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Text: Maja Ćirić
Image Credits Front: Tanja Marković and Jelena Radović, *Labyrinth*,
Installation, felt-tip pen on tulle, metal construction, Version 2008, 6*11*3m

Beyond Theory

Art Fun Club / Bojan Djordjev
Siniša Ilić / Dragan Djordjević
Nenad Kostić / Tanja Marković
Jelena Radović

Curated by Maja Ćirić

KUNSTHALLE EXNERGASSE

19. Juni - 19. Juli 2008
Tu - Fr 14.00 - 19.00 Uhr
Sa 10.00 - 13.00 Uhr
www.kunsthalle.wuk.at



Maja Ćirić

(born in Belgrade, 1977)

Maja Ćirić is a freelance and independent curator based in Belgrade, Serbia and Dubai, UAE. Holds a BA in Art History from the University of Belgrade, an MA in Cultural and Gender Studies from AAOM, Belgrade, and a diploma of the interdisciplinary postgraduate program Transit Spaces of the Bauhaus, Dessau, Germany. Currently enrolled in a PhD program in Art and Media Theory at the University of Arts, Belgrade, Serbia. Her practice is developed through both independent (www.mobile-studios.org; <http://www.womenngo.org.yu/images/Kampanje/AZC-OffBeatCat.pdf>; www.upgrade.beocity.com) and institutional projects (Curator of the Serbian Pavilion at 52. International Art Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia, BELEF <http://www.belef.org/07/visual/index.html>).

Her paper *Constructions of the Balkans as the Other in Curatorial Concepts* was presented at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at the Harvard University.

She received the ArtsLink Independent Projects Award (2007) and the Lazar Trifunović Award in Art Criticism (2007).

She uses her curatorial practice to augment mainstream cultural discourse, and generate alternative knowledge about social, political, and aesthetic transformations. Her varied areas of interest include gender theory and innovative media practices.

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Jelena Radović

(born in Belgrade, 1970)



Tanja Marković and Jelena Radović, *Labyrinth*, Installation, 2008

Her work is characterized by an exploration of relationships between transparency and opacity, the readable and the unreadable, i.e. relationships inherent in the contemporary culture. She uses different media, techniques and materials, but engages mostly in installations.

Graduated from the Painting Department at Faculty of Fine Arts, Belgrade, in 1994, acquired an MFA in painting in 1997. Participant of many group shows in Serbia as well as of three individual exhibitions of her own. Winner of two awards. Teaches drawing and painting at the School for Design, Belgrade.

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Maja Ćirić

BEYOND THEORY

A.

Curatorial practice is a tool usually employed to produce knowledge about certain concepts. Its usefulness is ultimately connected with their personal sensitivity, perceptiveness and a sense of mission.

Depending on political circumstances, however, some instruments are more useful than other. Moreover, conditions do change, along with the relevance of corresponding philosophical, scientific, cultural and artistic ideas.

So far, the region of origin of the artists represented by this exhibition has been the subject of interest to following curators: P. Weibl, E. Cufer, R. Conover, who organized *In Search of Balkania* in Graz in 2002; the show *Blood and Honey - Futures in the Balkans*, curated by H. Szeemann in Klosterneuburg, 2003; and *In the Gorges of the Balkans - A Report*, a part of R. Block's *Balkan Trilogy* in Kassel, 2003.



As their titles indicate, these shows were meant to examine the Balkans as a geographical as well as an imaginary location. Yet, describing the Balkans as just another exotic, tortured and fragmented Other makes sense only if positioned as one possible framework of this European peninsula's involved ethnology, religion, culture and history.

Monolithic or one-sided narratives, on the other hand, must be supplemented, even explained, if they are to offer a useful contribution to eventual dialogue.

One such example of constructive and meaningful addition to pondering on the perplexity of the Balkans is the *Belgrade Art Inc.* exhibition, organized in 2004 by curators Stevan Vuković and Marko Lulić for the Viennese Secession. Still, even that event could not escape making references to traumas and catharses experienced by the Belgrade cultural and artistic community following the dissolution of Yugoslavia, and Slobodan Milošević's fall from power.

Artists gathered together by the *Beyond Theory* show created their art simultaneously and in the same continuum as those who made strong and continual reference to ongoing politics, and the ensuing personal and public neuroses.

The difference between the two approaches may best be described by pointing to the fact that the work of the first group could have been realized anywhere, and in any of our contemporary epochs. These artists expressed themselves either theoretically or practically within a global framework, thus providing themselves with an opportunity for relevant appraisal independently of their region of origin.

from the text *Neither Brother Nor Sister* by Dejan Ilić. This text is published in the book *Understanding*, DEVE, Belgrade (2005), and explores the problems of differences, tolerance, and gender identity.

