirming that the artistic Utopia could also become a reality (Zahtila 2005:34–35). The basic idea of the project is to preserve the four-hundred year tradition of mining by transforming the industrial and historical heritage into an avant garde art project, a cultural and tourist attraction of world significance, that is, the creation of a real city 150 m below ground – in the subterranean halls and tunnels, carved out of the living rock, which connect Labin, Raša, Plomin and Rabac, and that with streets, bars, galleries, children’s playgrounds, shops, restaurants, and, the Museum of Mining and Industry of Istria (Zahtila 2005:34–35).

The *Podzemni grad XXI*. project was formally commenced in 1998 with the opening of the Lamparna Cultural Centre, as Dean Zahtila informs us further – the future entrance into the Underground City, that is, the lobby of the lift that will take us down 150 metres below ground (Zahtila 2005:34–35).

In the context of that project, the topic of the *Transart 2010* Festival – the 10th Istrian International Transdisciplinary Art Festival and Laboratory – was the *Podzemni grad XXI*. (cf. “Underground City XXI Labin”, <http://>; “Labin Art Express” 2002:189–190). On the occasion of the above festival, Dean Zahtila stated for the *Glas Istria* [Istrian Voice] newspaper that he hoped the implementation of the Underground City project would commence in 2011, “with repair of the mining shaft as the main entrance, and that the lift down to the 3 500 sq m hall at a depth of 150 m would start operating in 2012” (“Razgovor s Deanom Zahtilom [Conversation with Dean Zahtila]”, <http://>).

As part of the celebrations of the 90. *obljetnica Labinske republike: Međunarodni simpozij “Podzemni grad XXI – utopija ili realnost!?”* [90th Anniversary of the Labin Republic: the Underground City XXI – Utopia or Reality!?] (February 22 – March 5, 2011), the *Podzemni grad XXI*. project was presented by the mayor Tulio Demetlika, Dean Zahtila, the chairperson of the Labin Art Express XXI Association and Marko Sančanin, chairperson of Platform 9,81 Collective for Architecture and Media from Zagreb. It was emphasised then that the architectural-urban planning design had been completed in co-operation with Platform 9,81 in 2010, representing the first integral vision of revival of the mining industrial heritage and its re-activation (cf. “Naša baština... [Our Heritage]”, <http://>). One of the participants at that symposium was Wolfgang Ebert, member of the Management Board of the European ERIH association (European Route of Industrial Heritage) who said, among other, on that occasion:

Do not try with the Underground City to compete with the so-called middle-of-the-road approach, so that you merely insert culture into the mine. Regeneration of industrial facilities for cultural functions is already old news, with a falling trend. From the Opera in Sydney to many buildings in Lower Manhattan (New York City), the industrial heritage is packed with museums and galleries. Although such an approach continues to be exceptionally popular, I am convinced that interest

in such localities will deflate and then we [will] have the problem of a surfeited scene. For me, the highest quality solution for conversion of industrial heritage localities is – their authenticity. The buildings have to be permeated with history, they have to be palpable, they have to have their own smell and sound – they have to be as real as the former industry from which they stemmed. For me, that is the only sustainable concept. All day I have been thinking “what is my problem with the Underground City project and I have come to a conclusion that my problem is also the greatest potential of this locality – it’s invisible, it’s under ground. That’s the advantage, but also a great challenge. (according to Zahtila, MS)



Figure 2. The Lamparna Cultural Centre (entrance to the building), Labin

### **Marijan Crtalić's *Nevidljivi Sisak* [Invisible Sisak]**

Let's move to the centre of the Sisak-Moslavina County. The socially engaged exhibition *Nevidljivi Sisak – fenomen Željezara* [Invisible Sisak – The Ironworks Phenomenon] (2009) relates, as the sub-title suggests, to the Ironworks in the town in which the artist was born. The artist himself emphasises that he experiences the Sisak Ironworks and the appertaining workers' Caprag settlement as an archaeological park and open gallery in which industrial organisms, and especially those dying on the ironworks factory floors, as well as their cultural-manufacturing products integrated into public surfaces, associate to a once developed civilisa-

tion. Within the framework of the broad *Nevidljivi Sisak* project, Marijan Crtalić researches that town in several layers – from the archaeological remnants to the objects and places that testify to some not so distant times, and to the present, with a wish to achieve some sort of rehabilitation of Sisak cultural heritage. Namely, Crtalić implemented linking the artistic concept and the workers in this exhibition based on the fact that an artistic colony (1971–1990) had been set up within the Sisak Ironworks, following the Croatian Spring [Hrvatsko proljeće], at which cultural workers and the workers at the Ironworks created through joint co-operation. In that process, as Crtalić explains, the works of art were presented to the workers, while the artists received fees for their works (Crtalić 2009, http). As seen in the text of one of the organisers of the exhibition, Vlado Krnjaić, 1172 works were purchased from the artists for that purpose (Crtalić 2011:14–15).

