

## TRANSFORMING MEMORY. THE POLITICS OF IMAGES

24. Nadežda Petrović Memorial, Čačak

September 22 – November 4

Fikret Atay, Yael Bartana, Michael Blum, Mariana Castillo Deball, Mounir Fatmi, Ghazel, Irena Kelečević, Irena Lagator, Moataz Nasr, Sean Snyder, Milica Topalović, Monument Group (Milica Tomić, Branimir Stojanović i Nebojsa Milikić), Florin Tudor i Mona Vatamanu, Urtica (Violeta Vojvodić, Eduard Balaž i Daniel Stevanović), Luca Vitone

Curated by Astrid Wege (Cologne) and Miodrag Krkobabić (Belgrade)

The question of how we deal with our past, the way our memories influence the perception of our present reality and the forms in which these invocations of the past become manifest – these are some of the central ideas of the 24<sup>th</sup> *Nadežda Petrović Memorial*, the oldest biennial art manifestation in Yugoslavia. Founded in 1960 both to acknowledge Nadežda Petrović (Čačak 1873 – Valjevo 1915), one of the most influential artists of the region from the early 20th century, and to remind one of the first international art exhibition in Serbia in 1904, *Memorial* has established itself as a platform of contemporary art.

In reflecting how and to what extent the past imbues the perception of the present which very often is considered to be the presiding reality, *Transforming Memory* takes up a subject that resonates in manifold ways in the social and political realities of our time; it also reverberates the context of the recent history as well as the present in the countries of former Yugoslavia. While references in politics to past events are often instrumentalized and follow a logic of simplification motivated by the desire to reassure (or define) one's own identity and a sense of belonging, which in turn may produce exclusions, *Transforming Memory* acts on the assumption that moments of imagination and projection are always inherent in the relation to the past and thus in the conception of the present and future – an observation crucial to many artistic works. In doing so they consciously decentralize the perspective of the beholder in order to create spaces of reflection and to raise the awareness for the mechanisms of amnesia.

### Art Gallery "NADEŽDA PETROVIĆ"

Cara Dušana 6, 32000 Čačak, SRBIJA

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### Saturday, 22.09.2007.

- 18:00h – Opening and Award of 24th Memorial

### Sunday, 23.09.2007.

- 13:00h – Unveiling of restored SPOMENIKA 4 VERE
- 17–17:45h – Dom Učenika – Lecture Prof. Dr. Beatrice von Bismarck
- 18–19:00h – Dom Učenika – Video program Thierry Destriez, Heure Exquise! Lille

### Monday, 24.09.2007.

- 11–13:45 h – Dom Učenika – Video program Thierry Destriez, Heure Exquise! Lille

### DIRECTOR

- **Milica Petronijević** (Čačak, SRB)
  - Director of Art Gallery "Nadežda Petrović", Čačak

### ART DIRECTOR

- **Miodrag Krkobabić** (Belgrade, SRB)

## **CURATOR**

- **Astrid Wege** (Cologne, D)

## **VIZUAL IDENTITY**

- **Mirko Ilić** (New York, USA)

## **HOST OF MEMORIAL**

- **Ivan Tasovac** (Belgrade, SRB)
  - Director of Belgrade philharmonic orchestra

## **JURY for 24th Nadežda Petrović Memorial:**

- **Prof. Dr. Beatrice von Bismarck** (Leipzig, D)
- **Thierry Destriez**, (Heure Exquise! Lille, F)
- **Prof. Mileta Prodanović** (Belgrade, SRB)

