

iva r.
janković

odgovornost za sliku svijeta responsibility for our worldview

RAZGOVOR S
KRISTINOM LEKO

INTERVIEW WITH
KRISTINA LEKO

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¹ Nositelj projekta bio je [BLOK] Lokalna baza za osvježavanje kulture, producentica i autorica statističke obrade podataka bila je Vesna Vuković, a sudjelovali su Miroslav Jerković, Lina Kovačević, Marcell Mars, Ana Hušman, Petra Pokrovac, Dalia Cvetković, Jelena Jelinić.

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¹ The carrier of the projects was [BLOK] Local Base for Refreshment of Culture, the producer and author of statistical analysis of data was Vesna Vuković, with cooperation of Miroslav Jerković, Lina Kovačević, Marcell Mars, Ana Hušman, Petra Pokrovac, Dalia Cvetković, and Jelena Jelinić.

I. K. Leko, *Grupna fotografija sa kravom Bebam iz Sesveta, akcija, 7.12.2003, Trg žrtava fašizma, Zagreb*
Group Photograph with Beba The Cow, a happening on December 7, 2003, Zagreb
Foto / photo: Boris Cvjetanović i Kristina Leko

▼ Kristina Leko rođena je 1966. godine u Zagrebu, gdje je diplomirala na Akademiji likovnih umjetnosti. Od 1990. do 1995. studira i apsolvira filozofiju i indologiju na Filozofskom fakultetu. Nakon studija uslijedili su brojni rezidencijalni i studijski boravci u Italiji, Nizozemskoj, Grazu, Berlinu, New Yorku. Godine 2004. dovršava poslijediplomski studij u Berlinu (Universität der Künste).

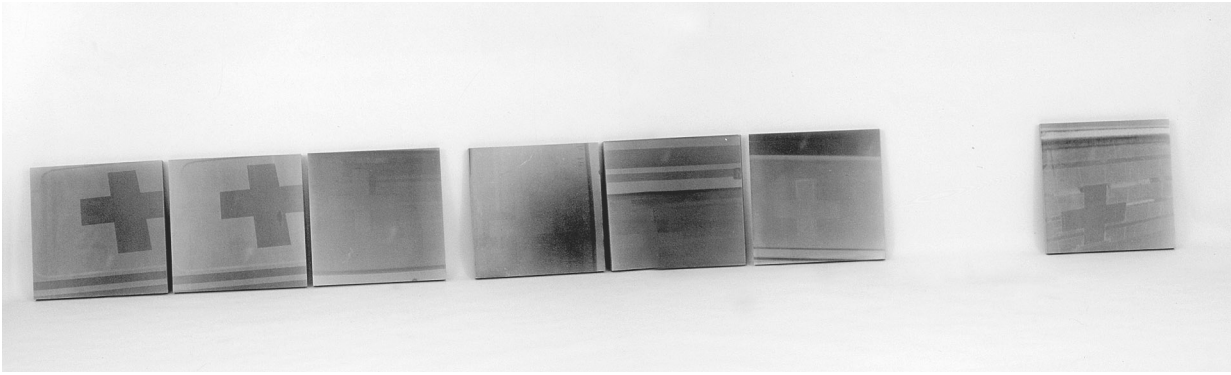
Za projekt *Sir i vrhnje*, koji realizira u suradnji s udrugom BLOK¹ 2004. godine, dobiva Vjesnikovu nagradu za likovnu umjetnost *Josip Račić*, a nedugo potom i nagradu BWK Alpha 2000 Europas Zukunft Leipzig, koja se dodjeljuje umjetnicima s područja Istočne Europe. Također je dobitnica Nagrade Zagrebačkog salona 1995. godine za projekte *Škola gledanja* i *Speaker System* te Nagrade Salona mladih 1992. godine.

Počeci djelovanja Kristine Leko obilježeni su medijem fotografije. Fotografско načelo "reproduciranja stvarnosti" svedeno je često samo na jedan njezin fragment. Motivi kojima je zaokupljena dijelovi su urbane ikonografije visokotehnologiziranog društva. Logotipove kamiona i automobila, odnosno detalje kotača na kojima se oni pojavljuju, kombinira sa snimcima pejzaža u kojima nema tragova ljudske prisutnosti. Preeksponirani svjetlom, ti se pejzaži više doimaju kao tamni bezdani negoli kao lijepe slike prirode. Suprematističkim apstraktnim motivom - križem jednakih krakova koji pronalazi na kolima hitne pomoći te ga na nizu fotografija opsesivno ponavlja - intuitivno upućuje na stanje uzbune, što će početkom ratnih godina u Hrvatskoj dobiti dodatne konotacije. Sredinom 90-ih godina zaokupljenost semiologijom tehnološkog pejzaža postupno prerasta u sve konkretnije i neposrednije umjetničke akcije (*Speaker Sistem*, 1994.). Reduktivni i distancirani postupci iz početnog razdoblja, kada upućuje na simboličku vezu između označitelja i označenog, postupno zamjenjuje povratak fotografiji u njezinoj izvornoj fenomenološkoj funkciji autentifikacije. Neprekidno je prisutna svijest o manipulativnim svojstvima medija, njegovoj retoričkoj tradiciji prisutnoj od samih početaka kada fotografskim objektima postaju bespomoćni, siromašni, obespravljani s ciljem "podizanja društvene svijesti". Kako bi izbjegla uobičajenu eksploataciju, autorica u neposredni kreativni proces često uključuje ljude s kojima radi, dopuštajući im da budu prikazani na način na koji se sami

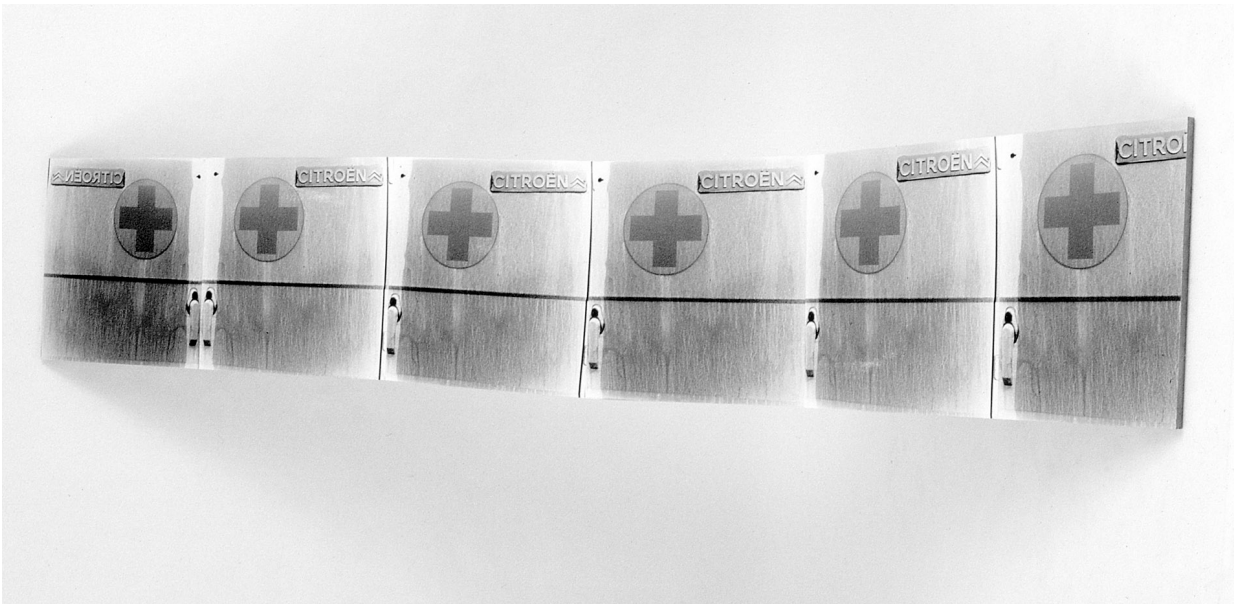
● Kristina Leko was born in 1966 in Zagreb, where she graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts. From 1990 to 1995 she studied philosophy and Indian studies at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences in Zagreb. Her studies were followed by numerous research and work residency periods in Italy, the Netherlands, Graz, Berlin, and New York. In 2004 she completed her postgraduate studies in Berlin (Universität der Künste). For her *Cheese and Cream* project, realized in collaboration with the BLOK non-profit-organization,¹ she received the Vjesnik Award *Josip Račić* in Zagreb. As well in 2004, she was honored with the Kunstpreis Europas Zukunft, a Leipzig based award for Eastern European artists. In 1995 she received the Zagreb Salon Award for her projects *Visually Based Perception Training* and *Speaker System*, and in 1992 the Young Artists Salon Award.