Though Dejan Ilić's piece itself is not concerned with the concept of drawing, Tanja Marković's interventions with it introduce the topic of drawing, replacing all others. This is to some extent similar to the process of introducing fluid gender identities into cultural space, art, or social theory instead of the until recently dominant, strongly structured dichotomies, or identities associated with biology, anatomy and gender differences. The second text does not use excerpts from texts written by other authors.

The work tries to answer the following question: can a text discussing a drawing, under particular circumstances, itself be considered a drawing? This possible transgression of the genre (the eradication of conventional parameters of the concept of drawing), serves to structurally demonstrate the problem of gender.

Labyrinth (installation) is a collaboration of Tanja Marković and Jelena Radović.

The basic intention is to confront the audience with the relationship between sensual perception and literary meaning, which they feel not to be in direct confrontation. Their audience thus faces the material sensuousness of meaning simultaneously with the semantic potential of the sensual.



Tanja Marković

(born in Belgrade, 1970)

Graduated psychology, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade. Postgraduate student of Theory of Arts and Media at the University of Arts, Belgrade. Candidate for a group analyst (psychoanalytical orientation), Belgrade Society for Group Analyses.

One of the founders of TkH (Walking Theory) Center for the Theory and Practice of Performing Arts. A member of the Druga Scena (Other Scene) platform of the Belgrade independent scene. Several performances in Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana, London in collaboration with TkH, installations in group exhibitions in Belgrade and Timisoara. Author of theoretical and artistic texts (published in TkH Journal for Performing Arts Theory), poetry (magazines: ProFemina, Treći trg, Anthology of contemporary poetry Tracing the Gender-Meaning of Engagement, DEVE, Belgrade, 2006; drama play Discreet Women, Decorative Child and Great Dane (published in Book 24 / 7 of Love, DEVE, Belgrade 2007, and in Scene, Theater Arts Review, 2008.) Scientific work in psycholinguistics: Kostić A., Marković T., Baucał A., Inflectional Morphology and Word Meaning: Orthogonal or Co-implicative Cognitive Domain? in Morphological Structure in Language Processing (ed. R.Harald Baayen & Robert Schreuder), Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin, New York, 2003.

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The work *The Drawing* consists of two printed texts dealing with the idea of conceptual drawings. The first text uses excerpts of sentences

It is therefore important to keep in mind that this Exhibition is taking place parallel to a development which Katerina Kolozova, the Macedonian theoretician, identifies with the positive political project of Southeast Europe, as an attempt to overcome the emotion-laden legacy of the "Balkans" of our misconception.

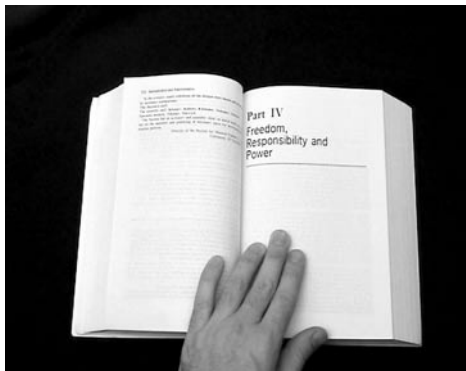
B.

In their book *What Is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari venture that different forms of thinking, each in their own way, manage chaos through various interventions upon its essence: that is, philosophy creates concepts, art nurtures sensory feelings, whereas science produces different functions.

What this exhibition therefore does, is to relativize and contrast the inevitable interaction between these separate planes of human imagination by pointing to the also inescapable seepage occurring when different concepts contaminate the realm of sensory impressions, or when certain functions becomes altered. It is the artists who illuminate the gap resulting from the entropical descent of our neat, theoretical constructs into chaos once again.



Art Fun Club



Art Fun Club, *Art Now Volume 1*, Video, 2006

Do not be fooled by our name. We do take art seriously.

We are a cooperative of three artists who began reconsidering their full devotion to the artists' way of life. It was quite a challenge for us to manage both life and art, since we enjoy both.

There was a moment when we realized that we were ceasing to be professionals, and becoming consumers of sorts. At this point we figured that we could blend these two positions – of art producers and art consumers.

For, if these two positions exist, there also has to be a place between them. Usually you either declare yourself an artist or a non-artist.