As part of the film *Industrijski raj* [Industrial Paradise] shown at the exhibition, an artist interviews workers who speak of historical experiences – about the time of creating sculpture at the art colony and times today, when not even the authors of sculptures from that “museum in the open” know the year in which they were made, while children, uninhibited by symbolic heritage, use them for play (cf. Mance 2010:37; Crtalić 2009, http). In the words of the art historian, Ivana Mance, there slowly emerges from the material “an ethnology of the everyday life in which the stance of the common man towards high culture and art now, as before, is permeated with forces of love and hate, attachment and repugnance, closeness and alienation” (Mance 2010:37). In other words, similarly to the strategy employed by Kristina Leko in the *Rudarske uspomene* exhibition, the artist brings together in one exhibition documentary material (archive photographs, press cuttings, documents) and counter-balances it against the current juncture, which shows all that is left of that worker-artist co-operation is thirty or so damaged sculptures in public places in the Ironworks workers’ settlement (the Caprag settlement) while, in the process, the workers of the Ironworks have, regrettably, experienced a similar fate. Namely, the Sisak Ironworks used to be the largest factory in this part of Europe, and the number of workers has fallen from the former 14 000 (approx.) to only 1 000 (approx.) employees today.<sup>5</sup>

Marijan Crtalić emphasises that a worker called Dragutin Hočevar, who was more than a mere visual art amateur, stood out particularly in the art colony and was highly esteemed by Ivan Kožarić, the internationally known Croatian multimedia artist. Crtalić adds that, apart from the visual art colony referred to above, the factory also had a literary section, theatre and music groups, choirs, and the like. The artist makes particular reference to a text written by a qualified fitter and

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<sup>5</sup> The Ironworks was taken over in 2007 by the American CMC Corporation, which undertook to retain the then-current workforce of 1 416 workers (that is, the number already drastically reduced at that time) for at least three years, however, already in 2008 we were witnesses to the renewed firing of workers (“Željezara Sisak otpušta radnike [Sisak Ironworks Firing Workers]”, http).

turner, Branko Golić: “The journey to work, the workplace, the cinema lobby, all that is one grand gallery” (according Crtalić 2011:14-15). It is noticeable that this component of satisfaction within which the management of the Ironworks also had the will to implement the cultural matrix, particularly in the organisation of the art colony, was also something that was emphasised in Kristina Leko’s *Rudarske uspomene* exhibition, when she pointed out that there was more attention paid to the cultural prosperity and education of the workers during the period of socialism (cf. Leko 2010:36-37). Or, as Crtalić explains:

Since its industry has been ruined, along with the entire economy and culture of Sisak, the basic objective of the project and my “Utopian” idea is to make a gallery of sorts in the open from all these sculptures that still exist. In any case, that would fit in with the cultural and tourist offer of the town itself. (“Marijan Crtalić istražuje ‘nevidljivi’ Sisak [Marijan Crtalić researches ‘invisible’ Sisak]”, http)

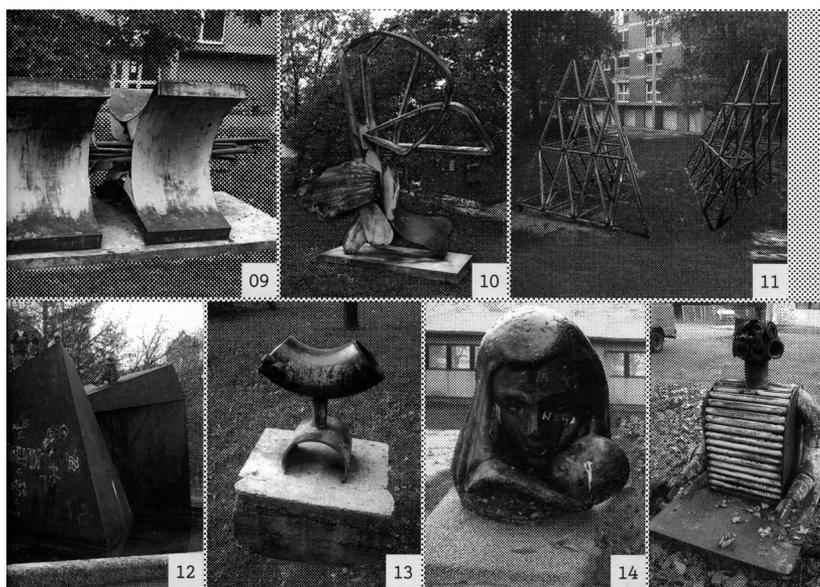


Figure 3. Marijan Crtalić: *Nevidljivi Sisak – fenomen Željezara*  
[Invisible Sisak – The Ironworks Phenomenon] (2009)<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> A detail from the exhibition catalogue for the *Nevidljivi Sisak – fenomen Željezara* [Invisible Sisak – The Ironworks Phenomenon] exhibition (November 5 – December 5, 2009), Zagreb: Miroslav Kraljević Gallery.

## Zagreb: the [TEŽ] Electric Light Bulb Factory as the “city lighthouse”

We now move on to Zagreb and pause firstly at the most recent artistic project of Zlatko Kopljar, *K 13* (2010), which was inspired by the Electric Light Bulb [TEŽ] factory building. The multimedia artist Zlatko Kopljar has been connecting his own body with visual art and performance art since 1996, and he has called this form of activity *construction* (K) since the Performance Art Week “Javno tijelo” [Public Body] (Zagreb 1997) (cf. Kopljar 2002).