The beginnings of Kristina Leko's work were marked by the medium of photography. Here, she often reduced the photographic principle of "reproducing reality" to one single fragment of it. In this period, she found her motives within the elements of urban iconography of our technological society. She juxtaposed the logos of trucks and cars, i.e. the details of hubcaps on which these logos appear, with the photos of landscapes void of human presence. Overexposed, these landscapes are not at all beautiful images of nature, but rather dark abysses. Through a suprematist abstract motif - an equal-armed cross found on an ambulance that she obsessively repeated in a series of photoworks - she intuitively suggested a state of red alert. Later, with the beginning of the war, these works would get additional connotations. In the mid-90s, her interest in a semiology of technological landscape gradually developed into more concrete and direct artistic actions (*Speaker System*, 1994). The reductive and detached procedures from her initial period, when she suggested a symbolic connection between the signifier and the signified, were gradually replaced by a return to photography in its original phenomenological function of an authentication. The artist is constantly aware of the manipulative characteristics of the medium, of its rhetorical tradition present from its very beginnings, since the times when photographic objects were shown as helpless, poor, and dispossessed in order to "raise the social consciousness". To avoid the usual exploitation, the artist





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vide i na koji se žele predstaviti publici (*Sarajevo international, O mlijeku i ljudima, Ja, Jazdza*). U okviru teme *Sight Seeing* Trije-nala fotografije u Grazu kao turističko mje-sto obilaska odabire dom umirovljenika koji se nalazi izvan grada. Pomoću osobnih predmeta, umirovljenici su pozvani da ob-nove sjećanja na svoju prošlost. Fotografija velikih dimenzija prikazuje umirovljenike u karakterističnim pozama s predmetima koji evociraju njihove životne priče. Rad pod-sjeća na maniru portretne fotografije prošlog stoljeća, a nastao je s ciljem poticanja komunikacije, na mjestu gdje su posjeti i komunikacija prava rijetkost.

Dokumentaristička svojstva medija naj-doslovnije su izražena u projektu *Sir i vrhnje*. Medijem fotografije koji povijesno započinje kao umjetnost osobe: njezina identiteta i građanskih svojstava (Roland Barthes) do-kumentirano je četiri stotine mljekarica. Kao poticaj u prevladavanju nelagode posjeta umjetničkoj galeriji, umjetnica ih poziva da sa zida skinu i za uspomenu uzmu svoju fotografiju.

Neprestano uključujući u rad ljude iz- van umjetničkog sustava, Kristina Leko do-kumentarističkom metodom ustrajno afirmi- ra vjeru u djelotvornost umjetničkog anga-žmana, temeljeći ga na načelu "odgovornosti za sliku svijeta", što u umjetničkim rukama može postati moćnim oružjem razotkrivanja društvenih i političkih nekorektnosti.

■ ■ Krenimo od 1994. godine, budući da tada počinješ djelovati u smjeru društve-nog angažmana, u doba dok se pojam antiglobalizma još nije toliko ukorijenio. Rad *Speaker System*² sastoji se od niza akcija i instalacija u javnim prostorima na Trgu žrtava fašizma:³ Dom HDLU-a, sre-dišnjica HDZ-a, Studentska poliklinika. Instalacije su za tu priliku načinjene od proizvedenih replika Sony ambalažnih ku-tija koje od originalnih odstupaju diskretno uklopljenim tekstom. Upravo taj citat Wima Wendersa o ugroženosti europskog identiteta ekspanzijom američke filmske industrije fokalna je točka djela. Dijelila si letke, čitala taj tekst na radiju. Također, tu su fotografske instalacije na fasadama triju zgrada s motivom Sonyjeva logotipa.

Kad se sjetim toga rada, sjetim se i one misli da svaki umjetnik provede život radeći isto djelo. Prošle sam godine u parku u Weimaru pozivala prolaznike da spase svijet prepravljajući američki Ustav te tako skupi-la 38 video izjava i 8 pisanih prijedloga. U

often involves people with whom she works in the process of artistic creation, allowing them to be shown in the way they see themselves (*Sarajevo International; On Milk and People; Me, Jadzia*). For the Austrian Triennial on Photography in Graz, within the theme of sight seeing, she suggested a retirement home on the outskirts of the town as a tourist spot worth visiting. The tenants were invited to renew the memories of their past by using their personal belong-ings. A photograph of large dimensions shows the tenants in their characteristic stances, with the objects evoking their life stories. The work resembles portrait pho-tography from the last century, and was created with the purpose of enticing com-munication in an environment where out-side visitors are very rare and where com-munication usually does not take place.

The documentary characteristics of the medium were expressed in the most direct way in her *Cheese and Cream* project. Using the medium of photography, which began historically as an art related to indi-viduals: to his or her identity and bourgeois characteristics (Roland Barthes), approxi-mately 400 milkmaids were documented. As an enticement to overcome the unease of visiting an art gallery, the artist invited the milkmaids to take their photographs off the wall and take them home as a souvenir.

Constantly involving people outside the art system in her work, Kristina Leko uses the documentary method to persistently affirm faith in the effectiveness of artistic engagement, founding it on the principle of "responsibility for our worldview". This responsibility, in the hands of an artist, could become a powerful weapon exposing social and political incorrectness.

● ● Let us start from 1994, because this is when you started your social engage-ment, in the times before the notion of anti-globalism took root to the current extent. The *Speaker System*² work consisted of a series of actions and installations in public spaces on the Victims of Fascism Square:³ the Home of Croatian Artists', the CDU party headquarters, the Students' Medical Clinic. The installations for this occasion were made of fabricated replicas of Sony packaging boxes, which differed from the original ones by a discreetly added text. This quote of Wim Wenders on the European identity being threatened by the expansion of American film industry was

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² Rad je produciran za izložbu *Keep the Frequency Clear* kustosa Tihomira Milovca, kojom je lokalna radio postaja Radio 101 obilježila desetogodišnjicu rada.

³ Početkom devedesetih godina ime trga je promijenjeno u Trg hrvatskih velikana, a prijašnji je naziv vraćen tek nakon 2000.

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² The work was produced for the *Keep the frequency Clear* exhibition by Tihomir Milovac, for a ten-year anniversary of a local radio station, the Radio 101.

³ In early 90s, the name of the Square was changed to Distinguished Croats Square, and the previous name was returned only after 2000.

2. K. Leko, *Bez naziva (iz serije ambulantnih kola)*, 1989, niz od 7 crno-bijelih fotografija kaširanih na medijapanu, svaka 50x50x5cm

Untitled (from the series of ambulance photo-works), 1989, 7 black and white photographs mounted on MDF panels, 50x50x5cm each

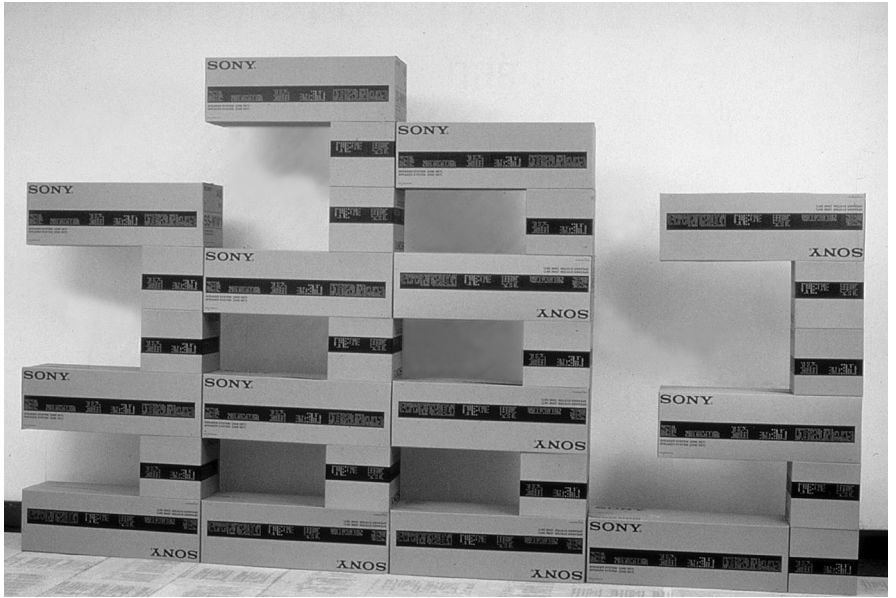
3. K. Leko, *Bez naziva (iz serije ambulantnih kola)*, 1989, povećanje crno-bijelog negativa na kolor papiru, kaširano na iverici, 50x300x2cm

Untitled (from the series of ambulance photo-works), 1989, enlargement of a black and white negative on color photo paper, mounted on particle board, 50x300x2cm

4. K. Leko, *Bez naziva (iz serije negativa)*, 1989., povećanje crno-bijelog negativa na kolor papiru, kaširano na šperploči, 20x40x0,7cm
Untitled (from the series of negatives), 1989, enlargement of a black and white negative on color photo paper, mounted on plywood, 20x40x0,7cm



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odnosu na 1994., kada u Studentskoj poliklinici i u zgradi HDZ-a dijelim letke s Wendersovim tekstom, to nije bitan pomak. Wenders upozorava na to da američka medijska industrija želi kontrolirati i naše misli i kupovne navike, da Amerikanci imaju monopol na sadržaj, a Japanci na tehničku opremu. Nestane li europskih pokretnih slika, Europa postaje treći svijet, kaže Wenders. Tom radu, za koji sam dobila Nagradu Zagrebačkog salona, prethodilo je razdoblje fotografiranja urbanog pejzaža, bavljena znakovima, što uključuje i Sonyjev logotip. Iz tih je godina i fotografska serija s motivom križa. Taj često korišten oblik i simbol 1989. godine pronašla sam na kolima hitne pomoći i godinu dana opsesivno fotografirala ambulanta kola. Takvim pristupom "geometrijskoj apstrakciji" lako je skliznuti u društvenu stvarnost, tim više što su i križ i hitna pomoć uvelike dobili na težini početkom devedesetih. A Sonyjev logotip tih sam godina fotografirala kamo god bih putovala, pa tako i u Zagrebu, kad se pojavilo prvo neslužbeno predstavništvo Sonyja u Hrvatskoj, u Zvonimirovoj, u vlasništvu tadašnje predsjedničke obitelji. Ta trgovina i njezin trodimenzionalni Sonyjev logotip koji sam fotografski umnožila u instalaciji na fasadi HDLU-a u okviru rada *Speaker System*, nalazila se dvije stotine metara od središnjice HDZ-a, a obje su se lokacije mogle vidjeti s mjesta instalacije. *Speaker System* se zapravo složio sam od sebe, objedinio značenjima bremenite lokacije, koje su se nekako sve našle u vidokrugu, te u stvari na dvije razine govori o političkoj moći i njezinim strukturama.