## **ARTISTS LIST:**

1. **Fikret Atay** (Batman, Turkey)
2. **Yael Bartana** (Tel Aviv/Amsterdam, NL)
3. **Michael Blum** (Vienna, A)
4. **Mariana Castillo Deball** (Mexico / Berlin, D)
5. **Mounir Fatmi** (Morocco/ Paris, F)
6. **Ghazel** (Teheran/Paris, F)
7. **Irena Kelecevic**, (Belgrade, SRB)
8. **Irena Lagator** (Cetinje, MN)
9. **Monument Group** – Milica Tomić, Branimir Stojanović i Nebojsa Milikić (Belgrade, SRB)
10. **Moataz Nasr** (Cairo, EG)
11. **Sean Snyder** (USA/Berlin, D)
12. **Milica Topalović** (Rotterdam, NL)
13. **Florin Tudor** i **Mona Vatamanu** (Bucaresti, RO)
14. **URTICA** – Violeta Vojvodić, Eduard Balaž, Daniel Stevanović (Novi Sad, SRB)
15. **Luca Vitone** (Milano, I)

## **FIKRET ATAY**

The video "**Bang Bang!**" (2003) shows four boys "playing" war in a railway depot. The camera – hand-held, wobbling in the style of live war coverage and with a particular sense for framing – follows the two teams while they target each other with toy pistols like players in a video game. The kids are not professional actors and pay no attention to the artist. Alluding in its title to Nancy Sinatra's song "Bang, Bang (My Baby Shot Me Down)", the video puts on view an everyday pastime of boys throughout the world. Against the backdrop of the politically charged reality of Batman, Atay's hometown near Turkey's border with Iraq, it takes another meaning – and at the same time exposes patterns and codes that are common to us all.

## **Yael Bartana**

“**Trembling Time**” (2001) was filmed in Tel-Aviv from a highway overpass on Soldiers Memorial Day. As Yael Bartana writes, “it depicts a moment of silence as it is observed in traffic during a cross-country siren. State organised memorials, ceremonies and military events define tradition and shape national identity. They are powerful and therefore dangerous phenomena that perpetuate patterns of loyalty and ignorance. I am interested in the dynamics of the state that prescribes a belief system, and the individual who embraces it.” Presented in Čačak, “Trembling Time” finds resonances also in former Yugoslavia’s recent past: here, the traffic used to slow down in a moment of silence to honour Tito’s death anniversary.

## **Michael Blum**

In “**The Rumor or how Samantha Fox helped Čačak reach fame**” (2007) Michael Blum follows the obscure paths of a story which had been reported in newspapers, websites and blogs. According to them, there had been a project to erect a statue of the former pin-up girl and singer Samantha Fox in Čačak after she agreed to perform in the town’s concert hall, obviously following a trend in dedicating monuments to international entertainers in ex-Yugoslavia, like Bruce Lee in Mostar and Silvester Stallone in Žitiste. Blum’s investigation in Čačak showed that the story reported wasn’t quite accurate. But instead of dismissing the rumour as unreliable and trivial, Michael Blum takes it as a symptom of our times – and dedicates it a monument, to be completed by the imagination of the beholder.

## **Mariana Castillo Deball**

Based on her research in Čačak, Mariana Castillo Deball stages a theatre piece in the House of Culture. Taking the style of a children’s story she refers to three characters: an accelerating paper ageing machine in Belgrade’s National Library that makes paper look older; the huge ficus tree inside the House of Culture; and the archaeological remains of the Roman baths in Čačak. Each object will tell its own story. Intermingling various layers and perspectives, Deball offers an alternative form of telling history. The theatre piece will be performed in the House of Culture at the opening. Additionally the artist presents an artist’s book in the Gallery space, again in the style of a children’s story book.

## **Mounir Fatmi**

“**Manipulation**” (2004) is a close-up of two hands incessantly playing with the famous Rubik’s cube, while trying to turn each side of the cube into a single colour. Gradually the cube loses its colours. From the billions of possible combinations, eventually there is only one left. Black replaces the former colours, the cubic shape also reminds one of the Kaaba, one of the most potent symbols in the world. Turned into a black cube the game loses interest.