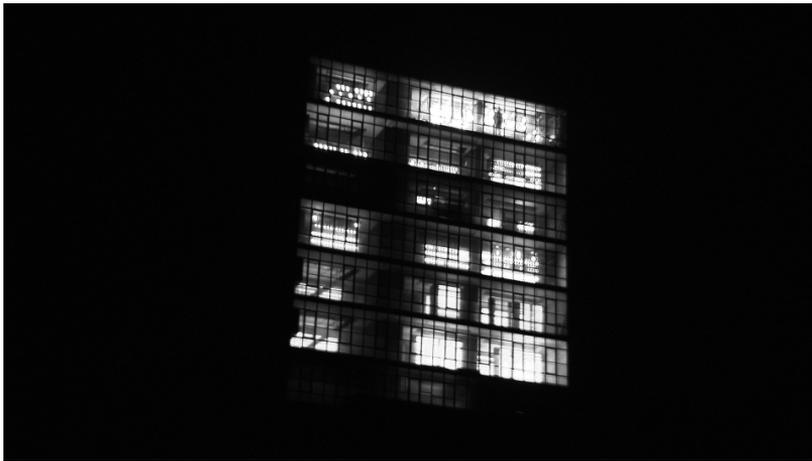


Figure 4. Zlatko Kopljar: *K 13* (2010)

The *K 13* exhibition – the artist’s most recent *construction* – consists of two-metre neon “monoliths” and intimate, dream-like video performances in which the artist is seen as he climbs through a forest (a nocturnal space, *locus horridus*) dressed in a blue suit, and then does the rounds of the TEŽ factory (a space of light, *locus amoenus*). Briefly, the project is inspired by Kopljar’s interest in the architectural and symbolic worth of the Electric Light Bulb factory, an industrial plant designed by Lavoslav Horvat during the 1950s. Kopljar’s experience of the building as some sort of urban lighthouse was, at the same time, his inspiration to raise public awareness on the importance of the unique “building of light”, which is forty metres high and only four metres wide (cf. Kopljar 2010).<sup>7</sup> Namely, that almost surrealistic building, which served as the testing station for light bulbs, is almost a

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<sup>7</sup> That was why a round-table was organised during the exhibition whose participants, including largely architects, urban planners, conservators, and art historians opened the dialogue on the TEŽ building and all its potential functions. For more detail on the project, cf. the Zlatko Kopljar monograph (2010).

museum exhibit, since production of light bulbs has been transferred to the PR of China (cf. Kopljar 2010). In the words of the artist:

I believe that one can establish a more profound link between imagination and reality with the aid of the *K 13* project. My wish is that the tower becomes a house of light in the near future, a gathering place at which the citizens of Zagreb can exchange their experiences. I want to connect two concepts in this work, which urban planners, politicians and those entrusted with project development usually confuse: the city in the function of the theatre of collective awareness and the city as a theatre stage for collective, real events. (Kopljar, according to Peritz 2010, http)

### **Tannery = Glyptothèque**

Marijan Molnar's *Reka-Zagreb: dvije ulice, dva mjesta, dvije sudbine* [Reka – Zagreb: Two Streets, Two Places, Two Destinies] ([HAZU] the Croatian Academy of Arts and Science, Zagreb, November 23 – December 13, 2002) examined the symbolic point of contact between two venues – Prvomajska Street in the small town of Reka (the artist's birthplace) outside Koprivnica, and Medvedgradska Street in Zagreb. The newly-opened chicken farm in Reka's Prvomajska Street evoked the fact that today's Glyptothèque in Zagreb was once a factory for processing leather, this seeming to be the first example of revitalisation of any factory in Zagreb. In 1940, namely, the HAZU had moved into the former tannery in which some one thousand pieces of leather had been processed every day. The artist linked the two streets by their common zoosphere – mass utilisation of animals – while he defined as one of the thematic blocks with the zooethic statement: "Our attitude towards animals defines our humanity in the future". The video films *Svitanje u Prvomajska* [Dawn in Prvomajska] showing the psychedelic interior of the chicken-raising farm, and *Svako jutro jedno jaje* [An Egg Every Morning], constructed as an ironical diary in which the artist notes the morning monotony of ritual eating, were also shown at the exhibition. These are a series of examples of private performances in which the exchange of various baseball caps injects a dose of gallows humour (*Galgenhumor*).<sup>8</sup> Or, as the artist says:

I placed the two localities in opposition to each other in that project, two different environments in which one is small and, in some way, at the beginning, rough in some ways and at that point at which Mesnička Street was together with the tannery of that time at the turn from the 18th to the 19th century. Then I placed an interrogative sentence on the *Jumbo* billboard there: "Can the current chicken farm become a future place of art?"