■ ■ Koliko su se, od onda do danas, tvoji stavovi promijenili? Tada si kritičku oštricu usmjerila u obranu europskih kulturnih vrijednosti. Nedavni projekt *Sir i vrhnje* posvećen je vremenu kad stojimo pred vratima za ulazak u Europsku Zajednicu, što nalaže brzo mijenjanje nekih ekonomskih kriterija, a time, posredno, i štetu od nove Europe, što se konkretno odnosi i na izumiranje nekih zanimanja...

Strategija je i onda i danas ista, kao i motivi. Nastoji se zaštititi nešto što je slabo, neka kulturna, civilizacijska vrijednost, a kako cijeli svijet ne bi izgledao isto, što pak predstavlja bit demokracije, a demokracija nije kapitalizam, niti tržišna utakmica.

the focal point of the work. You were distributing fliers, and you read the text on the radio. Also, there were photographic installations on the facades of the three buildings, with the Sony logo motif.

When I recall this work, I also remember the adage that every artist spends his or her life creating the same work. Last year, in a park in Weimar, I was inviting the passers-by to save the world by improving the US Constitution. There, I collected 38 video statements and 8 written proposals. Compared to 1994, when I was distributing fliers with the Wenders' text in the Students' Medical Clinic and the CDU party headquarters, there is no significant shift. Wenders cautions that the American media industry wants to control both our thoughts and consumer habits, that Americans took the monopoly into the content, and the Japanese into the technical equipment. If European moving pictures disappear, Europe would become part of the Third World, says Wenders. This work, which received the Zagreb Salon Award, was preceded by a period of photographing urban landscapes and its different signs, including the Sony logo. Also, the photo-series with the motif of the cross originated during these years. The cross, a very commonly used form and symbol, I "discovered" in 1989 on an ambulance and then, for a year, was obsessively photographing ambulance cars. Having this kind of approach to "geometric abstraction", it is easy to slip into the social reality, especially in the early 90s, when both the cross and the ambulance greatly increased their significance. And 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 the then president. 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, which was a governing party at the time. Both locations could be seen from where the installation was set up. The *Speaker System* actually came into being by itself; it unified the locations burdened with meanings, which somehow all happened to be within the field of vision there. It actually spoke on two levels about the politics of power and its structures.

5. K. Leko, *Speaker System*, 1994, detalj projekta: instalacija kutija multipla u središnjici HDZ-a, Trg žrtava fašizma, Zagreb, u sklopu izložbe *Keep that Frequency Clear*, kustos Tihomir Milovac
Speaker System, 1994, project detail, installation of multiplied cardboard boxes in the headquarters of the Croatian Democratic Union (governing party at the time), Zagreb, as part of the exhibition "Keep that Frequency Clear" curated by Tihomir Milovac

6. K. Leko, *Speaker System*, 1994., detalj projekta, galerijska instalacija kutija multipla 1995.
Speaker System, 1994, project detail, gallery installation of the multiplied cardboard boxes, 1995

7. K. Leko, *Čaša*, 1992, predmet iz zbirke nadenih predmeta *Mes objets trouvés*, zbirka u nastajanju od 1992. godine
The Glass, 1992, found object, from the collection "Mes objets trouvés", collection in progress since 1992

8. K. Leko, *Sokovnik*, 1995-99, predmet iz zbirke nadenih predmeta *Mes objets trouvés*, zbirka u nastajanju od 1992. godine
The Juicer, 1995-99, found object, from the collection "Mes objets trouvés", collection in progress since 1992

■ ■ U tom angažmanu sa "slabijima" uvijek postoji opasnost manipulacije istima, kao i nevidljiva linija etičnosti, koju su mnogi umjetnici nastojeći biti u trendu, skloni olako preskočiti. Čitajući tvoju završnu radnju napisanu na poslijediplomskom studiju berlinskog sveučilišta, čini se da je to problematika o kojoj neprekidno razmišljaš.

U poplavi "društveno angažiranih" umjetničkih projekata koji to nisu nego postoje radi sebe samih, poželjela sam formulirati pravila rada za umjetnike/ce koji/e rade sa živim ljudima i socijalnim temama. Sročila sam etiku u 12 pravila posvećenu tzv. umjetnosti u javnome interesu. Svrha tog pisanja bila je iznaći način da, radi svog vlastitog rada, nekako odredim važnu granicu, glavni problem ne samo te vrste umjetnosti, nego i svake političke aktivnosti, granicu karijerističkog profiterstva. Naime, uvijek se iznova ljutim na umjetnike i umjetnice koji, bez velikih priprema, u nepoznatoj sredini, zabilježe videom ili fotografski one "ugrožene", tj. pripadnike nižih društvenih klasa, i to je onda to. Iako su usta puna socijalnog angažmana, plod rada je tek galerijski ili muzejski izložak koji čak nema niti dovoljno široku publiku da bi potaknuo javnu diskusiju. Pitanje je kako izbjeći tu zamku neefikasnog, tj. lažnog angažmana. Najjednostavnije je doista se "angažirati", što zahtijeva puno vremena i entuzijastične suradnike. No, pritom je bitan i element amaterizma, jer radimo u području umjetnosti, a ne profesionalne socijalne službe ili politike.

■ ■ Osim uloženog vremena, na koji se još način može odrediti kvaliteta društveno angažirane umjetnosti?

Za sada, jedino sigurno mjerilo kakvoće vlastite umjetnosti intuitivno sažimam u pitanju: "Jesam li radeći stekla prijatelje?" Tim pitanjem samu sebe provjeravam jesam li dobro radila. Jer, napravim li intervju od 5 minuta u 5 minuta, neću uspjeti doista dotaknuti drugu stranu. A upravo to osjetilno doticanje strane koja ne pripada istom kulturnom krugu je srž umjetnosti i bit mogeg posla. Ono također ovisi o količini uložene osobne energije. Za *Sir i vrhnje* sama sam provela na tržnici četiri mjeseca, a još dva sa suradnicama Petrom, Jelenom, Dalijom i Vesnom. Sama sam obradila 1300 fotografija za internetske stranice, ne samo zato što je novaca bilo malo, nego i zato što sam htjela uložiti sebe na taj neki požrtvovan način, za plemenit cilj. Mislim da su oko *Sira i vrhnje* bili entuzijastični svi

● ● How much have your positions changed from then until now? Then, you directed your criticism towards defending European cultural values. Your recent *Cheese and Cream* project is dedicated to the time when we stand in front of the door to enter the European Union, which demands a fast change of certain economic criteria, and therefore, there is an indirect damage done by the new Europe, for instance, disappearance of certain professions...

My strategy is the same now as it was then, as well as my motivation. One tries to protect something that has been weakened, a cultural or a civic value, lest the entire world look the same; this is the essence of democracy, because democracy is not capitalism, nor it is a free market.

● ● In this engagement with the "weaker", there is always danger of manipulating them. There is also an invisible line of ethics, which many artists are prone to avoid too easily, trying to be trendy. When we read your thesis at the Berlin University of Arts postgraduate studies, it seems these are the issues you are constantly pondering.

In the flood of "socially engaged" art projects that are not what they pretend to be, but exist only for their own sake, I wanted to articulate rules for artists who work with living people and social themes. I penned an ethics in 12 rules, dedicated to so-called art in public interest. The purpose of this text was to find a way, for my own work, to somehow determine an important limit, the main problem not only of this kind of art, but also of every political activity, that edge of careerist profiteering. Namely, I repeatedly get angry about artists who, without much preparing, in an unknown milieu, use video or photography to register the "socially handicapped", that is, the members of lower social classes, and this is all there is to it. Although they pay lip service to social engagement, the fruit of their work is only a gallery or a museum exhibit that even does not have a wide enough audience to instigate a public discussion. The question is how to avoid this trap of inefficient, and therefore false engagement. The simplest thing to do is to really "engage", which demands a lot of time and inspired co-workers. However, also important is an element of amateurism, because we work in the field of art, and not in a professional social service or politics.

9. K. Leko, izložba *Mes objets trouvés*, Studio Josip Račić, Zagreb, 2000.

Mes objets trouvés, exhibition view, Josip Račić Studio, Zagreb, 2000

Foto / photo: Luka Mjeda

10. K. Leko, *Gekauft in Graz*, 2001, dvokanalna videoinstalacija, nađeni i kupljeni predmeti, digitalni otisci, pogled na postav u *Galerie für zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig*, 2004.

Gekauft in Graz, 2001, two-channel video installation, found objects, bought objects, digital prints, installation view, *Galerie für zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig*, 2004.

