

WE LOVE HEROES

IDEOLOGY, IDENTITY AND SOCIALIST ART IN THE NEW EUROPE

MARIBOR, ZAGREB,
SOFIA, TIRANA, PIRAN,
GDAŃSK, BELGRADE

OCTOBER 2014 – MARCH 2017

How are we to understand the monuments of the socialist era today; what can we do with them; and why do we love to hate them? Heroes We Love has brought together galleries, museums, research institutes, NGOs and a dance company from Central and South-Eastern Europe in a joint transnational project on the (still) controversial monumental heritage of the socialist past in order to search for possible answers. The project is supported by the Creative Europe programme of the European Union.

**3 exhibitions,
12 public art interventions,
5 conferences,
1 contemporary dance performance,
workshops, lectures and more.**

PARTNERS:

UGM UGM | Maribor Art Gallery
Slovenia

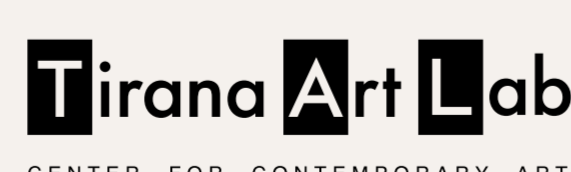
[BLOK] [BLOK]
Croatia



**Institute of Ethnology
and Folklore Studies**
with the Ethnographic Museum
at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
Bulgaria



University of Primorska
Slovenia



Tirana Art Lab
Albania



**Laznia Centre for
Contemporary Art**
Poland



**Museum of
Yugoslav History**
Serbia



The Dance Center
Slovenia

Co-funded by the
Creative Europe Programme
of the European Union



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE I.
MARIBOR, MARCH 2015

ART THAT CHANGES THE WORLD: CULTURE, POLITICS, IDENTITY

SPEAKERS

Ervin Hladnik Milharčič (SLO)
Miško Šuvaković (SRB)
Jasmina Cibic (SLO/UK)
Stefanos Tsvopoulos (GR)
Maja Ćirić (SRB)
Luiza Margan (CRO/AT)
Curatorial team BLOK/
Vesna Vuković (CRO)
Agnieszka Kulazinska (PL)
Romeo Kodra (AL)
Svetla Kazalarska (BG)
Tihana Pupovac (HR)
Nikola Dedić (SRB)
Milanka Todić (SRB)
Katarina Mohar (SLO)
Marina Katalenić (SLO)
Nikolai Vukov (BUL)
Borut Klabjan (SLO)
Andrej Preložnik (SLO)
Katja Hrobat Virloget (SLO)
Neža Čebbron Lipovec (SLO)

ORGANISERS

Katja Hrobat Virloget
& Simona Vidmar

PRODUCER

University of Primorska

Culture and identity are heavily shaped and informed by political and ideological forces. But can art fire back and change the usual courses of history in the making? We looked into artistic practices, questioned curatorial approaches, and searched for answers at the crossroads of theory and practice.



Luiza Margan, Eye to Eye with Freedom, 2014, public space intervention (photo: Markus Krottendorfer)



Ervin Hladnik Milharčič (photo: UGM archive)

“Many artists are turning to the study of past ideological and historical models in various fields in order to question the history and politics of our time.”

— JASMINA CIBIC *artist*



Miško Šuvaković (photo: UGM archive)

“What is ideology? Ideology is the manipulation of the human consciousness in relation to reality; but more important for us, ideology is the way of construction of the images of reality, which we take as reality.”

— MIŠKO ŠUVAKOVIĆ *professor, critic and curator*

“There are moments when an ideology set in stone turns around and show itself to be a good joke. This is a great moment for the forces of manipulation. It makes you sit before a great tragedy and puts a smile on your face.”

— ERVIN HLADNIK MILHARČIĆ *political journalist*



International conference Art that Changes the World: Culture, Politics, Identity (photo: UGM archive)



Maja Ćirić (photo: UGM archive)

“To paraphrase (Max) Horkheimer, I would say: whoever is not prepared to talk about capitalism should also remain silent about socialist realism.”

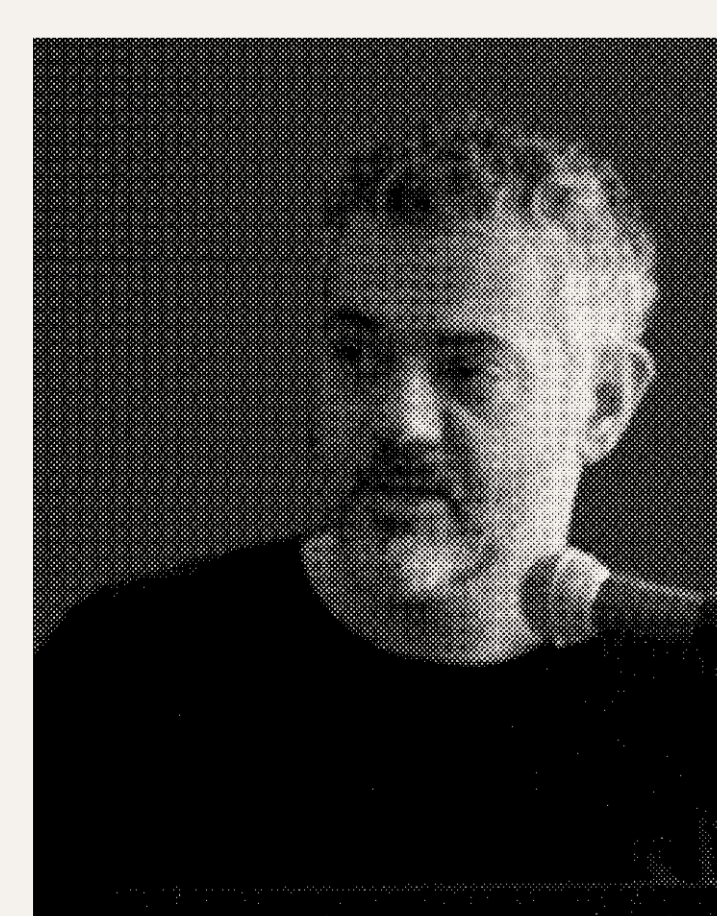
— BLOK *curatorial collective*

“Caution! The monument is falling apart.”

— TIHANA PUPOVAC *art historian, researcher*

“The fact that we are still in love with the heroes of the past means that we did not achieve closure with the past. It means that the past has something we need.”

— MAJA ĆIRIĆ *art historian, critic and curator*



Stefanos Tsvopoulos (photo: UGM archive)



Nikola Dedić (photo: UGM archive)

“Archive objects are composed of two diametrically different natures – the nature of aesthetics and manipulation on the one hand, and on the other hand they stand as the guardians of history and reality.”

— STEFANOS TSVOPOULOS *artist*

“My idea is that socialist realism is not a break with the body of modernism, rather it is one episode in the extensive utopian narrative about modernity, and about visions of the ways art can change societies.”

— NIKOLA DEDIĆ *art historian*



Conference group photo (photo: UGM archive)

INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION
MARIBOR, MARCH-AUGUST 2015

HEROES WE LOVE

SOCIALIST REALISM REVISED, CASE STUDY: EX-YUGOSLAVIA

ARTISTS

- Antun Augustinčić (CRO)
- Vojin Bakić (CRO)
- Jasmina Cibic (SLO)
- Lojze Dolinar (SLO)
- Igor Grubić (CRO)
- Boža Ilić (SRB)
- Sanja Iveković (CRO)
- Boris Kalin (SLO)
- Zdenko Kalin (SLO)
- Nikola Kečanin (CRO)
- Anton Gojmir Kos (SLO)
- Tone Kralj (SLO)
- Frano Kršinić (CRO)
- Siniša Labrović (CRO)
- Luiza Margan (CRO)
- Dalibor Martinis (CRO)
- Vinko Matković (CRO)
- Ivan Meštrović (CRO)
- Ivan Mirković (CRO)
- Slavko Pengov (SLO)
- Tadej Pogačar (SLO)
- Arjan Pregl (SLO)
- Karel Putrih (SLO)
- Vanja Radauš (CRO)
- Radeta Stanković (SRB)
- Sreten Stojanović (SRB)

CURATORS

Simona Vidmar
& Miško Šuvaković

PRODUCER

UGM | Maribor Art Gallery

Walter Benjamin wrote that “there has never been a document of culture which is not simultaneously one of barbarism” that needs to be understood as “a tool of the ruling classes.”



Heroes We Love exhibition view (photo: Damjan Švarc)

Socialist realism is perceived as doctrinal art in the service of the party, an eclectic and academic artistic configuration, a conservative, anti-avant-garde stream, and an art of empty visualization and false sentiments.

The relatively unknown period of socialist realism in former Yugoslavia was a time of generous commissions and unrestrained socialist iconography, a time of heroic enthusiasm and monumental propaganda.

Majestic monuments and monumental sculptures, heroic murals and enormous canvasses of socialist realism ended up in the dustbin of history.

The *Heroes We Love* exhibition entered the controversial field of socialist heroic art in order to identify and acknowledge those protagonists who brought this monumental form of art to its pinnacle.



Poster for the exhibition *Heroes we love: Socialist Realism Revised, Case Study: Ex-Yugoslavia* (design: Ajdin Bašić)

Vojin Bakić, *Monument to Stjepan Filipović, 1953-60, Valjevo, Serbia* (photo: Jure Kirbiš)



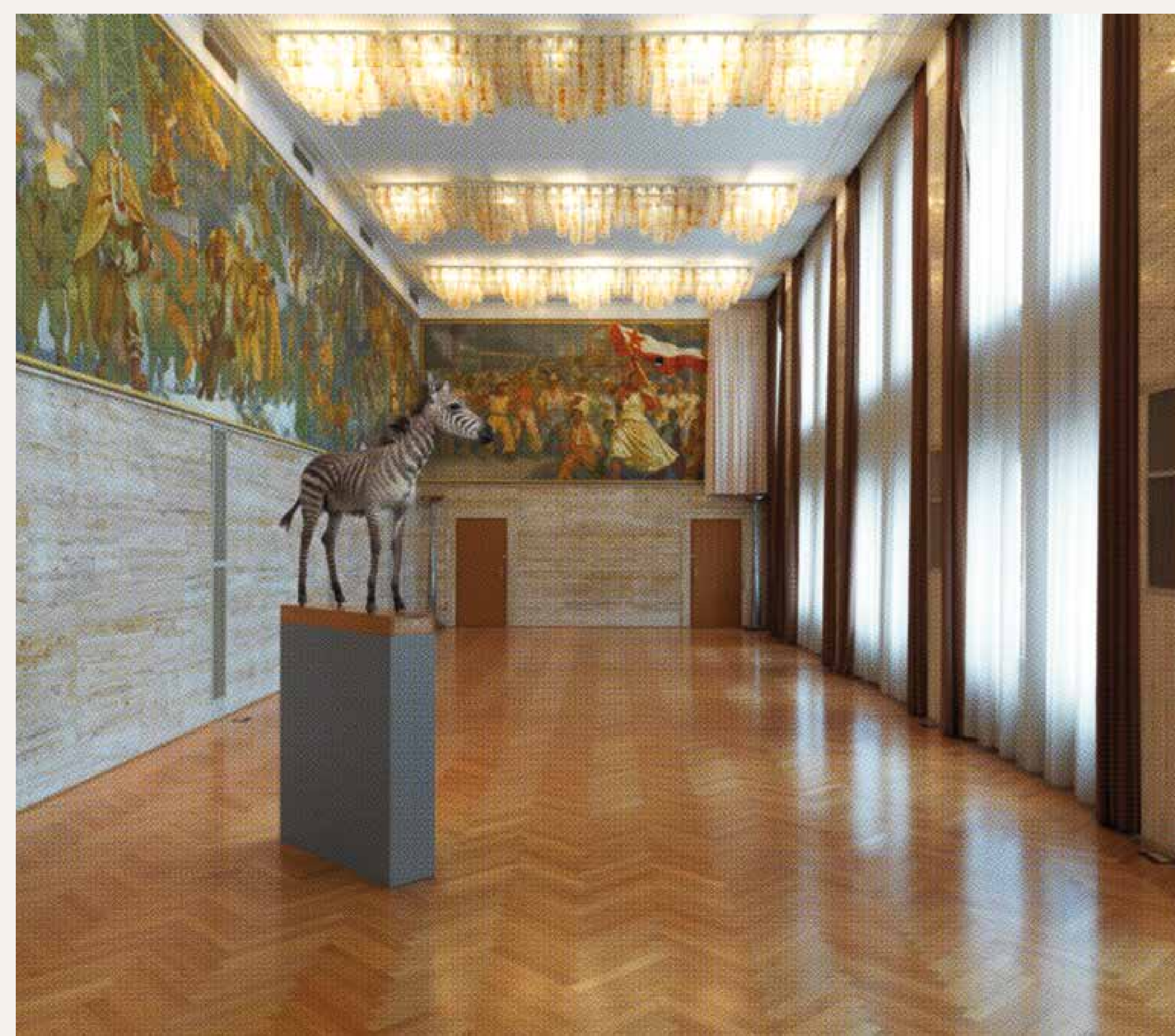
Igor Grubić, *Scarves & Monuments, 2008, public space intervention*



Antun Augustinčić, *Monument to the Red Army, 1945-47, Batina, Croatia* (photo: Darko Bavoljak)



Radeta Stanković, *Monument to the Port Worker, 1954, Belgrade, Serbia* (photo: Darko Bavoljak)



Jasmina Cibic, *Framing the Space, 2012, single channel HD video, 10 min 45 sec*



Radeta Stanković, *Tomb to the Liberators of Belgrade, 1954, Belgrade, Serbia*

“An important exhibition on an era that needs more political knowledge about its own history.”