(...) I wanted to underscore in that way that material artefacts, buildings and objects conceal and contain within them memory that is not only bright and which is not only a question of remembering facts but contains some sort of sediment, a

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<sup>8</sup> For more details on the project, cf. Molnar 2002.

layered deposit of the traces of former beings, their presence, the “aureoles” of fragrances, something just like what Duchamp denoted with the term *infra-mince...* (Molnar 2007:34-35)

### **The Nada Dimić Factory**

The *Nada Dimić* Factory underwent bankruptcy and privatisation in keeping with the transitional recipe customary at that time in Croatia (cf. Sančanin 2003:12). Since February 2011, it has been owned by Jure Radić,<sup>9</sup> that is to say by the Croatian Institute of Civil Engineering and the Stipić Group. Prior to that, from 2003, the Factory was owned by the lawyer Ante Nobile and the entrepreneur Mića Carić; in 2005, they sold it to Željko Kerum, the current mayor of Split, who had a problem with the factory in 2007, since it was protected as a cultural monument, when part of the building collapsed because of digging for the foundations of the Krešimir Business Centre. Inspectors from the Ministry of Building and Environmental Protection then prohibited Kerum from doing any further work on the building, because it was found that Kerum, although he had a permit only for reconstruction of the factory, intended to knock it down. Further, a fire broke out in the building in 2010, in which one hundred sq m of space on two floors was destroyed (“Požar u Kerumovoj zgradi [Fire in Kerum’s Building]”, [http](#)).

On the 152nd anniversary of the *Communist Manifesto*, Sanja Iveković in the organisation of the curator collective *Što, kako i za koga/WHW* [Who, How and for Whom] gave a performance entitled *Repetitio est mater (Nada Dimić)* at the Croatian Association of Artists gallery [HDLU], as well as the urban intervention *SOS Nada Dimić* as part of the *Nada Dimić File* project (Iveković 2003:12-14). The Sanja Iveković’s *SOS Nada Dimić* intervention (2000) consisted of renewing the neon sign that is located on the façade of the building, above the entry, which was originally designed as the name “Nada Dimić” written out by hand, and which had not been in use since that factory and/or the premises were privatised at the time of transition (Iveković 2002:67). During the 1990s, the factory was renamed Endi International, and then, like the majority of factories in Croatia, as we have already pointed out, was abandoned to bankruptcy. That neon sign was turned on during the time of the exhibition, conjuring up a different ideosphere that was not at all welcome in the neo-liberally oriented transition period. Apart from the

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<sup>9</sup> We recall that Jure Radić was strongly criticised for building the (New) Maslenica Bridge, which had to be closed whenever the wind blew strongly. The result was that the new bridge could be used less frequently than had been the case with the old one, that had been destroyed during wartime. Despite certain other “blind spots” in his work, in keeping with the political prescriptions of the ruling structures, Jure Radić was named director of the Croatian Institute of Civil Engineering (the IGH) in October 2006, and he had been chairperson of the IGH Supervisory Board prior to that (cf. “Jure Radić”, [http](#)).

foregoing, the artist organised free legal advice in that process for the factory's female workers, uniting the collective past and the frightening economic juncture of the present (bankruptcy, privatisation, loss of employment). In that way, she also re-assessed alternative models to the ruling economic system such as barter, donation and recycling of know-how ideas, skills and goods. Nonetheless, the factory was abandoned and sealed a year later, and the fate of the fired workers, largely women, who traditionally are the workers in the textile industry, continues to be uncertain. Apart from the above, Sanja Iveković *had made* a model of the factory building, a valuable example of industrial architecture, conserving it for the future (author of the model: Boro Kovačević) (cf. *Što, kako i za koga* [What, How and for Whom] 2003:157).



Figure 5. The (former) *Nada Dimić* Factory, Zagreb (photographed in 2011)

### **The *Paromlin* [Steam Flour Mill]**

The student exhibition on the topic of the content-related and functional conversion of paleo-industrial complexes in Zagreb (curator: Iva Prosoli) was implemented within the framework of co-operation between the Faculty of Architecture of Zagreb University and the City of Zagreb Museum on the *Zagrebačka industrijska baština: povijest, stanje, perspektive* [Zagreb Industrial Heritage: History, State of Affairs, Perspectives] project (project leader: Goran Arčabić). As the organisers explain the project, in 1918 at the end of World War I and with Croatia's entry into the Yugoslavian union, that watershed in Croatian history has been defined as the key determinant first phase, while the four historical complexes in question are the following: *Strojarnica Ugarske državne željeznice* [The

Engine Shop of the Royal Hungarian State Railways] (1893/1894), today part of *Tvornica željezničkih vagona "Gredelj"* [the *Gredelj* Rolling Stock Factory], *Kraljevski povlašteni parni i umjetni mlin* [The Royal Steam-powered Flour Mill] (1907/1908), *Tvornica cementa "Croatia"* [the *Croatia* Cement Factory] (1908) and *Tvornica penkala-olovaka "E. Moster i Drug"* [the *E. Moster & Co.* Penkala Pencil Factory] (1911).