11. K. Leko, *Les nouvelles de Zagreb / ZG proza*, 1999-2000, video, 58 min, slike iz videa / *Les nouvelles de Zagreb*

ZG News, 1999-2000, video, 58 min., stills from the video

12. K. Leko, *Les Nouvelles de Zagreb*, 2000, instalacija, *Bibliothèque Gabrielle Rois, Quebec*, 2000. *Les Nouvelles de Zagreb*, 2000, installation view, *Bibliothèque Gabrielle Rois, Quebec*, 2000

13. K. Leko, *Sarajevo International*, video-komunikacijski projekt, 2001, slika iz videa br. 1/12, te pogled na instalaciju istog videa u čitaonici *British Council Sarajevo*, u suradnji sa *Imadom Ziyada, Palestina/Irak*

Sarajevo International, video-communication project, 2001, still from the video No. 1/12 and installation view, *British Council Library, Sarajevo*; in collaboration with *Imad Ziyada, Palestine / Irak*

14. K. Leko, *Sarajevo International*, video-komunikacijski projekt, 2001, slike iz videa br. 4/12, te pogled na instalaciju istog videa u knjižari *Buybook*, u suradnji sa *Yvanom Enzler, Švicarska*

Sarajevo International, video-communication project, 2001, stills from the video No. 4/12 and installation view, *Buybook Bookstore, Sarajevo*, in collaboration with *Yvana Enzler, Switzerland*



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I love my country although
I have never seen it.

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koji su na projektu radili i pomogli. A to opet ne govori ništa o meni, nego o temi i problemu kojim se rad bavi.

■ ■ Realizaciju složenog projekta *Sir i vrhnje* koji se sastojao od izložbe, okruglog stola, internetskih stranica www.sirivrhne.org, suradnje s medijima, trebao je okruniti jumbo plakat u blizini izložbenog prostora na kojoj su se uz kravu, kao simbol cijelog projekta, našli svi koji su toga dana sudjelovali u happeningu besplatnog dijeljenja sira i vrhnja, ali to se, na žalost, nije dogodilo. Nekoliko mjeseci kasnije na istoj su se lokaciji pojavili politički plakati antieuropskog usmjerenja s natpisom "Sir i vrhnje su cool, ali Europska Unija nije". Kada se gleda retrogradno, moguće je zaključiti da si postigla nešto za čim žude mnogi umjetnici, nešto si pokrenula. O siru i vrhnju mnogo se govorilo nakon izložbe u drugim kontekstima, a da tvoje ime i cijeli projekt uopće nisu nigdje spomenuti.

Od samog početka nastojala sam da mojeg imena ima što manje. Uz nešto tako univerzalno kao sir i vrhnje ne mogu staviti svoje ime na način kao što je to uobičajeno uz izložbu. Za promociju ideje osobni potpis bio bi kontraproduktivan. Također, to su neka mjesta općeg identiteta koja je nepristojno osobno potpisivati, mislim. I onda, naravno, zato što nema osobnog imena, nego na internetskoj stranici iza Deklaracije stoji neka udruga o kojoj većina ništa ne zna, mnogi su se osjetili pozvanima prepisati tekst iz Deklaracije o mljekaricama i iznositi te misli, teze i podatke kao da su njihove, ne spomenuvši našu inicijativu, niti udrugu [BLOK] Lokalna baza za osvježavanje kulture, niti, što je najgore, to da se Deklaracija može potpisati online. Govorim o prilogu emitiranom na BBC Worldu, o prilogu u emisiji *Brisani prostor*, o jednom gospodinu iz Ministarstva poljoprivrede... Ima toga još. Kad su se pojavili plakati sa sloganom "Sir i vrhnje su cool, ali EU nije" bila sam žalosna zato što znam da, ako je dotični na desnici uzeo sir i vrhnje kao antieuropsku parolu, onda nitko na ljevici neće reći da su sir i vrhnje ipak "cool". No, zaštititi i sačuvati sir i vrhnje nije ideja koja sama po sebi pripada desno, niti lijevo. Uvjeren sam da sir i vrhnje zajedno s mljekaricama mogu u Europu i nadam se da osobe i dužnosnici koji su sudjelovali na našem okruglom stolu i izrekli javno obećanja, na tome i rade. A ako ne rade, onda ćemo se možda krajem godine opet angažirati.

● ● Besides the time invested, what is the other way to determine the quality of socially engaged art?

For now, the only reliable criterion for the quality of my own art I intuitively express in the question: "While working, did I make friends?" It is with this question that I check the quality of my work. Well, if I make an interview lasting five minutes in only five minutes, I won't be able to reach the other party. And, reaching the party that does not belong to the same cultural circle as me, this is precisely the core of art and the essence of my vocation. The amount of personal energy invested is determined as well. For *Cheese and Cream* project I personally spent four months on the city market-places, and two more months with my co-workers Petra, Jelena, Dalija and Vesna. I myself prepared 1300 photographs for our web site, not only because there wasn't enough money, but because I wanted to apply myself in a self-giving way for a beautiful cause. I think that everyone who worked on the *Cheese and Cream* project was enthusiastic. And this does not say anything about me, but about the issue and the problem that the work deals with.

● ● The realization of the complex *Cheese and Cream* project, which consisted of an exhibition, a panel, its web-site www.cheeseandcream.org, collaboration with the mass media, was to be crowned by a billboard to be displayed near the exhibition space. This poster would show a cow, as a symbol of the whole project, together with a crowd of people who participated in the happening of giving away free cheese and cream. Unfortunately, the billboard never came into being. A few months later, on the same location, political posters of anti-European orientation appeared, with the message "Cheese and cream are cool, but the European Union is not". Looking back, we might conclude that you achieved something that many artists crave for, you managed to instigate something, there was much public talk about cheese and cream in other contexts, although your name, or the whole project, were not even mentioned.

From the very beginning, I tried to make my name as scarce as possible. I cannot sign my name by something so universal as cheese and cream in a way that is usual for an exhibition. The personal signature would be counterproductive for the promotion of

■ ■ O odnosu umjetnosti i politike, vječnoj temi utemeljenoj i u historijskim avangardnim pokretima, puno se pisalo i govorilo zadnjih desetak godina. Kao praktičar, možeš li reći kako sama dijeliš angažiranu umjetnost od političkog aktivizma, gdje su i kakve su te granice?

Nedugo poslije izložbe *Sir i vrhnje* osjetila sam otvorenu mogućnost da izvan umjetničkog konteksta počnem raditi na problemu statusa mljekarica i njihove udruge. Ipak, to bi mi teško palo. Nepostojanje artefakata dijeli politički aktivizam od aktivističke umjetnosti. Umjetnost proizvodi artefakte, materijalne i nematerijalne. Radeći na *Siru i vrhnju* stavila sam sve svoje umjetničke sposobnosti u službu promocije zaštite mljekarica. Video instalacija, instalacije predmeta, fotografije, internetska stranica, sve je to podređeno istom cilju i radi njega postoji, ne postoji radi sebe, nego "robuje" ideji i političkom cilju. U tom smislu to je socijalni realizam čak u onom staljinističkom smislu, i to me uopće ne smeta. Formalno, moja video instalacija je, na primjer, realizam u smislu slikarstva 19. stoljeća. No u cijelom se projektu ne radi samo o socijalnom realizmu, nego o lijevo orijentiranom naporu za ostvarenje kulturne demokracije. S tim je u vezi uvjerenje da seljaci trebaju doći u galerije i da nema kulturnih barijera koje se ne bi mogle i trebale premostiti u jednom pravednom društvu. Sve to nije neka nova izmišljotina, nego naslijeđe i replika historijskih avangardi s početka 20. stoljeća.

■ ■ Prije *Sira i vrhnja* radila si izložbu u kojoj nije bila bitna samo tema, nego zajedničko sudjelovanje u procesu nastajanja s ljudima na koje se tema odnosi, u ovom slučaju - seoskih obitelji. Što se moglo iščitati kroz proces rada na toj izložbi koja se odvijala na relaciji Mađarska - Hrvatska?

O mlijeku i ljudima je izložba nastala u suradnji s pet mađarskih i pet hrvatskih seoskih gospodarstava koja žive od proizvodnje mlijeka. Htjela sam napraviti izložbu o načinu života koji nestaje, a tema je gotovo ista kao i u projektu *Sir i vrhnje*: tranzicijske promjene, zakonske promjene u vezi s EU, sve na uzorku 10 obitelji. Iako sam, slično kao u sarajevskom projektu, htjela raditi kratke filmove u suradnji s obiteljima, to nije bilo moguće. Seljaci nemaju toliko vremena. Tako sam sama napravila kratki film o svakoj obitelji, a izložbu smo radili zajedno. Obitelji su, reagirajući na moje fil-

the idea. Also, there are aspects of general identity that would make it inappropriate to sign personally. And then, of course, because there is no name, but on the project web-site there is a non-profit organization that nobody knows anything about, many felt they might as well copy the text from the *Declaration on Milkmaids* and present these thoughts, theses and initiatives as if they were their own, not even mentioning our initiative or the non-profit organisation [BLOK], or, what is the worst of all, not mentioning that one could sign the Declaration online. I have in mind the reportage broadcasted on the BBC World, then the Brisani prostor program on Croatian National Television, then, a gentleman from the Croatian Ministry of Agriculture... And there is more. When the posters with the slogan "Cheese and Cream are cool, but the EU is not" appeared, I was sad because I knew that, if the right-wing politician in question took cheese and cream as his anti-European slogan, then nobody on the left would ever say that cheese and cream are "cool" anyway. But, the idea to protect and preserve cheese and cream does not belong necessarily to the right or to the left. I am convinced that cheese and cream can join Europe, along with the milkmaids. I also hope that persons and officials who participated in our panel, and publicly announced their promises, are working on the issue. And if they are not, then maybe we will engage them again later this year.

● ● During the last decade, there was much talk and writing about that eternal issue, the relation between art and politics, as it is founded as well in the historic avant-garde movements. As a practicing artist, how do you distinguish the engaged art from the political activism, where are the borders, and of what kind are they?