— UGM VISITORS' BOOK

We wish to understand how far revolutionary romanticism went, from what and where it drew its inspiration, and how it imploded into itself.

We introduced reflections, enactments, actions and interventions by contemporary artists, all with a view to moving away from monuments of failed revolutions and instead toward new artistic utopias and contemporary concepts of memory patterning.

To quote Deleuze and Guattari: “The monument is not something commemorating a past; it is a bloc of present sensations that owe their preservation only to themselves.”

PUBLIC SPACE INTERVENTION & WORKSHOP
ZAGREB, MAY 2015

LIBERATION OF ZAGREB

NOTES FOR A RECONSTRUCTION

ARTISTS

Goran Sergej Pristaš
& Mila Pavićević

IN COLLABORATION WITH

MA students at the Academy of Dramatic Arts (Dario Belić, Nikola Šerventić, Dino Šertović, Ino Zeljak)

CURATORS

Ana Kutleša, Vesna Vuković,
Ivana Hanaček

PRODUCERS

[BLOK] in collaboration with Academy of Dramatic Art, University of Zagreb

A 10-day intervention in the city tissue to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Liberation from Fascism. The aim of the intervention was to discuss the possibilities of forming an immaterial monument to this struggle.



Liberation of Zagreb © Zagreb City Museum

The intervention was the result of a research process that was developed through an artist-led workshop with students at the Academy of Drama Arts in Zagreb. Students of photography and cinematography were connected with historians and activists.

Materials connected with the illegal anti-Fascist movement in Zagreb and the Liberation were gathered from photo and video archives.

A remapping of the route of Liberation army troops was enacted through a performance in public space over several days around May 8. In a public action, the route was recreated on the basis of archive photographs, marked with tape, and re-shot.

Archive photos from Liberation Day celebrations were juxtaposed with contemporary photos from the same locations to produce a series of photo-collages.



Exhibition Opening (photo: Damir Žižić)



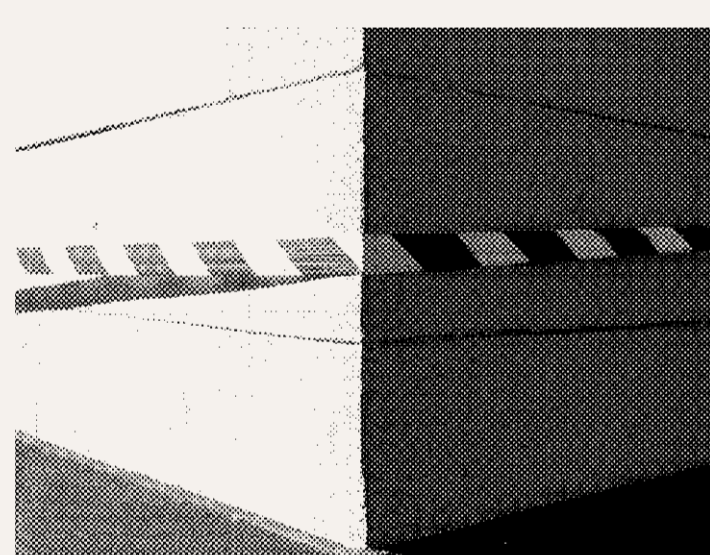
Exhibition Opening (photo: Damir Žižić)



Mapping the City (photo: MA students)



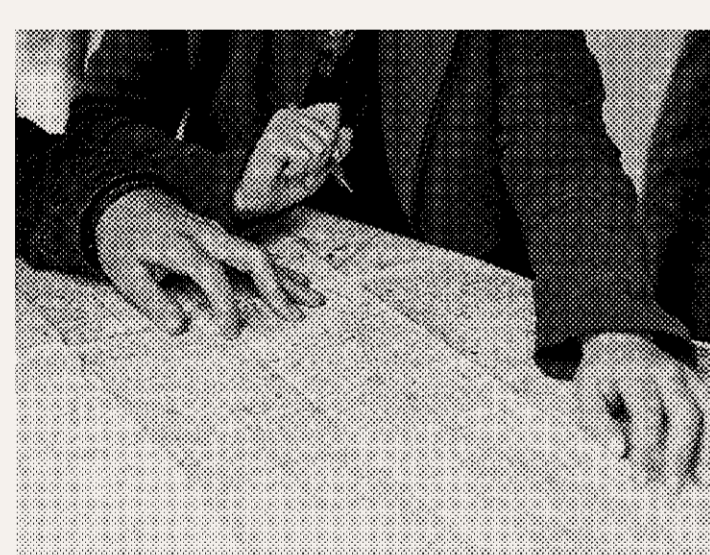
Exhibition Opening (photo: Damir Žižić)



Mapping the City (photo: MA students)



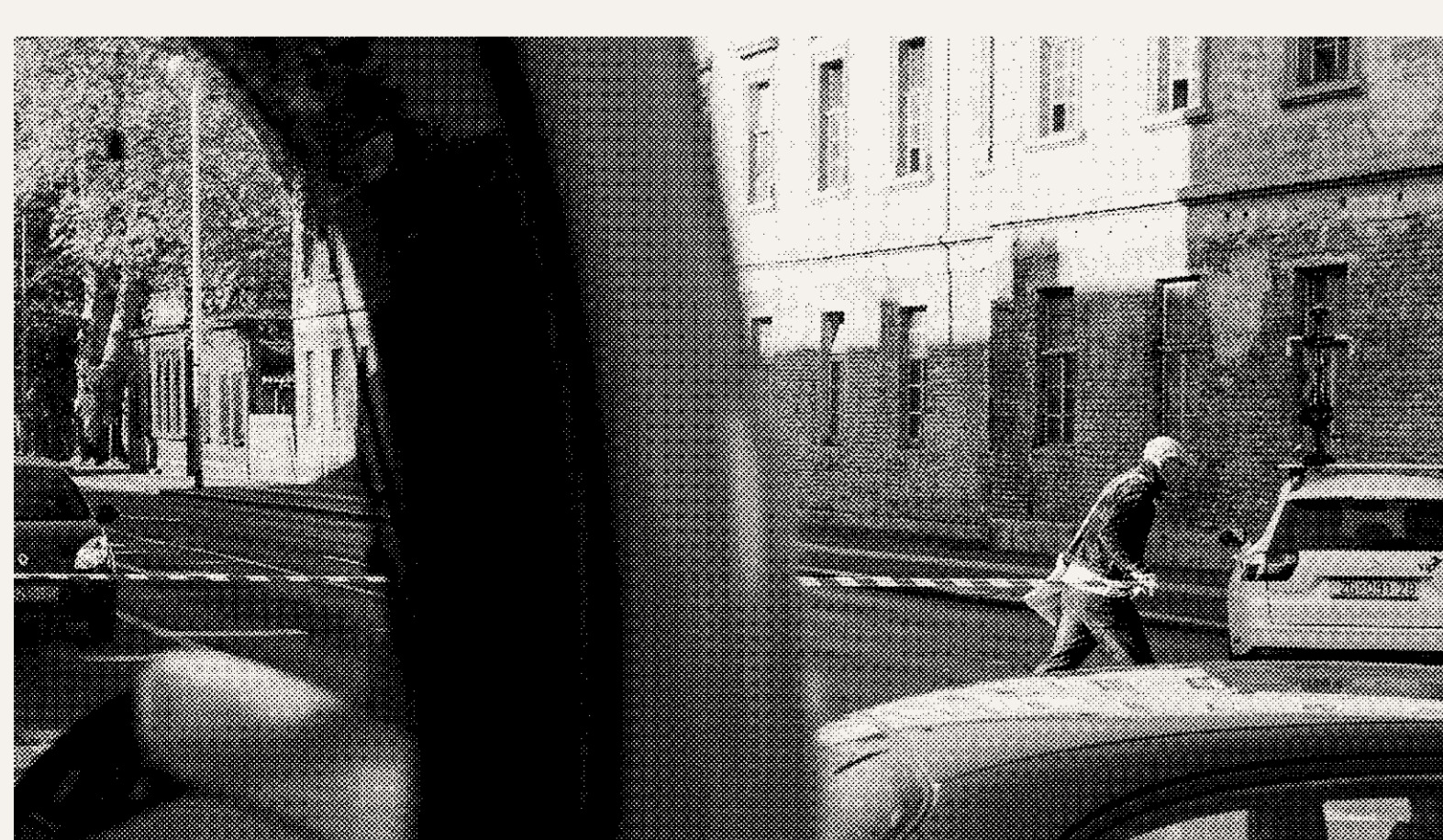
Exhibition Opening (photo: Damir Žižić)



Workshop (photo: MA students)



Mapping the City (photo: MA students)



Mapping the City (photo: MA students)



Liberation of Zagreb © Zagreb City Museum

The resulting photo-collages were exhibited at a derelict shop on one of Zagreb's main streets, which was also an important site in the events surrounding Liberation Day.

This intervention introduced a new dynamic into the surrounding neighborhood, and shed light on the transformative power of urban processes and the potential of abandoned and derelict spaces.



Exhibition Opening (photo: Damir Žižić)

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE II.
ZAGREB, NOVEMBER 2015

SOCIALIST MONUMENTS AND MODERNISM

SPEAKERS

Rachel Aumiller (USA)
Tomislav Augustinčić (CRO)
Owen Hatherley (UK)
Aneta Vasileva, Emilia Kaleva (BG)
Vladimir Kulić (SR/USA)
Agata Pyzik (PL)
Romeo Kodra (AL)
Goran Janev (MK)
Iva Grubiša (CRO)
Milan Rakita (SRB)

ORGANISERS

Lana Lovrenčić & Tihana Pupovac

PRODUCER

[BLOK]

“If the demolition of Red Army memorials was a natural reaction to the years of oppression, at what point did it become manipulated and incorporated into contemporary events, often as the result of the transition to capitalism, to privatization? What role does common nationalism, which emerged almost everywhere after the collapse of communism, play in such a process?”

— AGATA PYZIK

The Afterlife of Red Army Memorials in Poland: International Perspective

Modernism is taken as the socio-political base whose (ideological) superstructure the monuments were supposed to represent; that is to say, socialism is understood as a modernist project. By taking modernism not only as a period in art history but as a social(ist) and political practice, we question the differences between memorials in former socialist countries as well as their difference from memorials in the West.