In the same year, the *Modernizacija na periferiji carstva: zagrebačka industrijska baština 1862.–1918.* [Modernisation on the Periphery of the Empire: Zagreb Industrial Heritage 1862–1918] exhibition (Zagreb City Museum, January 26 – April 25, 2010),<sup>10</sup> which was part of a larger studios project that included two more continuations planned for 2012 and 2014, as well as a series of professional conferences (e.g. *Budućnost zagrebačke industrijske baštine* [The Future of Zagreb Industrial Heritage]), held already in 2010), along with publications and events. Twelve industrial facilities and complexes were selected as the focus of the exhibition, whose construction dated up to 1918 (cf. *Modernizacija na periferiji Carstva* [Modernisation on the Periphery of the Empire], [http](http://)).

At the beginning of 1980, the Ministry of Culture protected the *Paromlin* [the Zagreb Steam Mill] as a cultural monument, due to the fact that it is the oldest major industrial complex in Zagreb (Arčabić 2007:24-25). Its history dates back to the beginning of the industrial and trade development of Zagreb, which is set as having been in 1852 with the founding of the Chamber of Trade and Crafts (cf. Rogina 2004:301).<sup>11</sup> The question of its conversion was first raised during the 1980s, but has remained unresolved to the present day. Namely, the first concept for the Steam Mill's conversion dated from the 1980s and related to the Hall of the Workers' Movement and Revolution and/or to a permanent exhibition called *Zagreb našeg vremena* [The Zagreb of Our Time] (Rogina 2004:303; Galović 2000, [http](http://)). However, there was a fire in the Steam Mill in 1988; apart from the mill section being consumed by fire, other areas over a surface of 10 000 sq m remained untouched, are empty at the moment, and could be converted to new use with only minor investments (Rogina 2004:305).

Of the numerous and disparate ideas for conversion of this building, we shall mention that of the architect, Ivan Crnković, who drew up a project in 1992 for revitalisation of the Steam Mill and its conversion into the Museum of Contemporary Art. His design won the most prestigious award for architecture, the

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<sup>10</sup> The first professional texts on industrial archaeology appeared in Croatian journals in 1982 while registration of monuments of individual heritage (architecture) started at the same time in Croatia (Smokvina 2009:12).

<sup>11</sup> On *Akcija Paromlin MSU* [Steam Mill Zagreb Action], which commenced at the beginning of 1991, cf. Matičević 1991:4-7. The greatest supporter of the idea of relocating the Museum of Contemporary Art to the Steam Mill building came from the Museum's late curator and director, Davor Matičević.

*Shinkenčik*. That notwithstanding, the City did not find funding over the next four years for implementation of the project<sup>12</sup> and, despite the fact that this is an A Category monument, which should be under conservation protection, the Steel Mill has been neither protected nor renewed up until today (Torbica 2010, http). In that sense, that is, its possible conversion into the Museum of Contemporary Art became current again in 2001, thanks to the efforts of Tihomir Milovac, curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art. Exhibition activity in one of the preserved sections began in June 2002 with an international exhibition of the contemporary Baltic scene, *The Baltic Times*,<sup>13</sup> organised by the Museum of Contemporary Art, and then by Dalibor Martinis' *Dvije poruke* [Two Messages] exhibition; there were further activities through promotion of a Children's Museum, the *Eureka* Association and an International Exhibition of female photography *Ženska soba – ženski pogled* [Female Room – Female View] organised by ULUPUH [Croatian Association of Artist and Applied Arts] (Rogina 2004:301).

This exhibition of student work on conversion of paleo-industrial complexes in Zagreb,<sup>14</sup> in the context of research and promotion of protection of industrial heritage, presented possible solutions for their conservation and high-quality conversion, which came about in the framework of the compulsory programme of the leading Croatian educational institutions in the scholarly fields of architecture and urbanism. Thus Igor Bosiljevac, then a student included in the project, sees the Steam Mill as a multifunctional culture centre conceived as a complex of mutually connected pavilions; these pavilions would be made up of the *Paromlin* (as the central pavilion), the Theatre (as the southern pavilion), the Dance Centre (as the northern pavilion) and the Public Square (as the western pavilion); the pavilions would be interconnected by bridges across the Public Square pavilion that would contain an Internet Café and gallery area, while the *Paromlin* pavilion itself – would have an Internet Café, a museum, art shop, children's play area and a library. The *Utopian* architectural vision of Igor Bosiljevac's Steam Mill would thus convert it into a Zagreb cultural centre that would be located right alongside the *Vatroslav Lisinski* Concert Hall; it would be a multi-functional cultural centre conceived as a complex of mutually connected pavilions (*Izložba studentskih radova* [Exhibition of Student Works] 2010:41).<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> It should also be mentioned that Aleksandra (Saša) Broz staged Wilde's *Salomé* on the charred remains of the Steam Mill at the end of the 1990s and that, as part of the *Here Tomorrow 2002* exhibition, Sanja Iveković's project *My Name is Nermina Zildžo* was presented on the Steam Mill's upper floor (cf. Marcoci 2002:22-23).

<sup>13</sup> As was noted in the press, the part of the exhibition shown at the Steam Mill attracted a host of visitors, primarily because there had been long-term aspirations that the attractive space be used for exhibition purposes (Jovetić 2001, http).