Not long after the *Cheese and Cream* exhibit, I felt an open possibility to start working on the issue of milkmaids' status, and on their association outside of the art context. However, this would be very difficult for me. Nonexistence of artifacts, this is what distinguishes political activism from activist art. Art produces artifacts, both material and immaterial ones. While working on the *Cheese and Cream* project, I have put all my artistic know-how in the service to promote the milkmaids' issue. The video installation, the installations of objects, photographs, the web site, all these were created to serve the same goal. The show was



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not there for its own sake, but was “enslaved” by an idea and a political goal. In these terms, this was a work of social realism, even in the Stalinist sense, which doesn’t bother me at all. From a formal perspective, for example, my video installation was realism in the terms of 19th-century painting. However, the social realism does not explain the project in its whole. It is also a left-oriented effort aiming at cultural democracy, believing that, for instance, peasants should come to the galleries and that there are no cultural barriers that could not and should not be overcome in a just society. All of this is nothing new, but is a replica of and belongs to the heritage of historical avant-garde movements from early 20th century.

● ● Before *Cheese and Cream* project, you worked on an exhibition in which not only the theme was important, but also the creative collaboration with the people concerned with that theme - village families. What could be learned from the work process in this project, which was taking place in Hungary and Croatia?

On Milk and People was an exhibition created in collaboration with five Hungarian and five Croatian village farms that make their living with dairy production. I wanted to make an exhibition about the life style that is about to vanish. The theme was almost the same as in the *Cheese and Cream* project: transitional changes, legal changes considering the EU, all of that on the sample of ten farmer families. Although I wanted to create short films in collaboration with the families, in a way similar to my Sarajevo project, this was not possible. Farmers don’t have so much time. So I made myself a short film about each of the families, but we created the exhibit together. Responding to my films, the families had chosen their household objects to be shown in the ICA-Dunajvaros. The show was a complete ambient on which we had been working together for three days. It included my films and their object-installations. And again, I wanted that the people I was portraying have possibility to control the way they would be presented, to the greatest possible degree. Therefore, I spent the money I got from the Ministry on the journey to Hungary. Two members of each family traveled to Hungary to install the exhibition together with the Hungarian families. For some of them it was the first trip abroad, and for some others, their first vacation in

move, izabrale predmete za izložbu u ICA-Dunaujvaros, koja je bila cjelovit ambijent sastavljen od njihovih instalacija predmeta i mojih filmova, na kojem smo svi zajedno radili 3 dana. I opet, htjela sam da ljudi koje "portretiram" u najvećoj mogućoj mjeri sami kontroliraju način na koji će biti predstavljeni. Tako sam novac od ministarstva potrošila na put u Mađarsku, kamo su putovala po dva člana svake obitelji da bi zajedno sa mađarskim obiteljima postavili izložbu. Za neke je to bio prvi put u inozemstvo, za druge prvi odmor u puno godina... Svi smo dobili isti simbolički honorar, tj. dnevnice. Jedan od mojih pomalo romantičnih ciljeva bio je postići da se mali mađarski i mali hrvatski seljak sretnu i razmjene iskustva, nešto što zapravo nikome nije u interesu... Svi su otišli kući vidno dobro raspoloženi. Svaki dan smo svi zajedno ručali u galeriji i upravo to me učinilo jako sretnom.

■ ■ Kako je bilo moguće uspostaviti prisan odnos s mljekaricama, budući da su, radi što preciznije statistike, bile zastupljene u popriličnom broju?

Broj mljekarica bio je prevelik da bi se moglo stupiti u dublji osobni kontakt s njima kao u mojim drugim projektima, u kojima uglavnom insistiram na individualnom pristupu socijalnoj temi. Kod *Sira i vrhnja* radi se o stjecanju političkog povjerenja, tj. o moralnom pravu "zastupanja" mljekarica, u smislu postavljanja izložbe o njima. Kako steći to pravo "reprezentacije"? I opet je odlučujući faktor uloženo vrijeme i entuzijizam. Najprije sam ja puno puta bila na tržnicama, snimala video i pričala s mljekaricama. Onda smo organizirali prvu akciju na Dolcu, u okviru *Urbanog festivala 2002*. Onda sam opet dolazila i snimala. Svi su me već znali. Godinu dana kasnije pojavilo se nas pet i počeo je rad na anketama koji je trajao svakodnevno više od 7 tjedana. Nakon što su nas iz dana u dan vidale na tržnici od ranog jutra, nakon što su prošle anketu, žene su shvatile da se njima ozbiljno bavimo, kao i to da ne sjedimo negdje na plaći, pa evo nešto zapisujemo, nego da se radi o našoj slobodnoj volji i inicijativi. Postoji dinamika grupe koja ti jednostavno da do znanja da je ispit položen. Kad se pojaviš na tržnici i gdje god se zaustaviš, mljekarica ti želi pokloniti sir. Sir, naravno, moraš odbiti. No, oko 12 do 15 posto mljekarica posjetilo je izložbu. S obzirom na to da te žene ne žive u Zagrebu te da je izložba trajala svega 9 dana, to je priličan broj.

many years... All of us got the same symbolic fee, that is, per diems. One of my almost romantic goals was to make small Hungarian and small Croatian farmers meet and exchange experiences, which is something that is in nobody's interest, really... All of them returned home clearly in a good mood. Every day, all of us would dine together in the gallery, and precisely this made me very happy.

● ● How was it possible to establish a close relationship with the milkmaids, since, for the purpose of precise statistics, there were many involved?

Their number was too large to establish a deeper personal contact, as is the case in my other projects, which mostly insist on a personal approach to a social issue. *Cheese and Cream* was about political trust, that is, about earning the moral right to "represent" the milkmaids in the sense of setting up an exhibition about them. How to earn this right of "representation"? Again, the decisive factor was the time invested, and the enthusiasm. First, I was visiting the markets, making videos and talking to the milkmaids. Then we organized the first action on the Dolac marketplace, in the setting of the Urban festival of 2002. Then, I had been coming and filming again. Everybody knew me already. A year later, the five of us appeared and started working on the questionnaires, and it lasted for more than seven weeks. After they had been seeing us every day on the marketplaces, getting there early in the morning, the women realized that we had been serious in dealing with them, as well as that we were not employed nor well paid to do the job, but that it was our free will and initiative. There is a group dynamics that simply tells you if you have passed the exam. When you appear on the marketplace, and wherever you stop for a moment, a milkmaid wants to give you her cheese. Of course, you have to say no to the cheese. However, about 12 to 15 percent of the milkmaids did visit the show. Considering that these women did not live in Zagreb, and that the exhibition lasted for only nine days, this was a considerable number.

● ● I would like to have a look back to your earlier, autobiographical works. One might notice that in these narrative works, introspection was not a purpose for itself. Actually, all these works correspond directly to a larger frame of social reality.

15. K. Leko, *Posjeta, 2002.*, fotografija nastala u suradnji sa gđom Murke, te g. Karusom i g. Grossom, štčenicima doma za starije osobe Volkshilfe u Grazu, u sklopu Austrijskog trijenala fotografije

A Visit, 2002/03, photograph created in collaboration with Ms. Murke, M. Karusa and M. Gross, the residents of the Volkshilfe retirement home in Graz, in the realm of the Austrian Triennial on Photography

16. K. Leko, *O mlijeku i ljudima, video-komunikacijski projekt, 2001.-2003.*, detalj s izložbe u ICA-Dunaujvaros, Mađarska, 2003., instalacija predmeta br. 5/10, u suradnji sa obitelji Ostojčić, Prnjavor

On Milk and People, video-communication project, 2001-2003, detail from the exhibition, ICA-Dunaujvaros, Hungary, 2003, object installation No. 5/10, in collaboration with the Ostojčić Family, Prnjavor, Croatia

17. K. Leko, *O mlijeku i ljudima, video-komunikacijski projekt, 2001.-2003.*, detalj s izložbe u ICA-Dunaujvaros, Mađarska, 2003., stilovi iz videa br. 1/10, te instalacija predmeta br. 1/10, u suradnji sa obitelji Kolesarić, Zoljani

On Milk and People, video-communication project, 2001-2003, detail from the exhibition, ICA-Dunaujvaros, Hungary, 2003, stills from the video No. 1/10, object installation No. 1/10, in collaboration with the Kolesarić Family, Zoljani

■ ■ Željela bih se osvrnuti na tvoje ranije autobiografske radove. Moguće je primijetiti da u tim narativnim radovima ispitivnije sebe nije samo sebi cilj. Zapravo, svi ti radovi korespondiraju sa širim okvirom društvene zbilje.

U video dnevniku *Zagrebačka proza* snimala sam sebe jednom mjesečno, od kolovoza 1999. do ožujka 2000., kako u kuhinji čitam svoje osobne vijesti toga dana: gdje sam bila, što sam radila i mislila. Uz to sam kombinirala isječke iz Dnevnika HRT-a istoga dana. I to se dvoje nadopunjuje. Zabilježeno razdoblje je razdoblje velikih političkih promjena; tu je i smrt Franje Tuđmana. *Zagrebačka proza* počinje 11. kolovoza 1999. pomrčinom Sunca, a vijest iz HRT Dnevnika toga dana kaže: "Ministarstvo hrvatskih branitelja obavještava hrvatske ratne vojnike invalide i članove obitelji ubijenih, poginulih, preminulih, zarobljenih i nestalih hrvatskih branitelja, kao i civilne invalide i članove obitelji poginulih civila, da će isplata novčanih naknada za spranj započeti u petak trinaestog." Rad obiluje crnim humorom. Pronalazila sam analogije između vlastitih stanja i stanja nacije. To su kao neke metastaze u kojima i sama postajem žrtvom, npr. nelikvidnosti. HRT govori o bankovnom udaru, a ja o tome kako nisam dobila plaću četiri mjeseca. U to sam doba za bijednu plaću radila na HTV-u i skupljala neplaćene račune. Kroz naraciju pokušavam ujedno otkriti načine kako zadržati dostojanstvo i užitak u svakodnevnim stvarima. Rad je bio naručen za jedan mali bijenale u Quebecu te je koncipiran kao gusto informativno štivo u formi četverokanalnog videa za prostor najveće javne knjižnice u Quebecu gdje je bio izložen. Zainteresirani su mogli, u sat vremena, doznati sve najvažnije o meni i o mojoj zemlji, od broja stanovnika, etničkog sastava, stanja u raznim privrednim granama, turističkih odredišta, do podataka o nedavnom ratu, privatizaciji, sindikalnim problemima, kao i o mojim emotivnim stanjima i svakodnevnim problemima moje obitelji. Sve to bio je i način da se pročistim od realnosti i sredim svoje odnose prema ljudima i pojavama.