Nenad Kostić

(born in Belgrade, 1975)

Received a Master's degree from the Faculty of Fine Arts in Belgrade; was part of an MFA program at the Academy of Art University of San Francisco, received a scholarship from the Education Foundation of Crown Prince Alexander. During the past 12 years Kostić exhibited at three individual and numerous group shows. His primary medium is painting; yet he explores video as well.

His painting is highly conceptual with numerous layers of execution and meaning. He has experimented in freezing movie frames and in animation, and meticulously copying this material in a traditional medium such as oil, thereby transmuting such images from mass pop culture into art. He is also involved with questioning the position of the artist's subjects and legitimacy of his sources of inspiration.

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Nenad Kostić, *Ghost in the Shell*, 24 x Oil on Canvas, 2003





Bojan Djordjev

(born in Belgrade, 1977)

Graduated Theater and Radio Directing at the Faculty of Dramatic Art in Belgrade, 2001. Wrote his Master thesis about *Literalness and Theatricality – Mutations of Body/Figure in Performative Practices – 1970, 1980 and 1990*, which he defended in 2007 at the Theory of Art and Media Department, University of Art, Belgrade. He works as author, director and performer of numerous artistic performances, and theater pieces in Serbia and abroad. Member and co-founder of TkH (Walking Theory) art and theory platform. One of the editors and contributors for TkH Journal for Performing Arts Theory. TkH (www.tkh-generator.net) Journal is participant of DOCUMENTA 12 Magazines project, Kassel, 2007. Artist in residence Akademie Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart, 2004. and 2005/06. One of the founding members of the Druga Scena (Other Scene) initiative in Belgrade.
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Bojan Đorđev and Siniša Ilić, *Desert of Pictures*, Performance, 2008

14

Or, you consider something a work of art or no such thing.

We, however, want to occupy this place where nobody wants to be – in between, where we can partake from both sides, and hopefully, give to both. This is why we do not claim to make art, but works about art – works related to art.

We create our works out of books about art. For a book of art is an art object. Such volumes are entire art collected and materialized in a single object. So when we use these books, it is a metaphor for art itself. When we place them in different situations, adoring them, loving them, laughing at them, criticizing them, playing with them... we actually interact with art itself.

By doing so we try to add something missing to contemporary art – though we are not yet quite sure what it may be, and what exactly we are adding.

Selected Group exhibitions:

Article 23., SKUC Gallery, Ljubljana (2008); Skip the curators, talk about artists, Press to exit, Skopje (2007); Fremd bin ich eingezogen, Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Kassel (2006); 47th October Salon, Belgrade (2005); Challenge, Sinagogue, Center for contemporary Art, Trnava (2003); The Last East European Show, Museum of Contemporary Art Belgrade (2003)

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Dragan Đorđević, *Whatever*, Installation, 2008

2002, and has since evolved and migrated through different media and artistic contexts. The base of the project is Ilić's and Djordjević's "collection" of thousands of pictures (mainly cutouts from the magazines, brochures, private photographs etc.) used as material for videos/avatars/slideshows. Sometimes those pictures are the only elements of such pieces. This project had its numerous variations and shapes: it started as a six hour lecture-performance in Belgium and Croatia 2002/2003 (slideshow with commentaries from the audience and the authors). This project uses pictures as the only narrative material. It relies only on the semiotic charges of the known (or completely unknown) images and the reactions of the audience, their ability to engage in a dialogue with what is shown, new meanings arising from the "clash" between the audience, the authors and the images acting in an almost independent capacity.

So far, the *Desert of Pictures* has been shown at the following events (a selection):

EUROPA Session, based on Ivana Sajko's play *Europa*, Center for Cultural Decontamination, Belgrade; Academic Theater, Niš (2006); Jam Session, theater workshop of Summer School of University of Arts, Belgrade (2006); In Search of Lost Guilt, (with Ana Vujanović), theoretical comic strip, published in *TkH Magazine* No10 (2006); An Opera of Female Gender, Botanical Gardens "Jevremovac", BELEF 05, Belgrade (2005); The Terror of the Desert of Pictures, (video-cca 3000 digital slides), The Violence of Image/The Image of Violence – 1st Biennial of Young Artists, Bucharest (2004); Snow-White Session, Vooruit Center, Gent; Akademie Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart; SKC, Belgrade (2004); Visibility Itself – B-ing in the Desert of Pictures, Vooruit Center Gent; MMC, Zagreb (2002/03



are ephemeral by nature and meant to initiate new social alliance between the artist, the art work, the audience and the institution”

(Bojan Djordjev)

Statement about his work:

“I do drawings on the gallery walls, various dimensions, executed in coal, and pencils. Sometimes performed/done at the exhibition openings as performances. In both situations, the performative aspect is important, either as opening and showing the process, or the fact I do one specific drawing only for specific place, specific context, specific occasion. They are a bit useless, you cannot move them, you cannot have them, or buy them. Those drawings are disposable art works. Gallery walls together with drawings are whitewashed again after the exhibiton is closed.