## **Ghazel**

In “**Urban Landscapes**” (2007) Ghazel juxtaposes two “portraits”: One represents a black “ghetto” street teenager, the icon of a black youngster in the western world today. The other shows an urban situation, an ugly apartment building in a ghetto area. The young boy is staged in the style of classic portraiture, representing him in a position of power and respectability, his gesture and gaze signaling importance. Presented like paintings in a darkened space with coloured walls – alluding to a 19<sup>th</sup> century salon – the videos mirror the construction of images of power and the ambiguities of identity. They confront codes of self-representation with an urban reality echoing the drawbacks of western civilization and its history of colonialism.

## **IRENA KELEČEVIĆ**

**“Shadows of the Past”** (2007) takes its starting point at a specific moment in the history of both Čačak and former Yugoslavia materialized in the Monument of Four Religions. Initiated by the Anti War Woman’s organization PŽS FIDAC of which Nadežda Petrović was one of the founding members, the monument is dedicated to all soldiers killed in the area during the first two Balkan Wars and World War I. and combines the symbols of the four religions the killed soldiers belonged to (Orthodox and Catholic Christians, Islamic and Jewish). Under Nazi occupation during World War II, the Jewish and Islamic symbols were removed. 66 years later, Irena Kelecevic will restore the monument – and in doing so she prevents the memory of fateful historical events from fading.

## **IRENA LAGATOR**

**“After memory”** is a book consisting of banknotes to the value of 200 dinars depicting Nadezda Petrovic. The banknote is in itself a homage to one of the most influential artists of the region from the early 20th century. Lagator’s project enhances several layers of meaning by combining new and older bank notes which show traces of their use in time. “After memory” is not only a monument to Nadezda Petrovic and her ideas of “Connecting” and “Otherness”, but also reflects the recent history of “Yugoslavia” respectively Serbia: for example, on the newly printed bank-notes the word ‘Yugoslavia’ has disappeared.

## **MONUMENT GROUP** (Milica Tomić, Branimir Stojanović and Nebojsa Milikić)

**“Politics of Memory”** is the most recent manifestation of a project which started in 2002. There, a citizen’s initiative involving artists, theoreticians, architects and writers in Belgrade criticized the local administration’s announcement of a monument dedicated to the victims of the wars in former Yugoslavia. Reflecting the construct of the victim, “Politics of Memory” traces the complex processes set in motion when entering the personally as well as ideologically charged and contested field of public memory. The book documents a conversation with the initiators of the monument in Belgrade, with invalids and veterans of the wars in the 1990s and with parents who lost their children there. Piled up in the gallery space the books are free to take away – Monument Group – erects a monument that disperses.

## **MOATAZ NASR**

**“The Echo”** (2003) is a two screen video projection juxtaposing a scene from Yousef Chahine’s popular 1969 film Al-Ard with a scene shot in a bustling, present day coffee shop. The short monologue performed by the film’s main character is the center piece of Chahine’s movie based on Abdel Rahman El Sharkawi’s novel, which discussed the Egyptian struggle against the British Occupation during the 1930s. In this scene the film’s protagonist expresses his frustration with the Egyptian people’s passive attitude. Performed in 2003 by a young woman in the middle of a coffee shop in down town Cairo, the sequences echo each other, raising the question whether the present political and social situation has remained as stagnant as it was in 1933 and 1968.

## **SEAN SNYDER**

Sean Snyder’s work revolves around the built environment and the media. Working with photography, video and text, he rigorously dissects the role of ideological representation in the construction of the urban and media space. His research based practice uses both self-produced and reprocessed material to uncover indexes that function as symptoms of ideological representation and subversive counterpoints to dominant knowledge. Snyder analyzes the implicit visual and technological vocabulary of image making and its dissemination. Experimenting with various analogue and digital image reproduction methods Snyder exposes the constructed nature of media events and brings into question the notion of the real.

## MILICA TOPALOVIĆ

“**A Portrait of a 36 year Old**” (2007) by Milica Topalovic is a portrait of a building, a plant and a person interweaving personal memories and collective history. It is both an archive of resonating stories and an architectural view – a section through the foyer of the House of Culture in Čačak with its huge ficus tree onto the Central Square. What interests the author the most is the recount on a massive modernist intervention in the centre of a Serbian town as well as the architecture of the building 36 years after its opening – the decay, the missing and the new. Reinterpreting the conventions of architectural vocabulary, *A Portrait of a 36 year Old* captures various layers of the past in one serial photo image.