■ ■ U radu koji nastaje nešto ranije, također autobiografske prirode, *Magičnim kolačem* koji se kao standardizirani proizvod prodavao nekoliko mjeseci u slastičarnici Zagrebačkog slastičarskog poduzeća u Gundulićevoj ulici, čini se da magijom umjetničkog čina pokušavaš aktivno djelo-

In my video diary *Zagreb News* I had been recording myself once a month, from August 1999 to March 2000, reading my personal daily news of the day: where I had been, what I had been doing and thinking. In addition to that, I juxtaposed excerpts from Croatian Television Evening News of the day. Those two complemented each other. The period covered by my video diary was a period of big political changes - Franjo Tuđman also died then. *Zagreb News* starts on August 11th, with the Sun eclipse, and one of the news items from the TV Evening News of the day said: "Ministry of Croatian Defenders informs Croatian war invalids and family members of killed, deceased, fallen, imprisoned and missing Croatian soldiers, as well as civilian victims and family members of killed civilians, that the payment of money reimbursements for July will commence on Friday, the 13th." The work is replete with black humor. I had been finding analogies between my personal situation and the one of the nation. It is like metastases where I also became a victim, for instance, a victim of insolvency. The National Television talked about a financial coup, and I talked about how I hadn't been paid for four months. In those times, I had been working for peanuts for the National Television, and piling up my unpaid bills. Through the narration, I tried to find ways to keep up my dignity and to still enjoy life. The work was commissioned for a small Biennial in Quebec. It was conceived as a dense, informative text in the form of a four-channel video, for the biggest public library in Quebec, where it was shown. The audience could, in an hour, learn everything important about me and about my country, from the population size, to ethnic composition, situation in various industries, tourist destinations, data on the recent war, the privatization, union problems, as well as my emotional states and everyday problems of my family. All of this was also a way to cleanse myself from the reality, to settle my relations with people and phenomena.

● ● In another work of autobiographical nature that appeared a little earlier, in your *Magic Cake* that was on sale as a standardized product in the pastry-shop of the Zagreb Pastry Company in Gundulićeva Street, it seems you tried to use the magic of an artistic act to actively affect not only the social consciousness, but also your own everyday life.

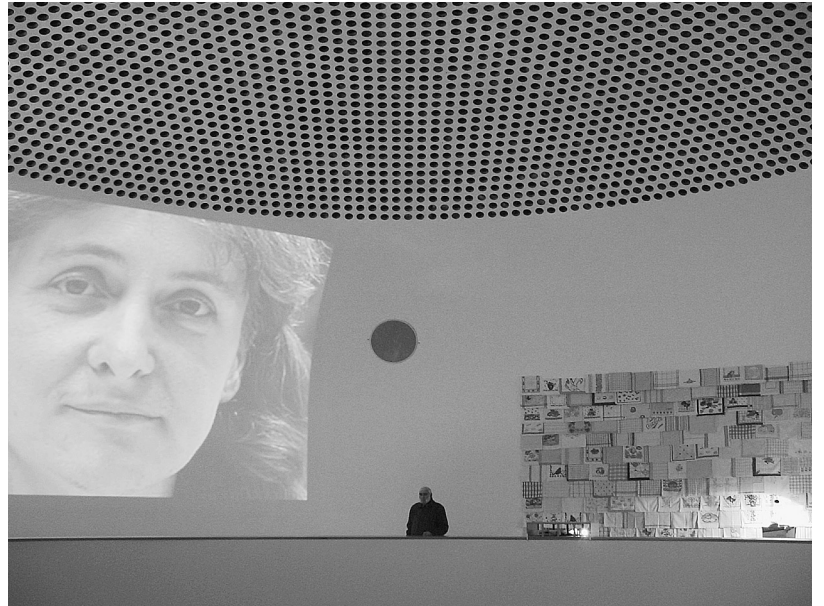
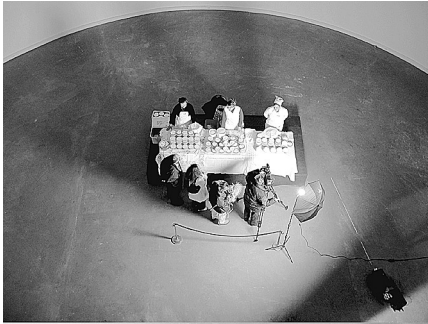
18. K. Leko, *Vive le fromage au lait cru!*, akcija dijeljenja sira i vrhnja u galerijskom prostoru, 7.12.2003, Velika galerija HDLU, u suradnji sa Jagicom Levak, Anicom Horvat i Renatom Kostibol *Vive le fromage au lait cru!*, action, handing out free cheese and cream to the gallery audiences, December 7, 2003, Big Gallery HDLU, in collaboration with Jagica Levak, Anica Horvat and Renata Kostibol

Foto / photo: Boris Cvjetanović

19. K. Leko, pogled na izložbu *Sir i vrhnje*, trokanalna video instalacija, zbirka kuhinjskih krpa zagrebačkih mljekarica, Galerija PM, 2003. *Cheese and Cream*, exhibition view, three-channel video installation, collection of dish-towels belonging to the Zagreb milkmaids, PM Gallery, Zagreb, 2003

20. K. Leko, *Mlijeko 2002*, akcija dijeljenja sira i vrhnja na tržnici Dolac 31.8.2002., u sklopu Urbanog festivala, u suradnji sa Marijom Špoljar, Maricom Seničić i Katicom Bzig *Milk 2002*, action, distributing free cheese and cream to passers by, Dolac Market, August 31, 2002, as part of the Urban Festival, in collaboration with Marija Špoljar, Marica Seničić and Katica Bzig

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vati ne samo na društvenu svijest, nego i na svoju vlastitu svakodnevicu.

Kolač mi je pomogao ovladati jednom šakaljavom privatnom situacijom. Kolačem i pričom kojoj sam napisala sretni svršetak pokušala sam prebroditi loše trenutke povezane sa krahom mog prvog braka, jer je sve vodilo tome da svi budu nesretni. No, napraviš čarobni kolač koji nosi sretni završetak i onda se to otprilike tako i dogodi! Doduše, dvije godine poslije. Za proizvodnju je trebalo doći u manufakturu u Preradovićevoj gdje uglavnom rade ljudi sa slušnim i govornim problemima kojima je tada, kao i meni, plaća kasnila nekoliko mjeseci. Kad dođeš u takvu sredinu i kažeš: "Ja sam akademska slikarica i došla sam k vama da zajedno proizvedemo čarobni kolač koji donosi sretan svršetak svakoj nesretnoj priči", ljudi se spontano razvesele. Jer, iako misle da meni u glavi nije sve u redu, ipak osjećaju to što radim među njima. Hoću reći, sam proces proizvodnje čarobnog kolača, koji je iznimno ukusan i bogat, ustvari je bio jedno kontinuirano unošenje doze optimizma u pogon sa starim strojevima, među ljude koji rade za 1200 kuna i prijeti im stečaj. Tijekom 1999. redovito sam naručivala i otkupljivala kolače te ih onda dijelila u raznim prilikama, npr. na filmskom festivalu u Splitu, na Oreste projektu u Veneciji. Poklanjanje je jedno od onih mojih 12 etičkih pravila.

■ ■ U tvojim autobiografskim radovima često se uz video zapise i fotografije pojavljuju predmeti iz svakodnevica. Na koji ih način selektiraš?

Svi predmeti koje "pronađem" postaju dio zbirke *Mes objets trouvés*, osnovane 1992. godine. Predmet je u zbirci zato što sam pomoću njega došla do neke važne spoznaje o sebi i svijetu. Predmet "skladišti" dio moje, i katkad opće, povijesti. Predmete ne izabirem, niti o njima prethodno razmišljam, nego se to jednostavno dogodi. Na primjer, kuhinjski nož. Mama je uvijek govorila da ako hoćeš dobar pribor za jelo, kupi onaj proizveden u Solingenu. Onda, u periodu kad sam čitala Weberovu *Etiku protestantizma i duh kapitalizma*, primijetila sam da se na mojim noževima nalazi stilizirani crtež kuće s dva križa na krovu. To me fasciniralo, oznaka protestantizma na nožu, znak tvornice iz Solingena. Svega nekoliko dana nakon što sam nož uvrstila u zbirku, Njemačku je potresao tužni događaj. Skupina skinheads je u Solingenu zapalila kuću

The cake had helped me to handle another sensitive private situation. I created my magic cake and a story to which one could add a happy ending, in order to endure bad moments related to the failure of my first marriage, because everything was leading everybody involved to being unhappy. But, one can make a magic cake that brings a happy ending to every love story, and then it all really happened in much the same way! Two years later, though. For the manufacture of the cake, I worked with the bakery in Preradovićeva Street, where hearing- and speech-impaired people worked, whose wages had also been late, as well as mine. When you come to such a milieu and say: "I am a painter, and I have come to you for us to make a magic cake that will bring a happy ending to every unhappy story", people get spontaneously merry. Although they thought that not everything was right in my head, they still felt what I was doing among them. In other words, the very process of making the magic cake, which was exceptionally rich in taste, was actually a continuous bringing in of optimism to the place filled with old baking machines, and to the people who worked for 1200 kunas per month, threatened by bankruptcy. During 1999, I had been regularly ordering and buying off my cakes from the Pastry shop, and then giving them away on various occasions, for instance, at the Split Film Festival, or the Oreste project in Venice. Giving away presents is one of those 12 ethical rules of mine.