International conference Socialist Monuments and Modernism (photo: BLOK)



Tihana Pupovac (photo: BLOK)

“Reduced to exotic forms, the antifascist monuments produced under socialism are now emptied of their original meaning and presented as the seductive, but fundamentally irrational manifestations of a totalitarian imagination.”

— VLADIMIR KULIĆ *Countering Orientalization*



Poster for the international conference Socialist Monuments and Modernism (design: Dario Dević)

“The manner in which the historical phenomenon of Yugoslav antifascist monuments has recently been subjected to various misty interpretations – ranging from forms of culturalization, aestheticization, romanticization, exoticization, glorification and commodification, to the point of overt attempts to annihilate its material and symbolic existence – indicates the extent to which modernist-oriented historicism has proved effective in converting it into a depoliticized object of historical revisionism that is deprived of its real historical significance.”

— MILAN RAKITA *Modernization Discourse and Its Discontents*

“What we are witnessing today is the coexistence of two opposites: the politically-biased denial of socialist architecture on the one hand and nostalgically-colored revivalism on the other.”

— ANETA VASILEVA & EMILIA KALEVA

Recharging Socialism: Bulgarian Socialist Monuments in XXI Century.



Romeo Kodra (photo: BLOK)

“The analogies in architecture and urban planning between the various political powers that have ruled the city are numerous. These transformations exist in a sort of harmony with the abandoning of the revolutionary character and their subsequent consolidation of power.”

— ROMEO KODRA

Architectural Monumentalism in Transitional Albania

“The remaking of the capital city aims at covering and hiding the socialist past, even in architecture, let alone in the symbolic sphere of monuments.”

— GORAN JANEV

Burdensome past: challenging the socialist heritage in Macedonia

“Typically, they are monuments to defeat – the Chartist movement, the General Strike, the 1984–85 Miners Strike.”

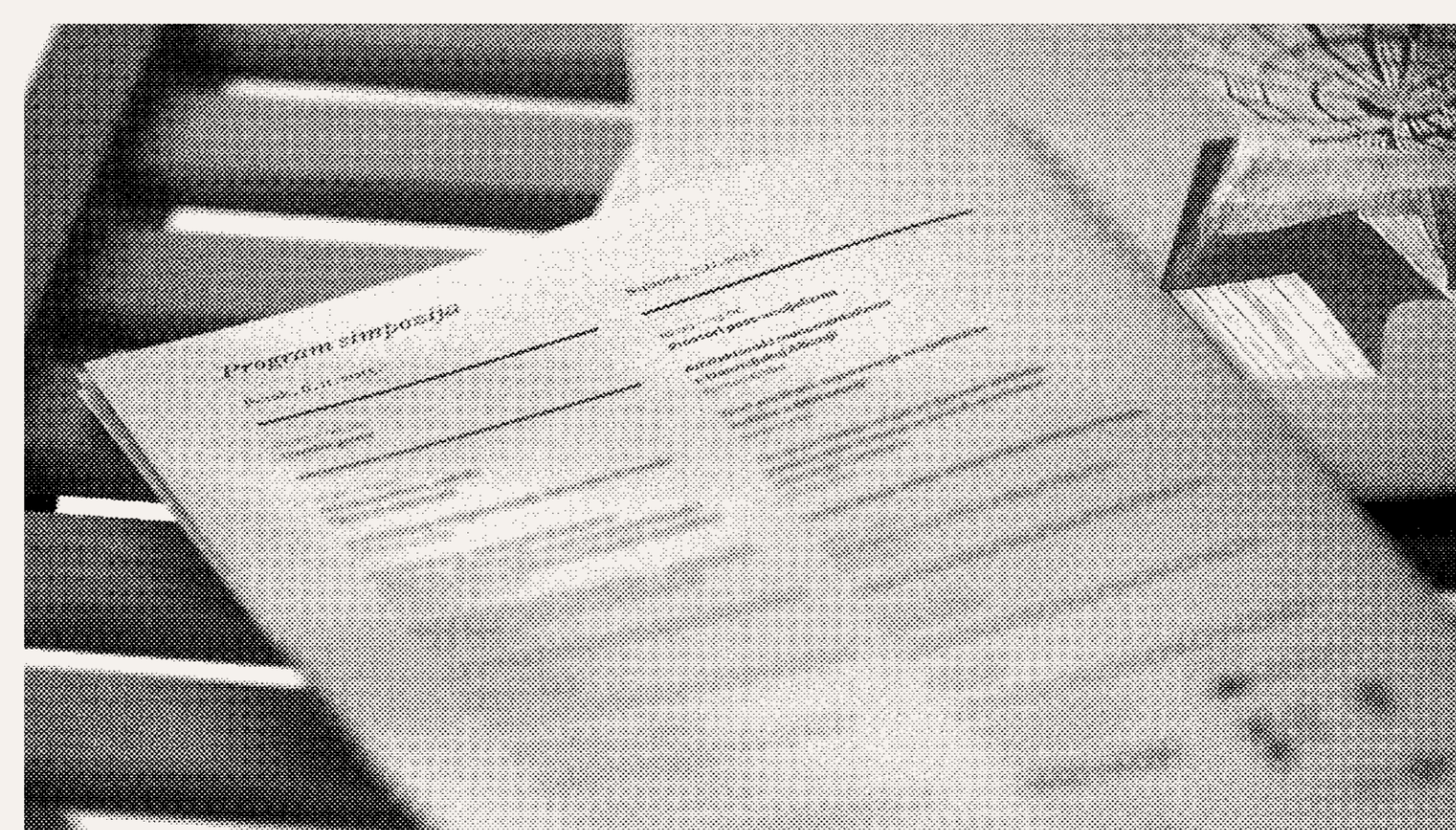
— OWEN HATHERLEY

Monuments to Glorious Defeat – Socialist Memorial Art in Britain



Vladimir Kulić (photo: BLOK)

International conference Socialist Monuments and Modernism (photo: BLOK)



“Memorialization in the form of the abstract statue suggests that our stance towards the past is concrete. Reconciliation with the past is itself a thing of the past. Memorial in the form of a repeated social practice presents reconciliation with the past as a continual process.”

— RACHEL AUMILLER

Finding Antigone Amongst Slovenia's Undeaf

“Socialism is here examined as everyday socialism, i.e. local practices as the result of the interplay between ideological superstructure and local context/history (Hann, 1993; Zukin, 1975). Both socialism and modernism are examined as paradigms of production (Verdery, 1991).”

— TOMISLAV AUGUSTINČIĆ

A People's Hero, a Monument and the Social Memory, Rade Končar in the midst of Social(ist)/Modernist Projects and Paradigms of Production



International conference Socialist Monuments and Modernism (photo: BLOK)

SPEAKERS

- Nikolai Vukov (BG)
- Katja Hrobat Virloget (SLO)
- Neža Čebtron Lipovec (SLO)
- Andrej Preložnik (SLO)
- Elitsa Stanoeva (BG)
- Radoslav Iliev (BG)
- Evelina Kelbecheva (BG)
- Daniela Koleva (BG)
- Ana Luleva (BG)
- Svetlana Kuyumdzhieva (BG)
- Yana Yancheva (BG)
- Svetla Kazalarska (BG)
- Asen Genov (BG)
- Aneta Vasileva (BG)
- Emilia Kaleva (BG)
- Dora Ivanova (BG)
- Plamen Dimitrov (BG)
- Ivaylo Ditchev (BG)
- Krassimir Terziev (BG)
- Luca Ponchiroli (IT)

ORGANISERS

Nikolai Vukov & Svetla Kazalarska

PRODUCER

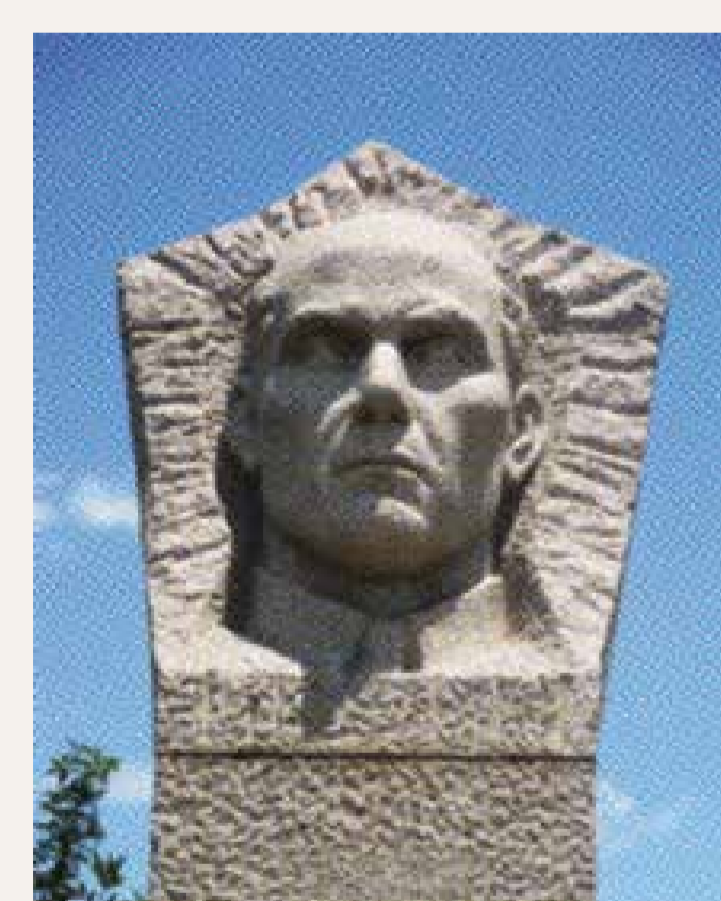
Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum – Bulgarian Academy of Sciences



Asen Genov (photo: Jure Kirbiš)

“One of the characteristic features of the communist ideology in Eastern Europe is the continuous impetus of translating the realm of ideas into tangible forms and physical embodiments. Such an incentive had a strong impact on the public sphere and social life in communist Bulgaria, resulting in a multitude of constructions and artistic forms whose primary goal was to serve as simulacra of the realisation of ideological promises.”

— **NIKOLAI VUKOV** *cultural anthropologist and historian*



Monument to Atanas Nedyalkov, Boyanovo village, Yambol region (photo: Luca Ponchiroli)



Monument to the 1923 September Uprising, Berkovitsa, Montana region (photo: Luca Ponchiroli)

“Exhibitions of the visual arts of Europe’s “Former East” have been growing in number and reach since 1989. On the one hand, Central and Eastern European art evokes the historical turbulences this part of Europe endured; on the other, its history has been largely shaped by the region’s political history. How have art curators dealt with this predicament?”

— **SVETLA KAZALARSKA** *cultural anthropologist*

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE III.

SOFIA, MARCH 2016

HEROIC ART AND SOCIALIST REALISM

MEMORY AND REPRESENTATIONS OF THE SOCIALIST PAST IN BULGARIA

&

PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION

SOFIA, MARCH-APRIL 2016

WITNESSES OF STONE

MONUMENTS OF THE SOCIALIST PAST IN BULGARIA

What is common to all the countries in New Europe is their hurried and resolute rejection of the heritage of Socialist Realism after 1989. As a result, such artworks have been researched only sporadically and partially. How are we to understand the monuments and artworks that constitute the Socialist Realist canon today; what can we do with them, and why do we love to hate them?



Monument of the Bulgarian Communist Party, Buzludzha peak, Stara Zagora region (photo: Luca Ponchiroli)

“Immediately after the establishment of the socialist authority in Bulgaria, the official discourse created and imposed the myth of the “revolutionary youth” – partisans, activists, anti-fascists and similar, i.e. the young generation of the 1940s. (...) they were given responsibility for the “heroic struggle”, i.e. for the development of the socialist system and the cooperation, modernization and industrialization of Bulgaria.”

— **YANA YANCHEVA** *ethnologist*



Poster for the exhibition Witnesses of Stone (design: Luca Ponchiroli)

“Hybrid in nature, socialist realism belongs to the realm of political discourse rather than to the realm of the aesthetic. (...) There are several “cases” that are considered milestones in the study of socialist realism in Bulgaria. They are particularly indicative of the way the machine of heroization and de-heroization functioned, especially during the 1950s.”