<sup>14</sup> The exhibits were the work of the former students, now all graduate architects (*Izložba studentskih radova* [Exhibition of Student Works], http).

<sup>15</sup> About all the aspirations in that area, and about the rumours that circulated in public in 1998 of a "mysterious Canadian investor who foresaw the building of an attractive 'Marriott' chain hotel"



Figure 6. *Paromlin* [The Steam Flour Mill]  
(the photograph has been taken from the [www.stjepantafra.com](http://www.stjepantafra.com) web-page)

### **Badel, Gorica or *Operacija: grad* [Operation: City] and UrbanFestival**

*Operacija: grad* [Operation: City] was held in 2005 as a ten-day manifestation during which various cultural content (theatre and dance performances, installations, exhibitions, performance art, film and video projections, music events, workshops, lectures) moved temporarily into the abandoned premises of the former *Badel* Factory, or more precisely, the Badel-Gorica factory complex close to Kvaternik Square in Zagreb (cf. Vidović 2010:33-34).<sup>16</sup> So two festivals were realised that year as part of the *Operacija: grad* project: the Touch Me and the UrbanFestival. That was the first time that the abandoned Badel factory (the former Arko Liquer

(cf. Rogina 2004:301-305). However, that ideas continue is shown by the recent proposal that a swimming pool in a large glass-façaded silo be built in the Steam Mill area, which would, among other, in that case, be “connected by way of the Underpass of the Main Railway Station to certain important Lower Town facilities. What would be in mind, primarily, would be the Zagreb City Council offices, Zagrebačka B/banka and the *Vatroslav Lisinski* Concert Hall, as well as the future swimming pool”. In that process, the objective is that the *Paromlin* be converted fully from an industrial into an ecological oasis and self-sufficient energy complex. According to those projects, “The roof of the *Paromlin* would be covered with photovoltaic cells and solar collectors, as well as the southern part of the silo. A wind turbine would be installed on the already existing chimney” (Torbica 2010, http).

<sup>16</sup> Part of these events would also take place at part of the premises of the former city *Zagrepčanka* abattoir in Heinzel Street.

Factory) had opened its derelict, rundown premises to various artist group manifestations. Otherwise, Badel had been laid claim to by diverse initiatives and had thus become a focal point in the struggle for premises for independent culture and a symbol of the entire city's disused potential. The central organiser of the manifestation mentioned was the [BLOK] Association – the Local Base for Cultural Refreshment, and Platform 9.81 Collective for Architecture and Media, while the programme of the *Operacija: grad* manifestation was created co-operatively by members of the independent cultural scene. Apart from that, the city authorities signed a document then by which that venue was supposed to be converted into an independent cultural centre. In that 2005, *Operacija: grad* continued on from the *Nevidljivi Zagreb* [Invisible Zagreb] project, which Platform 9.81 had initiated in 2003 with the objective that city premises, which had lost their primary function and had been neglected by urban policies, be recognised as potential for experimentation with new typologies of public space (Vidović 2010:33–34).<sup>17</sup> Naming their project *Nevidljivi Zagreb*, the Platform 9.81 Association called for awareness of the potential latent in abandoned city premises without any prospects, which had disappeared from public focus. In the words of Vesna Vuković from [BLOK] – the Local Base for Cultural Refreshment, the aim was to form a hybrid cultural centre at Badel that would be used by the entire non-institutional cultural scene (according to Mesarić, 2005, [http](#)).<sup>18</sup> Otherwise, the former Badel distillery is a degraded ruin today; looking from Šubić Street, a company selling plumbing and bathroom fittings has encamped on the right-hand side, while its other areas serve for the storage of produce from the nearby farmer's market, and something similar has occurred with Gorica where one now finds, for example, the premises of a security firm and a fitness club.

In contrast to that dilapidated state of affairs, it has been the cultural activists who have shown that a “forgotten” factory can fulfil the need for a different range of products today; one is reminded of the *Montažstroj* theatre group's performance *Vatrotehna* at those brilliant premises in 1990, and some of the *Eurøkaz* theatre festival's productions staged at Badel. Furthermore, as well as the 2005 *Opera-*

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<sup>17</sup> *Platform 9.81* as part of the *Nevidljivi Zagreb – vodič za skvotere* [Zagreb – Squatters' Guide] project compiled lists of the disused, largely industrial localities in Zagreb, only their map, as some have noticed, is not publicly on the Net and cannot be augmented (cf. Matejčić, [http](#)).

<sup>18</sup> Thus, for example, Ana Hušman presented her project, the installation *U mjesto mjesta* [with word play in the title, *In the Place of the Place*] at the UrbanFestival. Her installation starts out from abandoned industrial spaces, while stressing, as an especially interesting stance as she explains on the UrbanFestival Internet page, the making intimate of working space that is visible in the interventions of former workers of both genders, for example, in things left behind such as various trifles, wall posters, first aid cabinets with lace decoration... Apart from that, Lara Mamula presented her project *Industry adaggio za poslijepodne* [Industry Adaggio for the Afternoon] in the same place, inspired by the social context of the concept of the east in the Rijeka context, since the eastern part of Rijeka is associated in people's minds with the industrial zone, and the high-rises built for the workers' families during the 1960s (cf. Hušman, Mamula 2005, [http](#)).