● ● Your autobiographic works, involving video records and photographs, often feature objects from everyday life. How do you select these objects?

All the objects I "find" become a part of *Mes objets trouvés* collection, which started in 1992. An object belongs to the collection because it led me to an important insight about myself or about the world. The object is a "repository" of my personal or, in some cases, general history. I do not choose the objects, neither do I previously think about them. It simply happens. For instance, a kitchen knife. My mother has always been saying that, if you want good cutlery, buy products from Solingen. Then, in a period when I had been reading Weber's *The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism*, I noticed that on my knives there was a stylized drawing of a house with two crosses on its roof. This fas-

u kojoj su stanovali turski useljenici. Drugi primjer može biti vinska čaša kupljena u Ikea u Grazu. Jednog dana u toj sam čaši pronašla mrtvog pauka. Po tragovima kamena na stijenci čaše zaključila sam da se pauk utopio i to me jako potreslo. Bilo je to 1993., sredinom rata, kad je opće raspoloženje bilo mračno i kad su se mnogi, umorni od rata, počeli pitati nije li se moglo i drukčije. Ustvari, kad sam se zatekla kako meditiram nad čašom, pitajući se jesam li ja kriva za smrt pauka, u tom je trenutku čaša postala nađeni predmet. Od tada ju čuvam i pokazujem. 2001. čaša s paukom dobila je dodatak, dvokanalnu videoinstalaciju *Gekauft in Graz*, koja govori o ratu, shoppingu, ekonomiji... Izlaganjem nađenih predmeta i pričanjem priča o njima nastojim prenijeti neke, po mom mišljenju važne spoznaje.

■ ■ **Autobiografski proces koji tebi pomaže u svladavanju iskustva stvarnosti primijenila si u radu s djecom u Poljskoj. Kako su oni prihvatili mogućnost da progovore o svojim životima, budući da je ponovno riječ o ugroženoj skupini, djeci iz problematične četvrti s velikim postotkom alkoholizma i kriminala?**

“Razmjena biografija” odvila se u siječnju 2000. u sklopu programa *Socijalna skulptura* u Laznia Centru za suvremenu umjetnost u Donjem gradu u Gdansku. Tijekom snimanja napali su nas i ukrali nam dio opreme. S djevojčicama sam radila onako kako radim sama sa sobom. Najprije smo imali radionicu kreativnog pisanja. Prije toga sam prošla desetak lekcija poljskog, pa sam se, uz asistenticu, mogla snaći. Djecu sam u potpunosti pustila da postanu subjekt govorenja, čitaju svoje priče, sami odabiru što će, gdje i kako snimiti, čak i da snimaju. Kasnije sam složila jedanaest priča jednu iza druge u video rad od sat vremena. Djeca su bila uzbuđena zbog činjenice da će to biti film koji će se javno prikazati. Kad se dogodilo da su nas napali, svi smo bili u šoku, pa su se onda uključili roditelji, braća i sestre, kao tjelohranitelji. Zbog tog se nesretnog napada kroz radionicu doista uspjela ostvariti socijalna skulptura, stvorene su veze unutar zajednice. Na premijeru su došle čitave obitelji, mnogi su plakali jer su djeca, osim što su govorila o sebi, govorila o zbilji koja ih okružuje, o derutnom blatnom kvartu u kojem žive, o tome što bi sve trebalo promijeniti. Što se samih priča tiče, najviše me dirnula djevojčica Jadzia. Bila sam impresionirana

cinated me, a symbol of Protestantism on that blade, that logo of the Solingen based factory. Only a few days after I had included the knife into my collection, Germany was shattered by a sad event. A group of skinheads in Solingen burned down a house inhabited by Turkish immigrants. Another example could be a wine glass bought in the Ikea store in Graz. One day, I found a dead spider in it. The traces of lime sediment on the walls of the glass brought me to conclude that the spider had drowned, and this had shaken me a lot. It was in 1993, in the middle of the war, when the general mood was gloomy and when many, tired of the war, started to wonder if it had been possible for things to happen in a different manner. In fact, in that very moment when I found myself meditating over the glass, wondering if I was to blame for the death of the spider, the glass became my found object. Since then, I treasure it and exhibit it. In 2001 the spider-glass got an extension, a two-channel video-installation *Gekauft in Graz*, which is about the war, shopping, economy... Showing my found objects, and telling stories about them, I try to convey knowledge I find important.

● ● **The same autobiographical process that helps you handle the experience of reality, you have applied on working with children in Poland. How did they accept the possibility to talk about their lives, since they were also a socially handicapped group, the children from a neglected neighborhood with a high alcoholism and criminal rate?**

The “Exchanging Biographies” project took place in January 2000 within the *Social Sculpture* program at the Laznia Center for Contemporary Art in Gdansk. During the shooting, we were assaulted, and a part of our equipment was stolen. I had been working with the little girls the way I work with myself. First, we had a creative writing workshop. Before this I had about a dozen lessons of Polish, so I could manage, with help from an assistant. I had let the children become the subject, let them read their stories, choose themselves what would they shoot, when and how. Later, I edited eleven stories one after the other in a one-hour video work. The children were excited about the fact that this would be a film for public screenings. When the assault happened, all of us were shocked, and then their parents intervened, as well as

rana njezinom iskrenošću i jednostavnošću kojom izgovara teške činjenice. Kako bih joj dala nagradu za trud i iskrenost i neki poticaj za dalje, u galeriji Vladimir Nazor izložila sam taj video. A kad sam sljedeći put došla u Gdansk, posjetila sam ju i poklonila joj hrpu kataloga s njezinom pričom.

■ ■ U doba kad je zanimanje javnosti, osobito u inozemstvu, još uvijek okrenuto Sarajevu zbog stradanja koja su se tamo dogodila tijekom rata, za suradnju u projektu vezanom uz temu grada Sarajeva odabireš skupinu koja je, moglo bi se reći, pomalo izvan interesne zone. Zašto odabireš surađivati s ljudima koji nisu sa Sarajevom vezani dramatičnim ratnim događajima, nego su ondje iz inozemstva došli uglavnom nakon rata, i to najčešće iz posve osobnih razloga?

Jedan aspekt Sarajeva sličan je Zagrebu, iako znatno ekstremniji. Tijekom devedesetih velika količina mladih odlazi. Moja je trauma da sam u Zagrebu u jednom razdoblju ostala sama. Kad me Lejla Hodžić pozvala da radim u Sarajevu, bavila sam se ustvari tim bolnim pražnjenjem grada. Jer, gdje god sam po svijetu bila, uvijek sam srela nekog iz Sarajeva. A Sarajevo nije tek grad, nego pojam teškog bremena. I tu smo opet kod one odgovornosti. Koju vizuru odabrati, za kakav se kraj odlučiti? Instinktivno sam poželjela reći: "Pogledajte, ovo je grad kao i svaki drugi, jedan običan grad u koji dolaze živjeti ljudi iz cijelog svijeta! Nema razloga za odlazak." Istina je da nakon katastrofe svi želimo biti tek normalni, i ljudi i gradovi i zemlje. Zato sam poželjela reći da osim Srba, Hrvata i Muslimana postoje i drugi ljudi. Neka druga stvarnost. *Sarajevo International* je serija od 12 kratkih videa napravljenih u uskoj suradnji s portretiranim osobama, strancima koji su došli živjeti u Sarajevo i koji nisu dio međunarodne elite, misija i organizacija, nego obični mali ljudi. Priče su bile postavljene na javnim mjestima u gradu, obraćajući se lokalnoj publici. Zanimajući Srbe, Hrvate i Muslimane, nismo dobili sredstva Europske kulturne zaklade jer se, rekli su, "projekt ne bavi važnim problemima". No, ljudi koje sam srela u Sarajevu uglavnom su bili vrlo zahvalni za tu malu promjenu vizure.

■ ■ Kako vidiš svoju poziciju unutar sustava umjetnosti? Pokušavaš ga na neki način nadići konkretnim angažmanom prema postojećim problemima. No svejedno, tu je

their brothers and sisters, as bodyguards. Because of this unfortunate incident, a real social sculpture was realized through the workshop, and ties were formed within the community. Whole families came to the opening night, a lot of them were weeping, because children, besides talking about themselves, talked about the reality that surrounded them, the ramshackle, muddy neighborhood in which they lived, telling what should be changed. As for the stories themselves, a girl named Jadzia had touched me the most. I was impressed by her sincerity and her simple way of telling very difficult facts. To reward her for her efforts and sincerity, and to give her an enticement to go on, I exhibited this video in Vladimir Nazor Gallery. And when I came to Gdansk the next time, I visited her and gave her a pile of catalogues with her story.