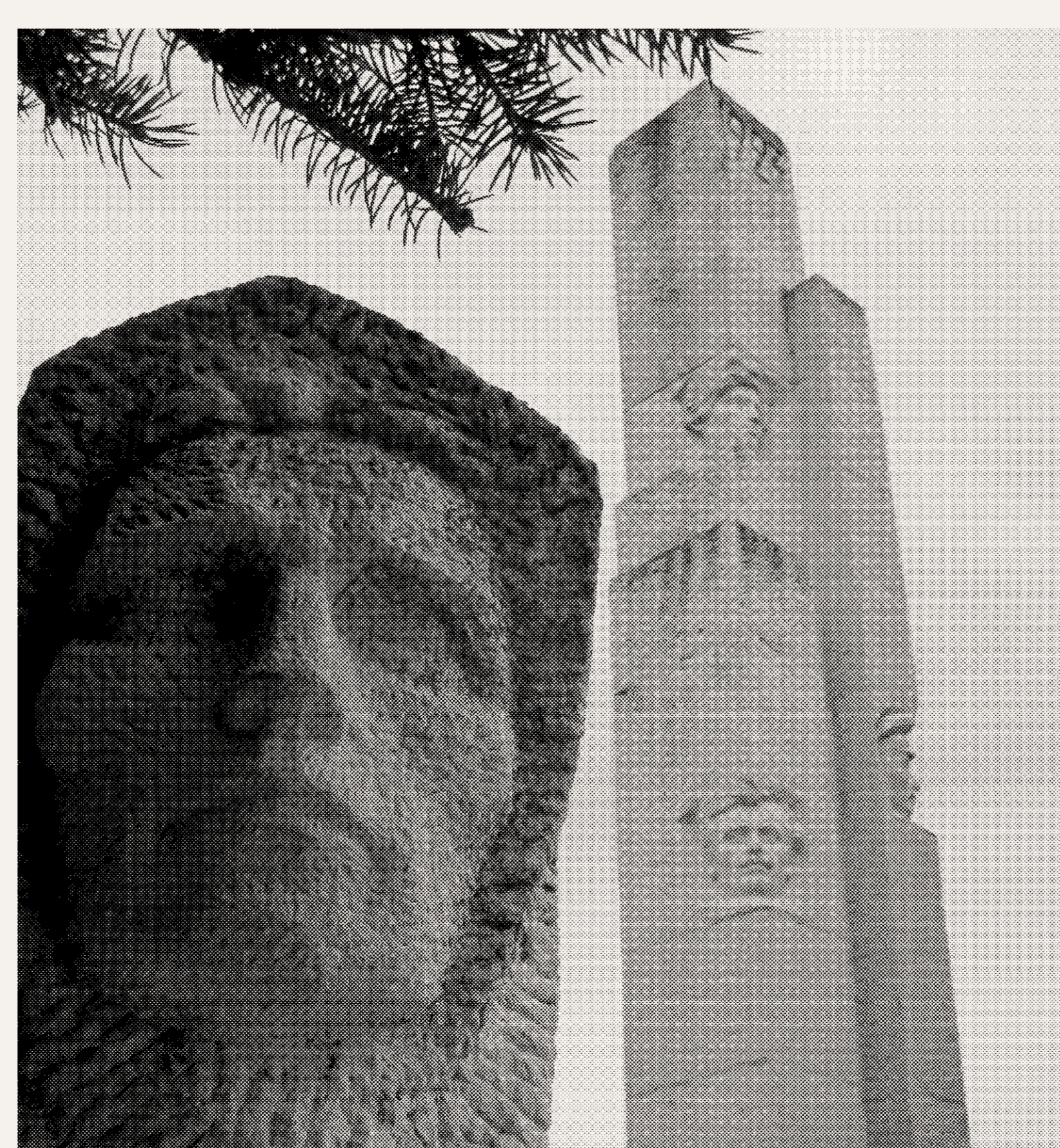
— **SVETLANA KUYUMDZHEVA** *art historian, critic and curator*

“Debate around the socialist monuments is actually a debate about the future of our public space as we know it.”

— **ANETA VASILEVA & EMILIA KALEVA** *architects*

“Indeed, most spectacular was the war with the monuments of communism, which symbolically replaced the battle with the communist rulers and rendered the revolutions’ “velvet”. Who would have imagined that these boring, bureaucratic, and oftentimes serially produced images could trigger so much rage, that they could inspire so many artistic desecrations?”

— **IVAYLO DITCHEV** *cultural anthropologist*



Monument to the 1923 September Uprising, Bratya Daskalovi, Stara Zagora region (photo: Luca Ponchiroli)

Monument of a revolutionary, Batoshevo village, Gabrovo region (photo: Luca Ponchiroli)



PUBLIC SPACE INTERVENTIONS & WORKSHOP
TIRANA, MAY-DECEMBER 2016

**FEATURING: NADJA PRLJA,
NIKOLIN BUJARI, GEORGIA
KOTRETSOS, ÇETA ART
COLLECTIVE**

ARTISTS

Çeta Art Collective (ALB)
Nikolin Bujari (ALB)
Georgia Kotretsos (GR)
Nadja Prlja (MK)

CURATOR

Adela Demetja

PRODUCER

Tirana Art Lab

Tirana Art Lab engaged young contemporary artists to intervene on selected Socialist-era monuments and cultural heritage in public space. The interventions and workshop aimed at stimulating public debate, initiating new interpretations and envisaging the possible potential of these special art works of the past.



Monument to the 5th of May – Martyrs' Day of Albania (photo: Nikolin Bujari)



Georgia Kotretsos & Tirana Art Lab, The Master of a State, 2016, intervention in public space (photo: TAL)

NADJA PRLJA
HUMANISTIC COMMUNISM (MAY 2016)

On the 5th of May, Martyrs' Day in Albania, artist Nadja Prlja conducted a workshop with participants Aurora Kalemi, Mirjana Meçaj, Lucas Vogt, Ruzmira Beqiraj Bejaj at the National Gallery of Art in Tirana, that aimed to create an image of 'Humanistic Communism', where the group of participants demonstrated, through different approaches, love and care for the former socialist monuments, by hugging, caressing, kissing and cleaning them, and by fantasising, together as a group, of a system that might change or mitigate the cruelty of systems both current and to come.



Georgia Kotretsos & Tirana Art Lab, The Master of a State, 2016, intervention in public space (photo: TAL)

NIKOLIN BUJARI
A MONUMENT FOR A MONUMENT (MAY 2016)

Bujari duplicated the original, forgotten monument dedicated to the 5th of May, Martyrs' Day in Albania, in original size and installed it in front of Tirana Art Lab in the city centre. In his intervention, Bujari uses simple strategies of replication and relocation in order to change the context and at the same time, the frame in which the monument is experienced and considered, creating opportunities for debate and re-evaluation.

GEORGIA KOTRETSOS & TIRANA ART LAB
THE MASTER OF A STATE (DECEMBER 2016)

Three signs were placed along the main boulevard in Tirana as part of an intervention. The totalitarian fascist and socialist regimes, and above all the neoliberal regime, have continued to use this privileged and semiotically charged space to reveal the 'teatre' of self-promotion through art. The three signs metaphorically intervene in the landscape of the boulevard, questioning the relation between art and politics under different political regimes.



Nadja Prlja, Humanistic Communism, 2016, workshop documentation (photo: Prlja & TAL)



Nikolin Bujari, A Monument for a Monument, 2016, intervention in public space (photo: Nikolin Bujari)



Georgia Kotretsos & Tirana Art Lab, The Master of a State, 2016, intervention in public space (photo: TAL)



Çeta Art Collective, Buongiorno, vi parla l'Albania, 2016, intervention in public space (photo: Çeta Art Collective)



Çeta Art Collective, Vojo Kushi is Still Alive, 2016, intervention in public space (photo: Çeta Art Collective)



Nadja Prlja, Humanistic Communism, 2016, workshop documentation (photo: Prlja & TAL)

ÇETA ART COLLECTIVE
BUONGIORNO, VI PARLA L'ALBANIA
(DECEMBER 2016)

In their interventions, Çeta make use of the imagery of Socialist Realist paintings, reactivating depictions of heroes from the past and through them reacting to and commenting on contemporary issues relevant to the Albanian context. For this intervention they employ a depiction of one of the country's most important paintings to take a stand against the growing presence of foreign call centre businesses and the exploitation of Albanian's younger labour market.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE IV.

TIRANA, APRIL 2016

THE ART OF THE SOCIALIST PERIOD BETWEEN DISDAIN, FETISHISM AND TRANSITION

SPEAKERS

- Sezgin Boynik (KOS)
- Marta Jecu & Jose Manuel Gomes Pinto (ROM&POR)
- Vladan Jeremić (SRB)
- Romeo Kodra (ALB)
- Róna Kopeczky (HUN)
- Gëzim Qëndro (ALB)
- Pirro Vaso (ALB)
- Willem Jan Renders (NDL)
- Jelena Vesić (SRB)

ORGANISERS

Adela Demetja & Romeo Kodra

PRODUCER

Tirana Art Lab

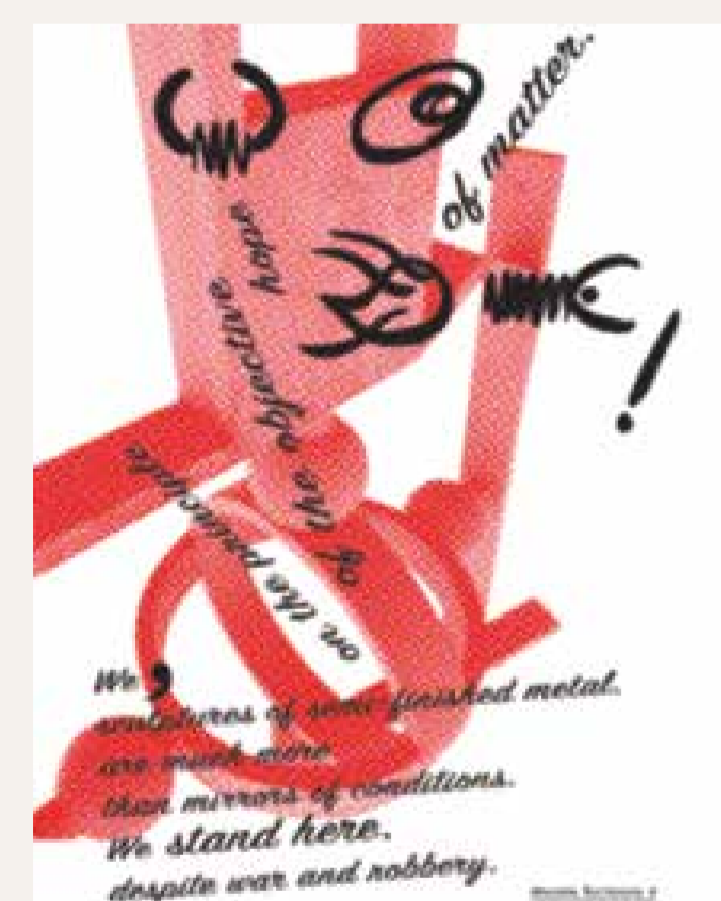
The conference raised questions that examined the cultivation of dreams and nightmares in the context of the “former bloc”, and the cultivation of a complete and ideal world was also explored, along with the heterotopic and heterochronic gaps therein. Similarly, the questions and exploration served to widen the scope to include not only a perspective on yesterday, but one on today and tomorrow, enabling several axioms to be extracted with which to interpret the former bloc realities. Lastly, through these axioms, we attempted to decipher the erotic formula of the “heroes” with whom “we” consistently fall in “love”, repeating the sacred and heroic cycle of the sacrifice of the daily for the sake of the future.



Willem Jan Renders presentation *Utopia and Reality / From Kapital to Capital* (photo: Eni Derhemi)

“Because artistic work is the product of creative collaboration between artists and workers and does not assume the extant form of sculptures, the project *Ironworks ABC* focuses on the history of production, presenting transformative speech through language and symbols. This is not a question of affirming certain sculptures as objects in need of protection from deterioration, but rather about the revalorization of the relations that form the very core of the creative process.”