*cija: grad* initiative mentioned above, Dalibor Martinis performed the *Vječna vatra gnjeva* [Eternal Fire of Rage] project at the *Subversive Film Festival* at 20:00 on May 17, 2008 at 20:00 in front of the Badel Factory, as a “irregular temporary monument” project from the *Data Recovery* cycle. In the words of the artist, speaking of that action in which he had set fire to a motor car: “The project commemorates an act of rebellion that breaks out irregularly but frequently on the margins of world cities, and is almost always, as a rule, expressed by burning cars” (*Up&Undergorund* 2008:11).

As part of *Operacija: grad 2010* for its twentieth anniversary, *Montažstroj* performed the *B.D.L.2.0.* action at 19:25 on September 30 as a “reconstruction” of the former distillery’s premises, which the visitors, as informed by members of that theatre group at the entrance to the run-down building, were entering at their own risk.<sup>19</sup> With that manifestation in 2010, *Operacija: grad* celebrated its fifth anniversary, rounding out the efforts of the Zagreb independent cultural scene in which it had creatively taken over several Zagreb locations – *Pogon Jedinstvo* [the Jedinstvo Plant], *Autonomni kulturni centar Medika* [the Medika Autonomous Cultural Centre], the *Močvara* [Swamp] Club and the former Badel Factory.<sup>20</sup>



Figure 7. Gorica, Zagreb (photographed in 2011)

<sup>19</sup> The warning read: “Since no-one has taken responsibility for the ruinous state of Badel, that will have to be done by the visitors: they enter this space and participate in the action exclusively at their own risk” (“U ruševni Badel... [In the Ruins of Badel...]”, [http](http://)).

<sup>20</sup> For more detail on the independent scene in Zagreb, cf. Vidović 2010.

## In conclusion or about possible conversions

Industrial heritage conversion practice stabilised in Western Europe and the United States from the 1970s. In Zagreb, and in Croatia generally, the conversion of the former leather processing factory in Zagreb into the Sculpture Museum, that is, the *Glyptothèque* in 1940, was an avant garde example in world terms of the conversion of the paleo-industrial complex, as emphasised by Goran Arčabić, author of above mentioned exhibitions on Zagreb industrial heritage (*Modernizacija na periferiji Carstva* [Modernisation on the Periphery of the Empire], [http](#); *Glyptoteka, povijest* [The Croatian Academy Glyptothèque, History], [http](#)).<sup>21</sup> As the former so-called Manchester of the Balkans, due to the ruthless actions of the powers-that-be, Zagreb expresses itself today as an absolute enemy of its former factories, which are plunged one after the other into bankruptcy and into architectural oblivion, while it was, in fact, those very factories that identified it in the architectural, demographic and urban sense, as has been underscored by Goran Arčabić.<sup>22</sup> In his words:

Some of those buildings, former industrial plants, could be converted into facilities for social and public requirements, but some of them should undoubtedly be converted into museums. (Arčabić, [http](#))<sup>23</sup>

We can only conclude with regret that it is a pity that Gorica and Badel have not yet been selected for conversion for the needs of the independent culture scene as has been done, for example, in the case of Ljubljana's Old City Power Plant [*Stara mestna elektrarna – Elektro Ljubljana*]. That plant is under protection as a cultural, industrial and historical monument and has become one of the most important contemporary performing arts venues in Ljubljana. Built in 1898, it was Ljubljana's first power plant and was closed down in the 1960s, being rented out to the independent performing arts scene in 2004. The artist Ema Kugler deserves the credit for uncovering that space for performing arts; in 1991, she gave her performing event entitled *Mahkurt* at the plant (Milohnić 2010:124). As early as

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<sup>21</sup> Wolfgang Ebert drew attention to the exceptional possibilities of transformation of industrial facilities throughout Europe, especially in the German Ruhr. At the 4th International Conference on Industrial Heritage held in Rijeka in 2010, he presented the European Route of Industrial Heritage (ERIH). The project networks the industrial heritage of the majority of western countries and promotes it as a desirable tourism destination and attraction ("Svijet je industriju pretvorio u turizam [The World Has Transformed Industry into Tourism]", [http](#)).

<sup>22</sup> So Barbara Matejčić ([http](#)) notes on her blog that Hamburg activists warn that there are few accessible living and working spaces in that city while, at the same time, about 1.2 million sq m of office and industrial premises are standing vacant.

<sup>23</sup> So, while curator practice sees possibilities in those buildings for the accommodation of museums, independent culture seeks a place in them for independent cultural centres. Of course, some economists see possibilities in them for business centres in industrial architecture (cf. Jakovčić, [http](#)).