● ● In a period when public interest, especially abroad, was still turned to Sarajevo because of the sufferings that happened there during the war, you choose to collaborate with a group placed outside of the core zone of interest. Why did you choose to work with people who were not tied to Sarajevo by the dramatic war events, but moved to Sarajevo from abroad after the war mostly for their personal reasons?

There is an aspect of Sarajevo that is similar to Zagreb, although more extreme. During the nineties, a great number of young people left. My personal trauma was that there was a moment when I was left alone in Zagreb. When Lejla Hodžić invited me to work in Sarajevo, I was actually dealing with this painful voiding of a city. Because, wherever I traveled abroad, I had always met someone from Sarajevo. And, Sarajevo is not just a city, but also a paradigm of a heavy burden. So, here comes that responsibility again. Which point of view to choose? Which ending to a story? Instinctively, I tried to say: Look, this is a city like any other, an ordinary city to which people from all over the world come to live. There is no reason to leave. It is true that, after a catastrophe, all we want is to be normal: the same with people, cities, and countries. That is why I wanted to say that besides Serbs, Croats and Muslims, there are also other people. *Sarajevo International* is a series of 12 short videos, made in close collaboration with the portrayed persons, foreigners who came to live in Sarajevo, and who were not a part of the international

21. K. Leko, *Verfassungskorrekturbureau, 2004., jednotjedna akcija ispravljanja američkog ustava u suradnji sa prolaznicima, Gradski park, Weimar Constitutional Overhaul Bureau, 2004, one week action in collaboration with passers by dedicated to the improvements of the US Constitution, Weimar City Park, Germany*

22. K. Leko, *Verfassungskorrekturbureau, 2004., slika iz videa Addressing the Americans, Part One Constitutional Overhaul Bureau, 2004, still from the video Addressing the Americans, Part One*



21



22

uvijek prisutan okvir umjetnosti i njezinih institucija...

Nije mi izazov boriti se protiv ustaljenih institucija i sustava umjetnosti. Zanima me raditi nešto što ima šireg smisla, biti "korisnom", a to redovito osjećam kad radim s ljudima izvan sustava umjetnosti. Školovana sam i rasla kao umjetnica, a ipak samotni rad u atelijeru, taj zrakoprazni prostor, nikad nisam mogla duže podnijeti. Zato mi leži dokumentarizam. Ne uvijek, ali ponekad imam potrebu proizvoditi i atelijersku umjetnost, koja je zapravo elitistička i ne obraća se svima. U to se ubrajaju autobiografski radovi, priče, predmeti, ono što se radi u samooči. To radim u slobodno vrijeme, kojeg nema previše. Jer, ne osjećam se pozvanom, na primjer, novac koji mi dodijeli ministarstvo utrošiti na autobiografske fotografske radove, nego mislim da taj novac treba biti potrošen na manje hermetičnu umjetnost. Mislim da su moja zbirka nađenih predmeta i artefakti koji iz tog proizlaze, proizvodi namijenjeni eliti i o toj se vrsti umjetnosti treba brinuti umjetničko tržište. Javni novac treba pak većinom trošiti na onu drugu vrstu umjetnosti, koja na otvoreniji način definira javni i kulturni interes zajednice. Takvim projektima i posvećujem najviše vremena, jer se pri tom osjećam življom.

■ ■ Jesi li osjetila otpor ljudi kad si u Njemačkoj radila projekt na temu američkog Ustava? Kako si razbijala strah i nelagodnu?

Presrela bih ljude na stazici u parku, pružila im veliku zdjelu finih bombona i rekla: "Dobar dan, kako ste? Ja sam ta i ta, dolazim iz Hrvatske i mislim da situacija u svijetu nije dobra, pa bih je htjela promijeniti, a vi ćete mi u tom pomoći." Ljudi se počnu smijati i pitati: Kako? "Počet ćemo s ispravkama američkog Ustava, koji je jako star i treba ga osvježiti. Imate li vi kakav prijedlog? Ja imam nekoliko." Onda bih ih odvela u svoj ured ispod suncobrana, ponudila na korištenje priručnu knjižnicu s ustavima različitih zemalja i političkom povijesti SAD-a, ponudila knjigu u koju su mogli zapisati svoj prijedlog te bismo, ukoliko nemaju puno vremena, a ipak žele uputiti poruku američkom narodu ili političarima, snimili video izjavu. Obećala sam otisnuti novu verziju Ustava, a DVD poslati odabranim političarima. Naime, pristup je potrebno stilizirati i neutralizirati, da ne bude maliciozan i da sve zajedno bude estetsko

elite of missions and organizations, but ordinary people. The stories were exhibited in public sites of the city addressing the local audience. Ignoring Serbs, Croats and Muslims, we didn't get the funding from the European Cultural Foundation, because, as they said, "the project does not tackle important problems". However, people whom I met in Sarajevo were mostly very grateful for this small change of perspective.

● ● How do you see your position within the art system? Engaging yourself in real existing problems, you are trying to overcome it in a way. However, there is always the framework of art and its institutions...

I don't find it a challenge to fight the established institutions and the art system. I'm interested in doing something of a wider meaning, in being "useful", and I always feel that way when I work with people outside the art system. I was educated and raised as an artist, and despite this, I could never stand the solitary work in an atelier, that vacuum. That is why I'm good in documentaries. Not always, but sometimes I feel a need to produce atelier art as well, which is actually elitist and does not address everyone. My autobiographical works, stories, objects, are of this type of work, produced in solitude. I do it in my free time, and that is not too often. Because, I do not feel inclined to spend money I received from the Ministry for my autobiographical photographic works, but I think, this money should be spent for less hermetic art. My collection of found objects, and the artifacts that generate from it, I think, these are products for the elite, and this kind of art should be taken care of by the art market. The public money should be spent for the other kind of art, which defines the public and cultural interest of the community more openly. I dedicate most of my time to projects of this kind, because I feel more alive when doing this type of work.

● ● In Germany, when you were working on the project dedicated to the US Constitution, did you feel resistance in people? How did you lessen their fear and unease?

I would intercept people on a path in a park, offer them a bowl of nice candies and say: "Hello, how are you? My name is so-and-so, I come from Croatia and I think that the situation in the world is not good, so I would like to change it, and you'll help me to do it." People would start laughing and

iskustvo. 80% ljudi se ustezalo od video snimaka te sam bila prisiljena garantirati zaštitu identiteta, tj. obećati da ću im u montaži staviti televizijsku masku preko lica. Kada sam lica prekrila crnim maskama, to je izgledalo strašno, kao da eksplicitno tvrdim da je SAD nacistička zemlja. Prekinula sam montažu i par mjeseci kasnije dosjetila se i upotrijebila maske u boji: crvenu, bijelu, plavu. I to je bio diskurs za koji se mogu zalagati, tipa: Evo, i mi bismo, prolaznici u weimarskom parku, svjetski turisti, rekli nešto demokraciji u prilog...

■ ■ **Pojedini umjetnici aktivisti namjerno stavljaju terorističke maske na lice kad žele izreći neke istine. To je posljednjih godina već postalo dijelom imidža umjetnika aktivista iz sfere tzv. taktičkih medija.**

Vjerujem da bih u nekim slučajevima i ja to mogla učiniti. No, prilikom dileme: zloguka crna maska ili aluzija na jednakost, bratstvo i slobodu, radi se ponovno o onoj istoj odgovornosti pripovjedača, pisca. Moj posao nije iznositi političke stavove i ocjene, iako to stalno činim, nego, kao i drugi istog zanimanja, graditi sliku svijeta za koju sam odgovorna. Odgovorna sam za ono što će ljudi nakon što vide moje artefakte, ponijeti dalje, sa sobom i u sebi. Primijenjeno na terorističke kape, mislim da nije teško raditi efektnu umjetnost; dovoljno je hrabro baratati jakim simbolima, no ne mislim da je to uvijek opravdano. ▼

ask: How? "We'll start with corrections to the American Constitution, which is very old and needs refreshment. Do you have any suggestions? I have several." Then I would lead them to my office under a sunshade, offer them to use a makeshift library with constitutions of various countries and a political history of the USA. I would also offer them a notebook in which they could write their suggestions. If they hadn't much time, and still wanted to send a message to the American people or politicians, we would make a video statement. I also promised to print the new version of the Constitution and send the DVD to selected politicians. Namely, it was necessary to stylize and neutralize the approach, lest it be malicious, and turn all of it into an esthetic experience. Eighty percent of the people were reluctant to make videos, so I had to guarantee that their identity would be protected, that is, to promise that I would mask their faces in editing. Later on, when I edited black masks on their faces, it looked horrible, as if I explicitly stated that the USA was a Nazi country. I stopped the editing. Two months later I figured out to use colored masks: red, white, blue. And, this was the discourse for which I can stand: We, passers-by in the Weimar Park, and world tourists, we would also like to say a word about democracy...

● ● **Some activist artists intentionally put terrorist mask on their faces when they want to say some truths. In recent years, this has become a part of the image of activist artists from the sphere of so-called tactical media.**

I believe that in some cases I could do it too. However, when in the dilemma: the ominous black mask or an allusion to equality, brotherhood and unity, there is again this responsibility of a storyteller, a writer. My job is not to affirm political positions and evaluations, although I am doing it all the time, but, as well as other people in this profession of ours, to build a worldview for which I am to be held responsible. I am responsible for what people will carry on with and within themselves after they have seen my artifacts. If we apply this to terrorist masks, I think it's easy to do eye-catching art: it is enough to boldly flash strong symbols, but it is not always justified. ●

→ Iva R. Janković - povjesničarka umjetnosti i likovna kritičarka. Voditeljica Galerije Proširenih medija. Živi i radi u Zagrebu.

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