— VLADAN JEREMIĆ artist



Rena Rädle & Vladan Jeremić, *Ironworks*, 2015 (photo: Rena Rädle)



Rena Rädle & Vladan Jeremić, *Ironworks*, 2015 (photo: Rena Rädle)

“The principle of shock-work (or Stakhanovism), in opposition to the contemporary “excellent worker”, signals a refusal to passively accept the role of the “exceptional individual” so easily assigned to successful cultural work, immaterial labour and creative businesses. It also indicates a rejection of the logic behind individualism, which forms the basis of this etiquette of “exceptionalism”. Instead, the actions of shock-workers and the consequences of their efforts are aimed at “higher goals” that strive to achieve a sense of wellbeing for society as a whole.”

— JELENA VESIĆ art historian, curator



Pirro Vaso, *Sketch of the Pyramid*, 1988, Tirana

“Based on the thesis that contemporary art institutions are one of the most sophisticated forms of the materialization of nationalist ideologies, we have questioned the consequences of this relationship. By arguing that the reproduction of nationalist ideologies is effected through the apparatus (discourses, institutions, practices) of contemporary art, we have tried to break from the common argument that nationalism is reserved only for banal expressions of culture.”

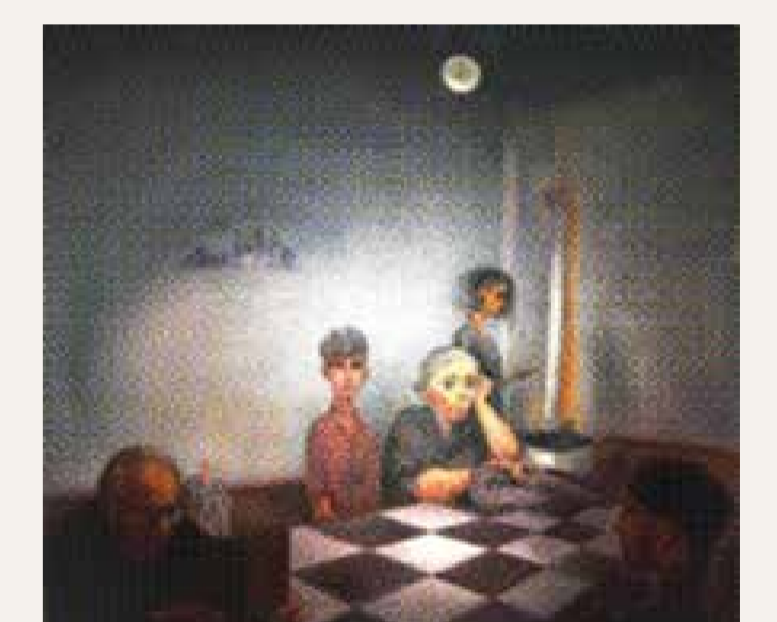
— SEZGIN BOYNIK sociologist, writer, art researcher

“Deconstruct the patriotic spectacle!”

— RÓNA KOPECZKY art historian, curator

“Three exhibitions at the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, Netherlands dealt with a part of the legacy of the former Eastern bloc. They were, however, conceived, elaborated and installed in a Western European institution, in a Dutch museum of modern and contemporary art. What are the benefits and/or disadvantages of this historical, social and geographical distance with regard to exhibiting the heritage of the former Eastern bloc?”

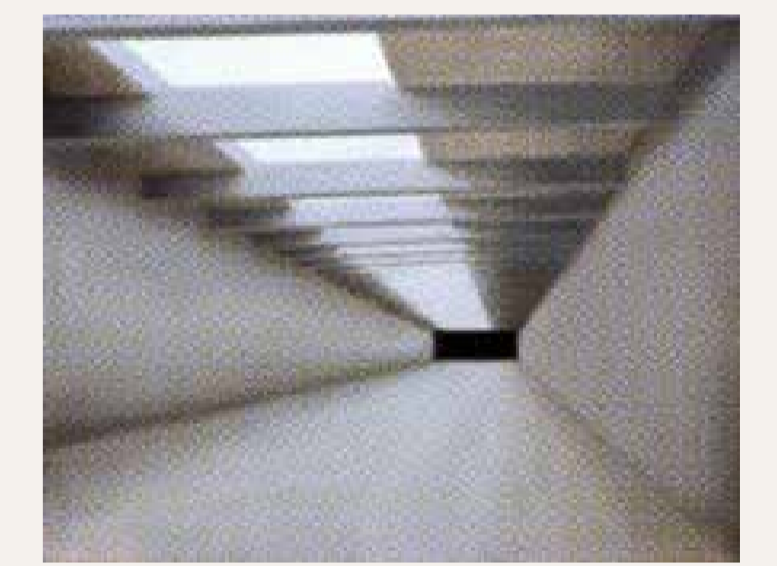
— WILLEM JAN RENDERS art historian, curator



Agron Bregu, *Evening*, 1989



Dhimitraq Trebicka, *The first toast to the Party*, 1977



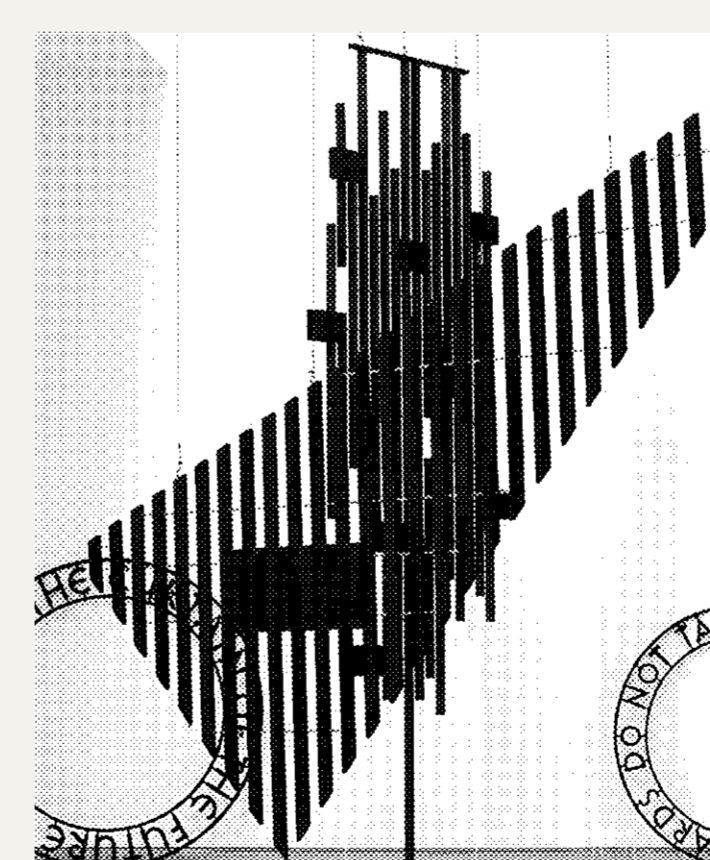
Dritan Hyska, *Hall*, 2006, oil on canvas



Poster for the international conference *The art of the socialist period between disdain, fetishism and transition* (design: Eni Derhemi)

“Could the genesis of this “pyramid” object possibly explain this contradiction? Could it be that this contradiction does not belong to the object, but to the creator-subject, i.e. the artist? Is the contradiction of the creator-subject even more deeply rooted in the urban planning history of the capital, Tirana?”

— PIRRO VASO & ROMEO KODRA architect & art historian



Jasmina Cibic, *Spielraum - The Nation Loves It* (detail), Ludwig Museum Budapest (photo: Tamás Bujnovszky)

“The painting *The First Toast to the Party*, by the Albanian artist Dhimitraq Trebicka, was part of the Socialist Surrealism exhibition owing to its latent messianic content and the indirect depiction of the total submission of the Albanian people, who could not enjoy even an intimate family event without publicly thanking the Party and its Leader.”

— GËZIM QËNDRO art historian

Jelena Vesić, *Winter Tale*, 2016



“The project focused on the monstrous character of political monuments and the way they molest their environment, which paradoxically renders them invisible. They trigger a traumatic experience but end up simply effacing their own presence in the minds of the people, dragging down the ‘face’ of the city with them.”

— MARTA JECU art historian, curator

PUBLIC SPACE INTERVENTIONS

GDAŃSK, JUNE 2016

POSTCARDS FROM A CITY

FEATURING: KAROLINA FREINO, JUOZAS LAIVYS, DIANA LARREA, ANGELINA MERENKOVA, KAMILA SZEJNOCH, JUSTYNA WENCEL & MARCIN CHOMICKI

INTERVENTIONS

- Karolina Freino (POL),**
Blind Window
- Juozas Laivys (LITH),**
Gogin in Gdansk
- Diana Larrea (SP),**
Myths and Truths
- Angelina Merenkova (RUS),**
Souvenir Shop
- Kamila Szejnoch (POL),**
Reconstruction, Artistic Action
- Justyna Wencel & Marcin Chomicki (POL),**
Floating Garden

CURATOR

Agnieszka Kulazinska

PRODUCER

Laznia Center
for Contemporary Art

Gdańsk is a city with a 1000-year history, which was “built/rebuilt from scratch” in the 20th century. Not only was the architectural tissue of the city subjected to reconstruction, but also its memory.



Karolina Freino, Blind window, documentation of a photo shoot in Gdańsk shipyard (photo: Adam Bogdan)



Karolina Freino, Blind window, documentation of a photo shoot in Gdańsk shipyard (photo: Adam Bogdan)

The true pre-war Gdańsk was hidden and an ideological construct, socialist in form and nationalist in content, was set up in its place.

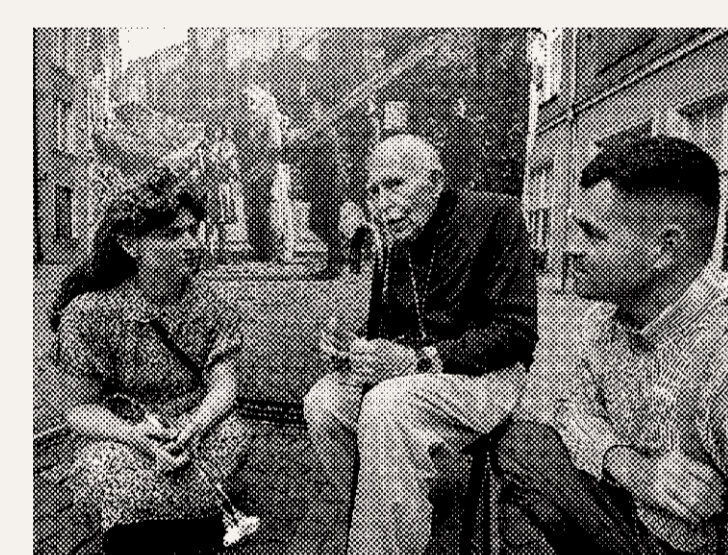
“The image of the city created for tourism and marketing purposes is free from defects – the city depicted on carefully framed and idealised photographs is thus a piece of fiction.” (M. Kowalewski)

Miles in the *Consuming cities* claims “we have reached the point where the city is in fact a largely rhetorical concept.”

The project was not intended to be an analysis of a specific place, but an attempt to reconstruct and create alternative urban narratives. The research was focused on the role of myths, ideologies, reconstruction, and alternative narratives in creating urban histories.