1989, the adaptation of the building began, but it was only in 2004 with the *Mladi levi* festival that an auditorium there was opened for contemporary performing arts. At the same time, in the foyer that was laid out as a museum, visitors could inspect the old parts of the power plant (cf. “Stara elektrarna – Old Power Station”, [http](#)). Various festivals also took place in that area: e.g. *Mladi levi*, *Mesto žensk*, *Gibanica*, *Exodos*.<sup>24</sup> One should also mention the example of Glasgow’s Tramway, which stands out as one of the most recognised contemporary visual and performing arts venues. It is accommodated at the former tramcar depot that dates from 1893, and has become recognised as an art and culture venue, particularly subsequently to Peter Brook’s *Mahābhārata* production there in 1988 (cf. “Tramway”, [http](#)). Somewhat closer to home is the example of the Venetian Biennale that has expanded throughout the Arsenale shipyards for presentation of contemporary art (according to Celevska 2010, [http](#)).

In many similar situations, artists have been the ones who have imbued industrial spaces with culturological meaning; so the *Kozmokinetično gledališče Rdeči pilot* [Red Pilot Cosmo-kinetic Theatre] performed *Dramski opservatorij “Zenit”* [“Zenit” Drama Observatory] in the courtyard of the *Janko Gredelj* Factory at the Eurøkaz in Zagreb in 1989, where, among other, they pointed out the parallelism between the factory complex of “supervision and fines” and the concentration camp complex.<sup>25</sup>

Without doubt, the creative potential in Croatia lies in the possibility of conversion of early industrial architecture into multi-functional spaces. As Andrea Zlatar has said: “In those projects known under the name ‘brownfield investments’, which are usually implemented in public-private partnership, cultural and artistic production would be recognised as creative, inspiring factors for the overall development of the city in the urban planning and economic sense” (Zlatar 2008:119). However, the occupation of abandoned industrial architecture in Croatia takes place largely in the direction of establishing shopping centres, motor car sales salons, hotels and restaurants (ibid.:120).

As Daina Glavočić, chairperson of the Pro Torpedo Association – for Promotion and Preservation of Rijeka Industrial Heritage, has pointed out, money is not a problem for the projects mentioned:

(...) because it [money] is always there for a good project both at home or in the funds of the EU. Our problem is the stance towards heritage; the remains of the Re-

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<sup>24</sup> Apart from that, 35 various groups and individuals are accommodated there, e.g. Betontanc, En Knap Group, Maska, Emanat, Vitkar, Via Negativa, Sebastijan Horvat, Tomaž Grom (Zupančić, [http](#)).

<sup>25</sup> In conclusion, one should stress the necessity in the context of those artistic conversions of industrial architecture buildings that an anthropology of art be set up also to study and encompass contemporary artistic practice, which has been written about, for example by Hal Foster in his well-known essay “The Artist as Ethnographer?” (cf. Schneider and Wright 2006:19).

naissance and the Baroque are being restored, while a large part of what was built after that time is given much less attention. (according to Celevska, 2010 <http>)

In addition, since conservational planning is largely reactive and not proactive in practice – namely, heritage is usually recognised only when it is seriously threatened (Alfrey and Putnam 2005:8) – then it looks as though we can also forecast a far from *Utopian* future for the industrial heritage in *Our Lovely Country*.

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## UMJETNIČKE INTERVENCIJE U INDUSTRIJSKU KULTURNU BAŠTINU ILI KAKO NASTAJE DRUŠTVENO KORISNA UMJETNOST?

### SAŽETAK

Članak je usmjeren na umjetničke projekte i intervencije u industrijsku kulturnu baštinu u pojedinim gradovima Republike Hrvatske (odnosno – s obzirom na dugogodišnju situaciju – *mračne naše*) koje korektivno nastoje uputiti vladajuće strukture na teorijska i praktična promišljanja raznorodnih aspekata zaštite, odnosno prenamjene pojedinih objekata industrijske baštine. Riječ je o sljedećim umjetničkim projektima: *Urbana intervencija* Tanje Dabo (1999.), koju je spomenuta umjetnica izvela na vratima bez kvake, na zidu s bodljikavom žicom riječke, dakako, bivše Tvornice “Rikard Benčić” kao buduće lokacije Muzeja moderne i suvremene umjetnosti. Nadalje, riječ je o labinskoj izložbi *Rudarske uspomene* Kristine Leko (2008.), o projektu *Podzemni grad XXI*. multimedijalne skupine Labin Art Express, o projektu *Nevidljivi Sisak: fenomen Željezara* Marijana Crtalića (2009.), intervenciji *SOS Nada Dimić* (2000.) Sanje Iveković te o projektu Zlatka Kopljara *K 13* (2010.), koji je inspiriran zgradom Tvornice električnih žarulja u Zagrebu. Pritom se članak osvrće i na projekt *Reka – Zagreb: dvije ulice, dva mjesta, dvije sudbine* (2002.), kojim je Marijan Molnar ispitivao poveznice između Prvomajske ulice u Reki (umjetnikovu rodnom mjestu) kraj Koprivnice i Medvedgradske ulice u Zagrebu. Naime, novootvorena je farma za uzgoj kokoši u Prvomajskoj ulici evocirala činjenicu da je prostor današnje Gliptoteke HAZU nekoć bila tvornica za preradu kože.