Some of them are done in a more expressionistic manner, some are hardly visible. If they don't 'exist' in art market, why should they be visible? Observer has to find the line on the wall. He/she has to be concentrated.

I usually don't discuss motifs on the drawings, you can see some recognizable social scenes, funerals, violence between children, sex or fantasy scenes, family occasions, private histories... I am not involving interpretation in my work, it is about presentation. What those situations look like. Those scenes function more like a reminder. Some of the drawings have titles, some of them don't”

Desert of Pictures project is a long term work-in-progress archive project of Siniša Ilić and Bojan Djordjev (see page 14).

The long term work-in-progress archive project *Desert of Pictures* started as a collaboration between Bojan Djordjev and Siniša Ilić in

Dragan Djordjević

(born in Bela Palanka, Serbia, 1974)

Received a Master's degree at the Academy of Fine Arts in Belgrade, Sculpture Department, class of Mrdjan Bajić, 2006; Graduated at the Academy of Fine Arts in Belgrade, Sculpture Department 2003. Graduated Mechanical Engineering in Belgrade 1998. Exhibited in Belgrade, Pančevo, Venice, Vienna and Düsseldorf.

Participated in the collateral event of 51st Venice Biennale Real Presence, and workshops by Richard Deacon in Belgrade, Milica Tomić in Helsinki, Michel Heiman during Wiener Festwochen, Vienna, and Jelica Radovanović and Dejan Andjelković in Belgrade. Artist in residence, Dusseldorf, 2004.

His sculptures form part of the collection of the Belgrade City Museum 2005, 2007.

First of his empathies, Religious Empathy Device, won the “Rista and Beta Vukanović Grand Award” – FFA's most important prize, for general achievement in art – at the end of his final year of studies.

Member and co-founder of dez.org group of artists based in Belgrade.

Empathy Devices is a long-term project composed of installations with inner visual contests and systems blocking direct approach to an exhibit (such as CCTV cameras, sensors or interactive set-ups) responsible for multiple transformation of data and emotions before finally reaching the viewer.

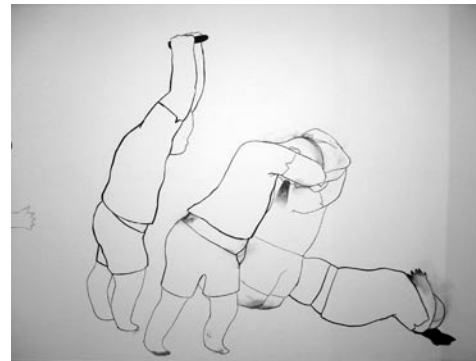


Some of these installations were realized in collaboration with other artists: *Reset Empathy Devices* (with members of dez.org art group), Pančevo; *Boxes for Empathy Mobile Studios Project* (with Goca Belić, Jelena Radić and Tijana Knežević), Belgrade; *Empathy Device* (with Tijana Knežević), Dusseldorf.

Whatever is one of project series realized during 2007. It is a system of sculptures housing other sculptures and drawings inside. Every sculpture contains a pushbutton which activates a matching video projection. This is made in collaboration with Tijana Knežević (drawings). Mainframe of this project consists of two juxtaposed systems of inner and outer reality. Each of them creates our state to refuse perception and intensify the introspection. *Whatever* signals ones confrontation to final definitions acquired from theory, politics, economy. We are trying not to use art as an illustration of the existing premises.
gangaon@gmail.com

Siniša Ilić

(born in Belgrade, 1977)



Siniša Ilić, *Drawings*, charcoal on wall, 2008

So far Ilić realized large scale wall drawings in galleries in Belgrade, Berlin, Helsinki, Bucharest, New York, Stuttgart, Rijeka, Vršac and Priština. Ilić acquired his MFA in Painting at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Belgrade. He is a member and co-founder of TkH (Walking Theory), an independent art and theory platform and journal based in Belgrade. Participant in the Drawing Center's Viewing Program, enjoyed residences at ISCP, New York City in 2006 and Akademie Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart (2005/6)
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About the Drawings:

"The wall drawings of Siniša Ilić are process-rather than subject based. They are traces of possible narratives, comments, observations, intended for the institutions he is invited to contribute in. They