Karolina Freino, Blind window, documentation of a photo shoot in Gdańsk shipyard (photo: Adam Bogdan)



Kamila Szejnoch, Reconstruction, documentation of artistic action, 18.-19.06.2016, Main Town in Gdańsk (photo: Adam Bogdan; background photo by Wiesława Gruszkowski)



Kamila Szejnoch, Reconstruction, documentation of artistic action, 18.-19.06.2016, Main Town in Gdańsk (photo: Adam Bogdan; background photo by Wiesława Gruszkowski)



Kamila Szejnoch, Reconstruction, documentation of artistic action, 18.-19.06.2016, Main Town in Gdańsk (photo: Adam Bogdan; background photo by Wiesława Gruszkowski)



Angelina Merenkova, Souvenir Shop, documentation of artistic action, 24-26.06.2016, Main Town in Gdańsk (photo: Adam Bogdan)



Angelina Merenkova, Souvenir Shop, documentation of artistic action, 24-26.06.2016, Main Town in Gdańsk (photo: Adam Bogdan)



Justyna Wencel, Marcin Chomicki, Floating garden, artistic intervention on Szopy Bridge (photo: Adam Bogdan)



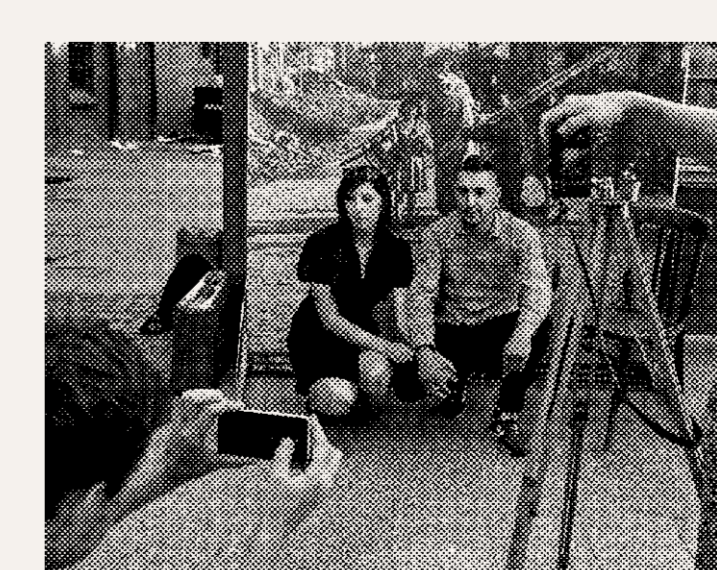
Justyna Wencel, Marcin Chomicki, Floating garden, artistic intervention on Szopy Bridge (photo: Adam Bogdan)



Kamila Szejnoch, Reconstruction, documentation of artistic action, 18.-19.06.2016, Main Town in Gdańsk (photo: Adam Bogdan; background photo by Wiesława Gruszkowski)

“Postcards change the way we look at the city by creating its visual dimension and becoming a tool of symbolic violence.” (M. Kowalewski)

What has been created? A theatrical stage design? An alternative urban narrative based on a manipulation of historical memory? Does the reconstruction end or does only the ideology change?



Kamila Szejnoch, Reconstruction, documentation of artistic action, 18.-19.06.2016, Main Town in Gdańsk (photo: Adam Bogdan; background photo by Wiesława Gruszkowski)



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE V.
BELGRADE, SEPTEMBER 2016

NOSTALGIA ON THE MOVE

SPEAKERS

Mitja Velikonja (SLO)
Tanja Petrović (SLO)
Dragan Markovina (CRO)
Branislav Dimitrijević (SRB)
Ana Hofman (SLO)
Milica Popović (SRB)
Nevena Škrbić Alempijević (CRO)
Muriel Blaive (CZ)
Nikolai Vukov (BG)
Svetla Kazalarska (BG)
Marija Đorgović (SRB)
Nataša Jagdhuhn (GER)
Nela Milić (UK)

ORGANISERS

Marija Đorgović,
Mirjana Slavković, Dušan Jevtić

PRODUCER

Museum of Yugoslav History

The spread of nostalgia throughout post-communist countries has often been looked upon as a kind of maladjustment to the present and its requirements. Nevertheless, more than a few researchers have proposed that we should listen more carefully to the messages conveyed by nostalgic narratives and practices.



The Day of Youth celebrations in Belgrade, Serbia, 2015 (photo: Marija Vasiljević)

“The central motif of Yugonostalgia and Titostalgia is the celebration of May 25, which in the time of the SFR Yugoslavia celebrated Tito’s birthday and the national Day of Youth. More than three decades after Tito’s death and two decades after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the celebration still lives.”

— **MARIJA ĐORGVIĆ** curator

“Under the influence of the acceleration of history, the museumification of communism happened a lot faster than the museumification of any other previous historical period.”

— **SVETLA I. KAZALARSKA**
assistant professor, cultural anthropologist

“The nostalgia performed in the public space of Tito’s birthplace cannot be treated primarily as a conservative and uncritical reflex towards the past.”

— **NEVENA ŠKRBIĆ ALEMPIJEVIĆ**
associate professor, cultural anthropologist



“It’s nice to think back on the times in which one grew up. I had a happy childhood and adolescence, and it seems wonderful that not all of it will be forgotten. Regardless of the infamous potty benches we have become intelligent people.”

(From the book of impressions at the DDR Museum)



The poster for the international conference Nostalgia on the Move (design: Goran Pandžić)

“Without affective and emotional engagement there is no intervention in the present and that is, for me, the political potential of nostalgia.”

— **TANJA PETROVIĆ** linguist, anthropologist

“The generation of last pioneers creates memory-based narratives that interweave the political and the nostalgic.”

— **MILICA POPOVIĆ** political scientist



The Day of Youth celebrations in Belgrade, 2015 (photo: Nemanja Babić)



The Day of Youth celebrations in Belgrade, Serbia, 2015 (photo: Marija Vasiljević)

“I take conferences as an opportunity to intervene, to start a discussion, rather than to present something that is already done.”

— **BRANISLAV DIMITRIJEVIĆ** professor, art historian



The Day of Youth celebrations in Belgrade, Serbia, 2015 (photo: Marija Vasiljević)



The Day of Youth celebrations in Belgrade, 2015 (photo: Nemanja Babić)

“Yugo-nostalgia, as well as all the other red nostalgias, is a typical consequence of this liminality of state in which all our societies find themselves, from the Baltic to the Balkans, from Prague to Moscow – stuck somewhere in between “no more” and “not yet”. We have not come out, nor have we yet arrived anywhere. As a result this curious prefix “post” is commonly being used, which in itself is problematic, like we should now be called post-children and not adults. It just serves to show that this situation does not have a name nor an identity as such.”

— **MITJA VELIKONJA** professor, cultural anthropologist



Exhibition The Inventory Storehouse of Socialism, Red House Center for Culture and Debate, 2006, Sofia (photo: Milena Charli)

International conference Nostalgia on the Move (photo: LP studio)

“Nostalgia has great potential, because the potential of revisionist nostalgia around the defeated powers of the Second World War helped to thoroughly destroy the heritage and the very physical existence of socialist Yugoslavia.”

— **DRAGAN MARKOVINA** historian

FEBRUARY 2015–NOVEMBER 2016

#HEROESWELOVE INTERNATIONAL INSTAGRAM CONTEST

Instagram users shared their encounters with socialist heritage at the hashtag #HeroesWeLove, featuring memorials, public sculptures, murals, mosaics, state buildings, housing complexes, memorabilia, publications and personal archives, as well as their associations, interventions, inspirations... Posts from Russia, the USA, and all over Europe come together to form a mosaic of familiar and unlikely images of socialist archaeology. From among more than 1800 posts a special jury made a selection of images best representing the legacy of socialism in visual culture. Here we present 33 shortlisted posts!