## FLORIN TUDOR & MONA VATAMANU

The critical reflection of the heritage of the regime of Romania’s ex-leader Nicolae Ceaucescu plays a major role in the work of Mona Vatamanu and Florin Tudor. In “**Vacarești**” (2006), they deconstruct the passed regime, by erecting a monument of failure – an anti-monument – which becomes visible only for the duration of the performance in the video. In a winterly fallow field a young man, Florin Tudor, walks along the outer lines of the ground plan of the monastery of Vacarești which had been destroyed for the construction of Ceaucescu’s so called Palace of the People. The video shows the artist’s difficulty in getting along: an exploration of the insecure terrain which constitutes the recent past of Romanian presence

## URTICA - Violeta Vojvodić, Eduard Balaž and Daniel Stevanović

Art and media research group Urtica presents a new version of their project “**Social Engine**” v.5. Produced as a Internet application, database of CBTI – cultural behaviourally transmissible information (i.e. textual and visual messages that guide our every day behaviour) – “Social Engine” provides a collective display for various authors' inputs. In Čačak, Urtica creates a new set of CBTI referring to the specific surroundings of Nadezda Petrovic Gallery: the police, the court, the church and the National Museum, taking the gallery’s facade as site of their intervention. By signifying the institutions which are entrusted with power, as “guardians” of the social system, Urtica is spotlighting the question "who guards the guardians".

<http://urtica.org/socialengine>

## LUCA VITONE

Flags and banners are an orienting point and a sign of belonging. They serve as symbols for a nation, a community or an idea. In “**Nulla da dire solo da essere**” (2004/2007) Luca Vitone ties the iconography of the anarchists’ movement together with that of the Roma people. The red wheel refers to their nomadic lifestyle, while the quotes from libertarian thinkers on some of the banners reflect upon the relationship of individual and society as well as on the motif of movement and trajectory. Displayed in the pedestrian zone of Čačak, where banners normally serve as carriers for the advertising of commercial products, Vitone’s flags both intervene into and recode the public space. They create temporary places both real and imaginary.

## **VIDEO PROGRAM**

### **HEURE EXQUISE !**

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Created in 1975, Heure Exquise ! is specialized in the promotion of video art and video creation.

Starting with an essentially creative project, Heure Exquise ! has progressively set up its activities of distribution , screenings , documentation and training in video creation and electronic arts.

### **IZBOR VIDEO PROGRAMA - THIERRY DESTRIEZ:**

1. **Se faire des amis/Making Friends** – Laëtitia Bourget – France/Australie - 2006
  - (selected excerpts – total 26 min.)
  - Episode 1 : **Communiquer /To Communicate** – 5 min.
2. **Saana, passage en noir** – Robert Cahen, 2007, 7 min. Prod: Boulevard des Productions
3. **Tehran** - Noemi Sjöberg, 2005 – Spain – 5:11 min. Battle of snow
4. **Under Construction** – Zhenchen Liu, 2007, France, 10 min. Prod: Studio National des Arts, Le Fresnoy
5. **Digue Morand** – France Dubois, 2003, France - 5 min. Blue sea side
6. **N/E/S/W** – Augustin Gimel, 2002, France – 4:45 min.
7. **Le silence est en marche** – Pierre-Yves Cruaud, 2001, France – 3:30 min.
8. **Cell** – Volker Schreiner, 2006, Germany, 4:27 min.
9. **Cinema-Dolls Trilogy** – part 2 - Roxane BILLAMBOZ, 2007, 4:30 min.
  - (Gene Kelly and Cyd Charisse)
10. **Se faire des amis/Making friends** – Laëtitia Bourget - France/Australie – 2006
  - (selected excerpts – total 26 min.)
  - Episode 4 : **Etre attentionné/Taking care** – 4:30 min.