Photo: _kate_sk_

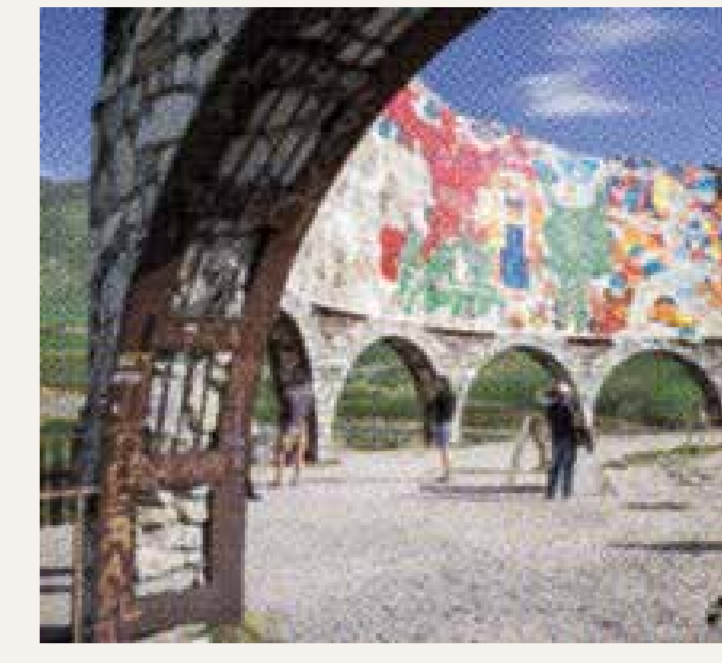


Photo: _babe_k_hasanov_



Photo: bahram_bagirzade



Photo: androaparatus

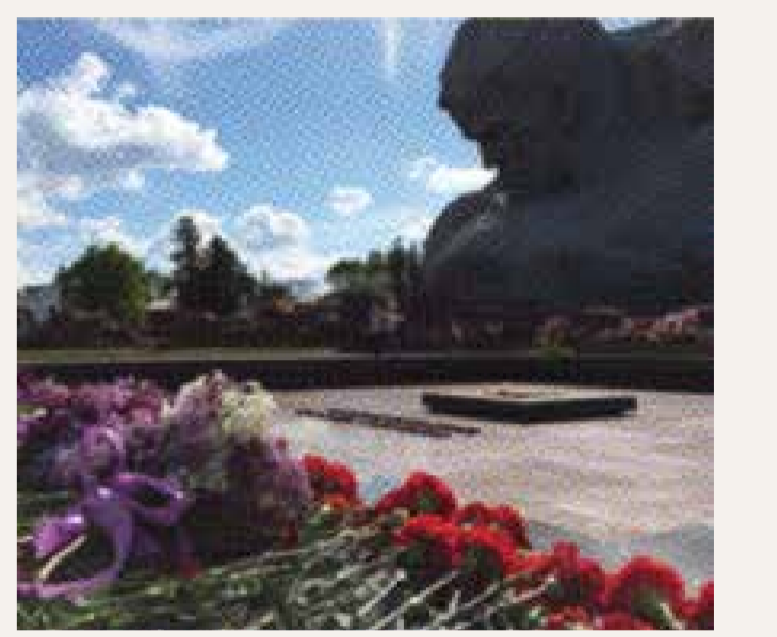


Photo: brestfortressfoundation

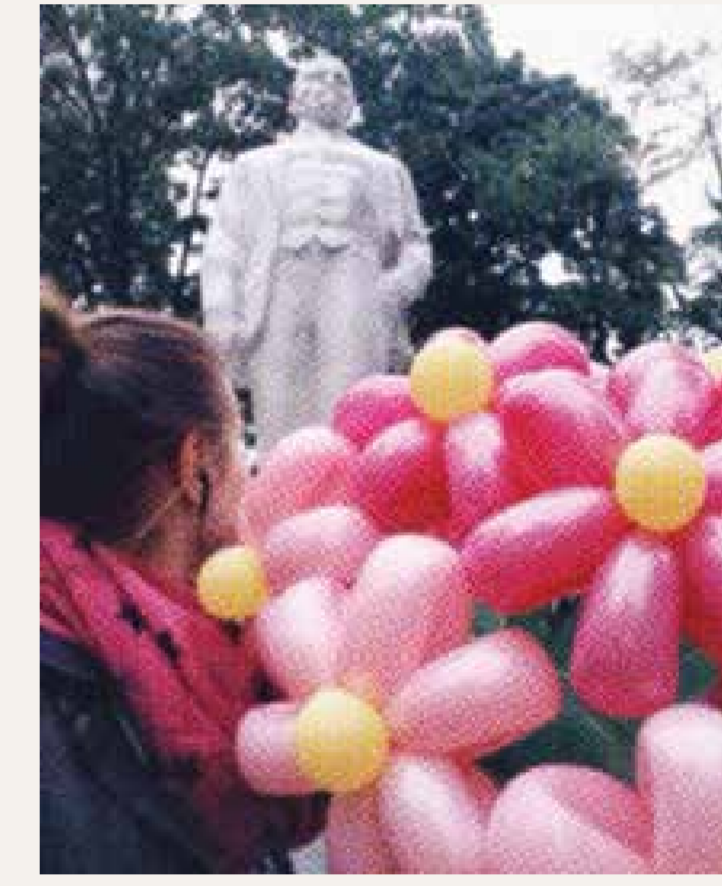


Photo: polina_jakob

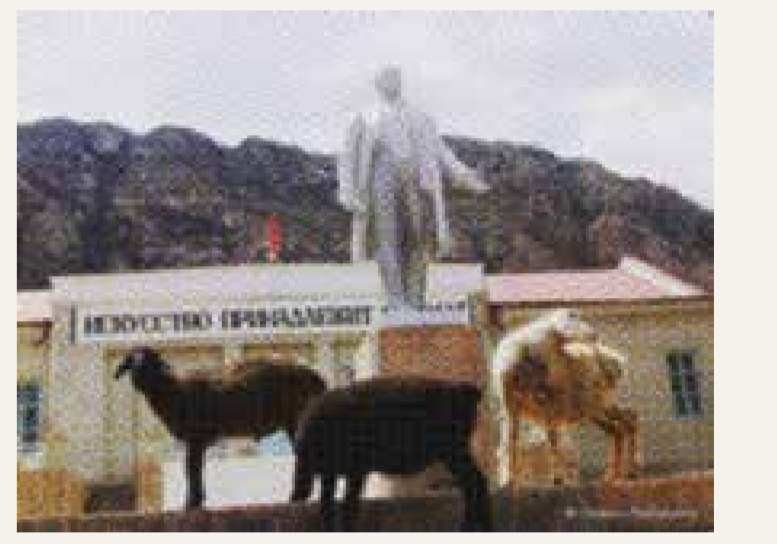


Photo: cholpon.zhanadyl

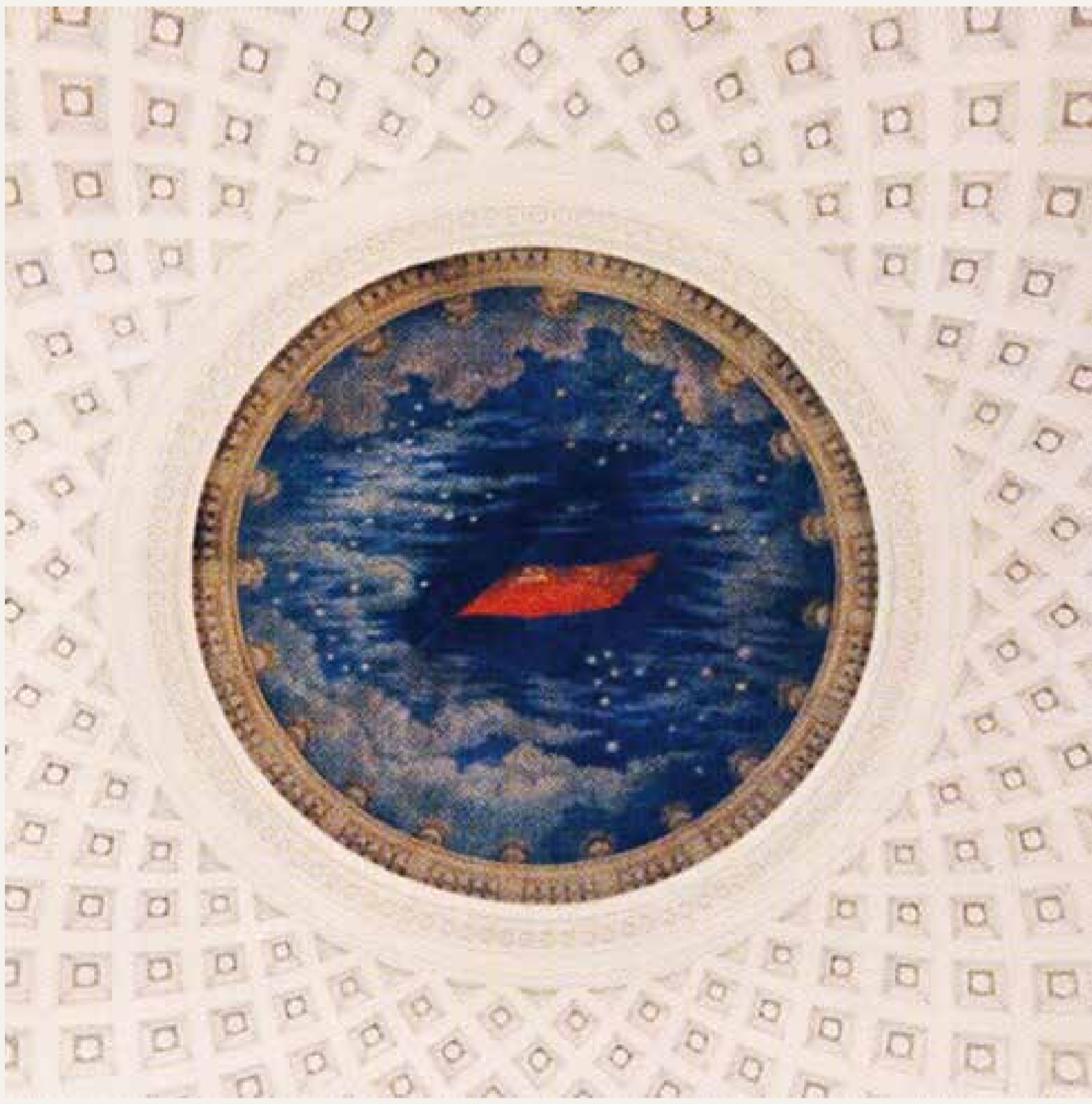


Photo: arizona



Photo: dagaach



Photo: allamuua

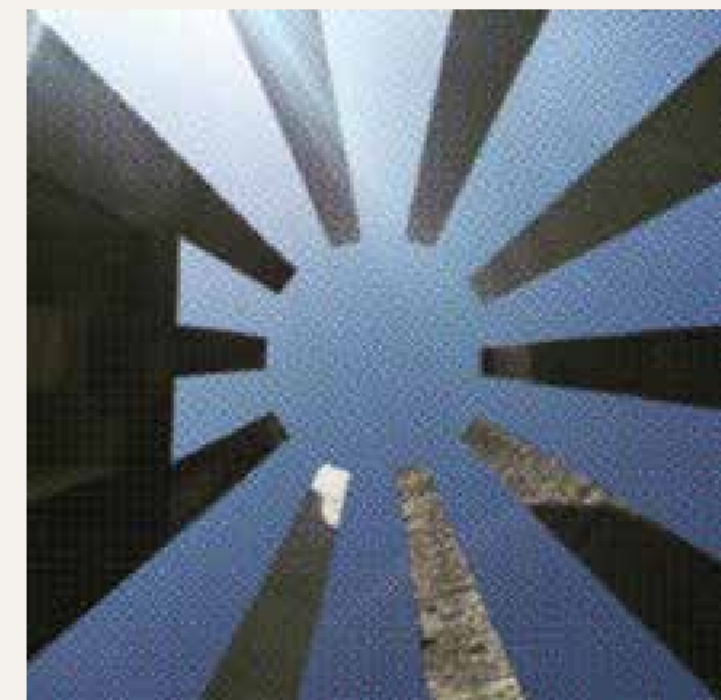


Photo: mjm_her



Photo: project_memory

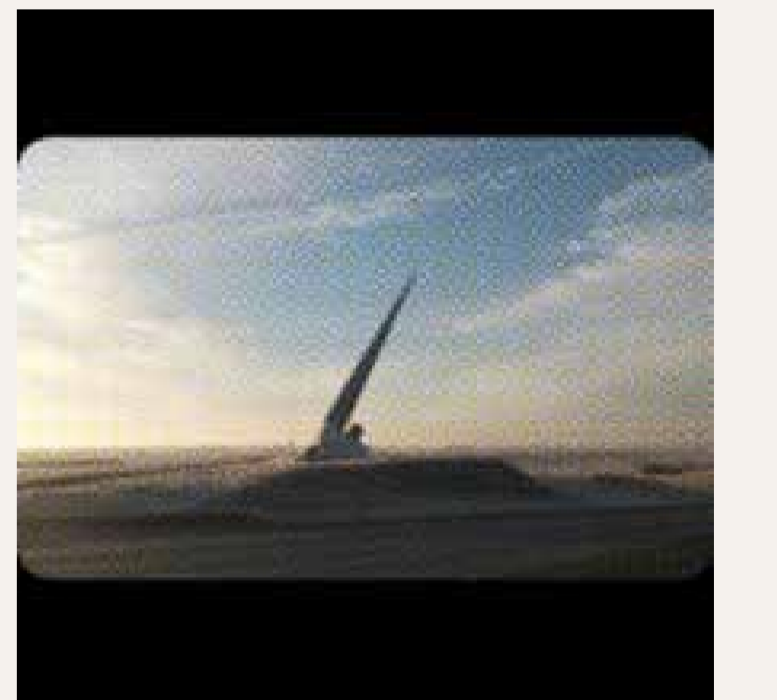


Photo: project_memory



Photo: mariia.utorova

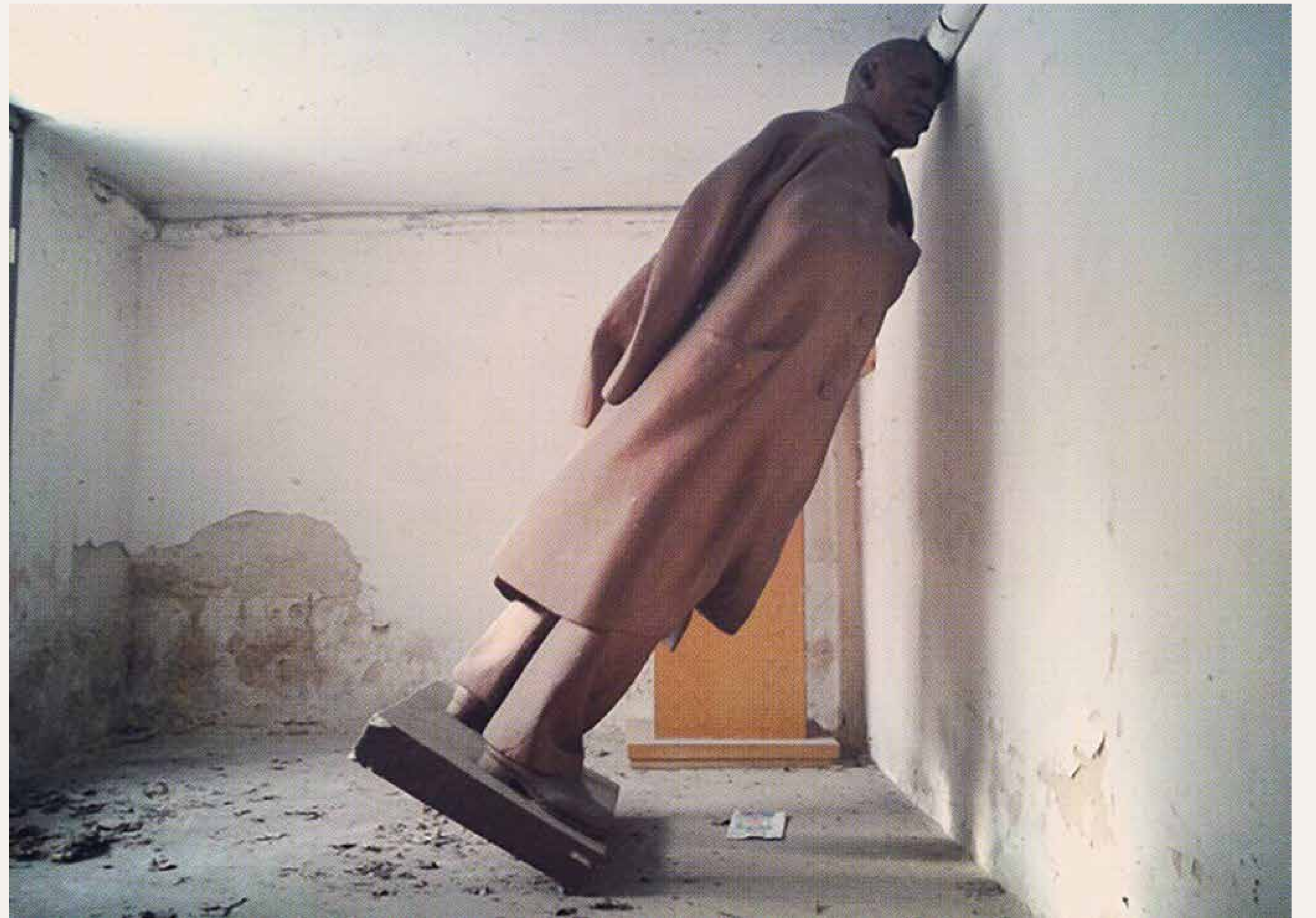


Photo: kamilaszejnoch

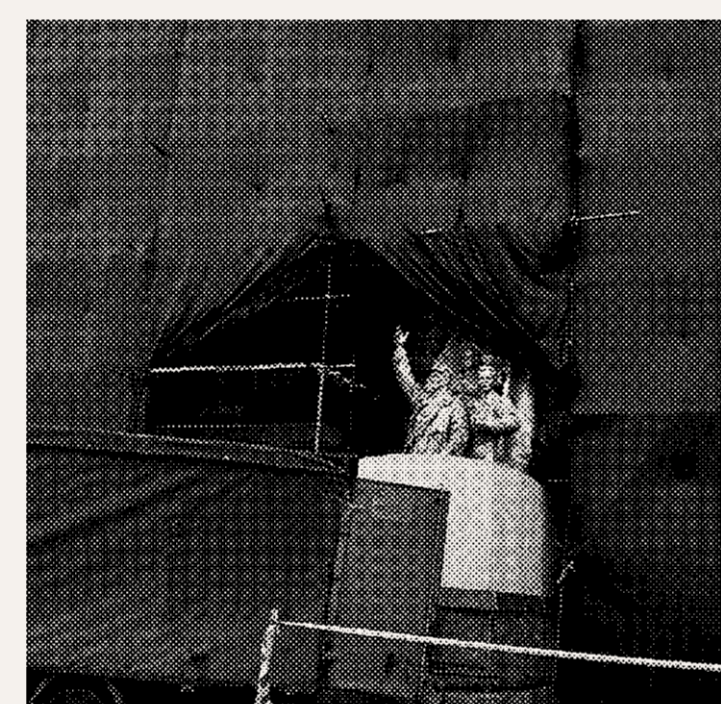


Photo: lanelic



Photo: elenabulava



Photo: therealbabskaya

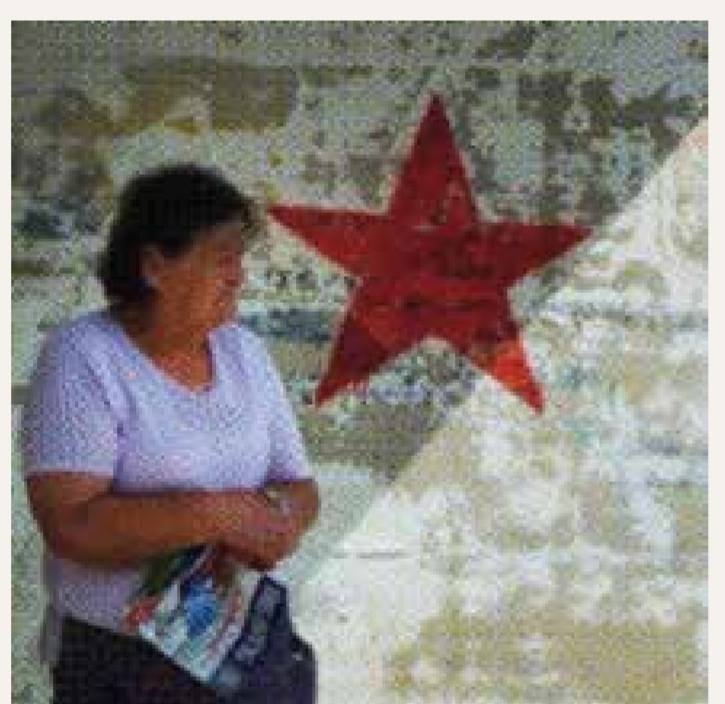


Photo: fugi_andrej



Photo: julia_shaki



Photo: julia_shaki

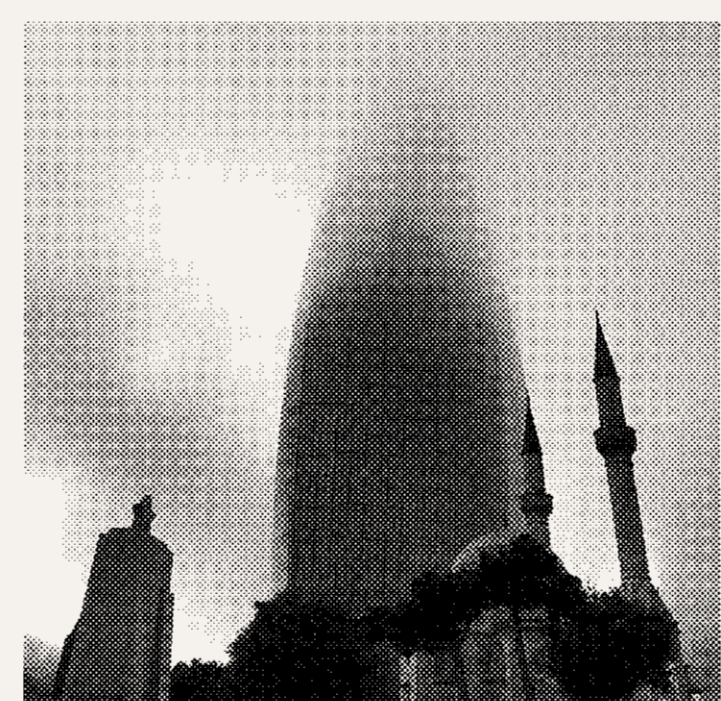


Photo: sehrbaz



Photo: tjape



Photo: traktor.sa.srem

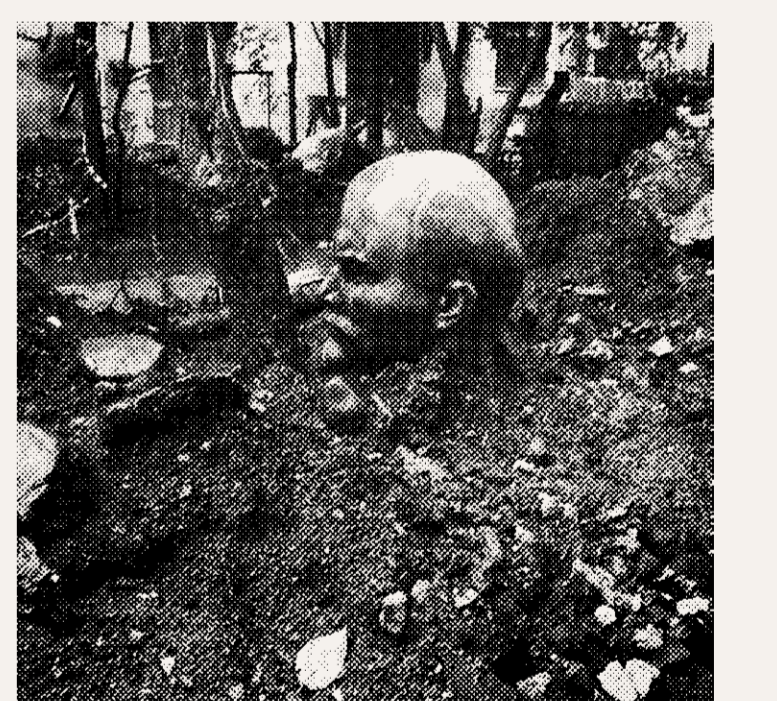


Photo: vasianufriev



Photo: gu_zzz



Photo: victoria_liholet



Photo: miirtich



Photo: larisastas



Photo: kamillavallieva



Photo: jul_frost

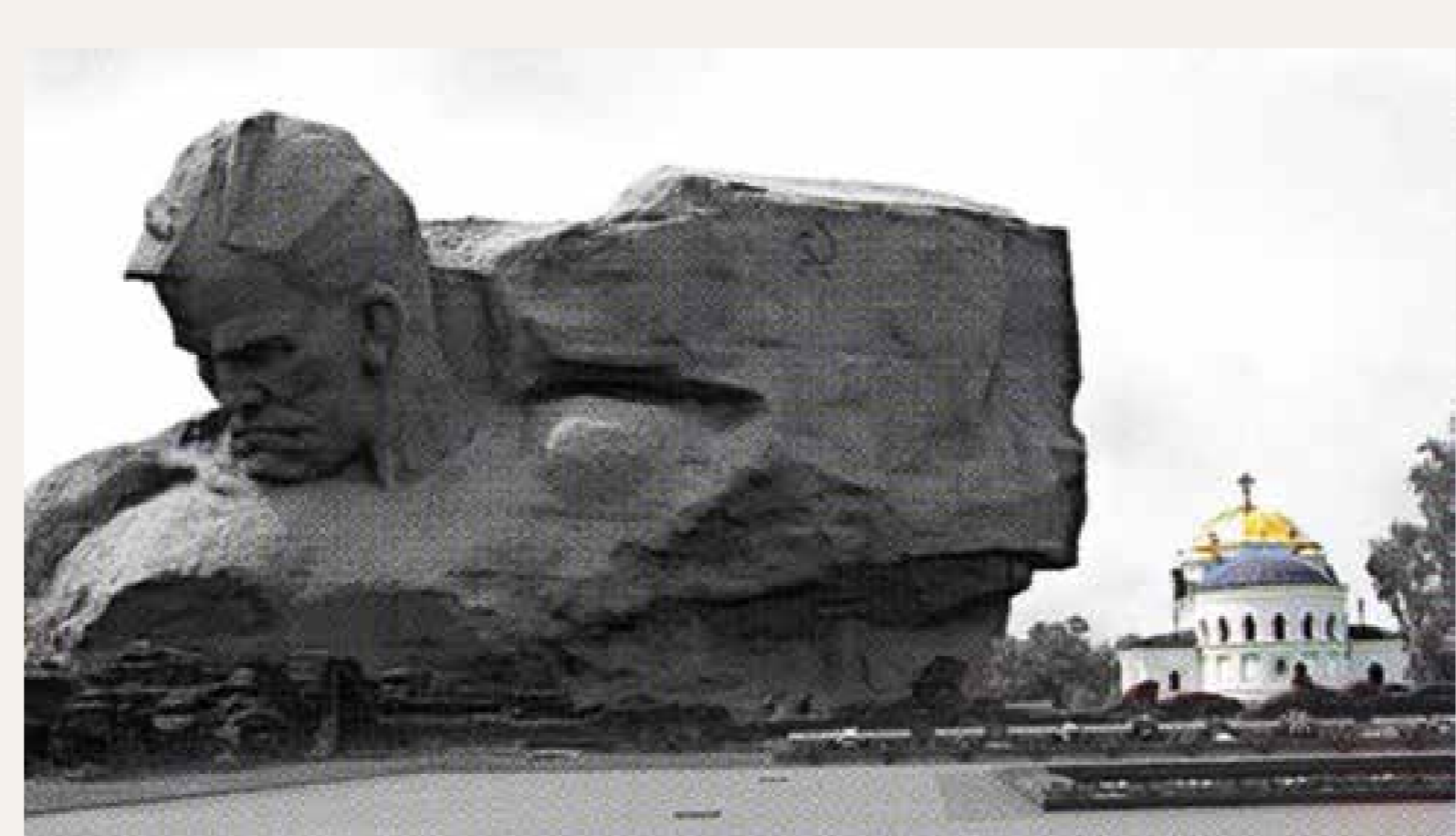


Photo: olczou



Photo: natus_et_denatus