

Fokus Grupa

Kao što je nekad bilo

As It Once Was





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— umjetnost izgradnje nacije

As It Once Was

— The Art of Nation Building

**Mestna galerija Ljubljana, MGML
Fokus Grupa**

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Kao što je nekad bilo — umjetnost izgradnje nacije

Alenka Gregorič

Fokus Grupa je u sklopu OFF bijenala predstavila različite projekte koji u kombinaciji čine sasvim novu koherentnu cjelinu. Osnovna pretpostavka galerijske prezentacije je tumačenje javnih spomenika u Hrvatskoj te propitivanje moći nacionalnih mitova i mitskih dimenzija utvrđenih povijesnih činjenica. Izloženi projekti ne predstavljaju tek izbor postojećih radova posloženih u čitljivu priču, nego su okupljeni kako bi formirali dramaturški luk koji se može čitati kao izložba s klasičnim elementima grčke tragedije (antička grčka tragedija imala je ritualno značenje te je teme vukla iz mitova).

U posljednje vrijeme tema spomenika kontinuirano ima središnju ulogu u umjetničkom govoru Fokus Grupe. Njihovo pažljivo istraživanje i proučavanje činjenica, kao i tumačenje, razrađeno do najsitnijeg detalja, propituje ulogu javnih spomenika, poticanje nacionalnih osjećaja kroz sugestivno prizivanje prisutno kod važnih javnih skulptura te, posljedično, stvaranje mitova. Projekt Fokus Grupe može se povezati s ritualnošću jer stvara jedinstvenu dramu upravo kroz estetski perfekcionizam i prividnu spontanost prezentacije, oboje obilježeno dokumentarističkom vrijednošću i mise-en-scèneom različitih, ali komplementarnih elemenata. Poruka izložbe nastoji dati pljusku u lice svakom pojedincu koji u naizgled neproblematičnim slikama spomenika prepoznaje vlastiti nemar i manjak kritičnosti te se suočava s njihovom podvojenošću.

Predstavljanje na OFF bijenalu bavilo se pitanjima javnih skulptura — kao fizičkih manifestacija ili materijalizacija nacionalnih ideja — te razloga zbog kojih su izrađene, uklonjene, ponovno podignute, uništene ili tretirane na neki drugi način koji je odražavao promjenu političkih i društvenih paradigmi. Kroz ovu nas izložbu kolektiv potiče na promišljanje određenih činjenica ili načela koje državni aparat pozicionira u područje javnog diskursa. Predstavljaju nam činjenice i primjere načina na koje se moć političkog sustava manifestira kroz spomenike, uz znatnu dozu podmuklosti. Baš kao što vjerske institucije šire potrebna vjerska uvjerenja i dogme kroz obredne slike, državne institucije grade povijest kroz formiranje javne slike te pomažu u stvaranju mita, osnovnog instrumenta ideološke indoktrinacije masa. Mitovi imaju za cilj objasniti dobro i zlo, život i smrt te odnos vremena prema vječnosti. Opisuju djela heroja neke kulture te pružaju izvor stabilnosti i utjehe u trenucima u kojima se ljudi suočavaju s očitim kontradikcijama. Iako znanost može opovrgnuti doslovno tumačenje mitova, oni i dalje služe kao važni emocionalni oslonci za društvo.

Stvarnost, koja na prvi pogled nema ništa zajedničkog s pričama i mitovima, tako se ogoljava pred promatračem. Spomenici, često prolazni elementi javnog prostora, imaju sposobnost suočavati nas s našom vlastitom lakoćom prihvaćanja onoga što se općenito prihvaća kao stvarno. Njihov značaj i sudbina razlikuju se ovisno o vremenu i političkom sustavu. Sudbina javnih skulptura najizravnije je predstavljena u radu nazvanom *Ljudi vole spomenike*, u kojem prikupljeni arhivski fotografski materijal bilježi što se događalo sa spomenikom bana Jelačića na glavnom zagrebačkom trgu. U prošlosti je skulptura konjanika u više navrata zamjenjivana drugim političkim atributima, važnima za dano povijesno razdoblje, a nakon 1991.

konjanik je vraćen na svoje mjesto gdje stoji i dan danas. Jedan dio instalacije Fokus Grupe — 3D print glave konja u prirodnoj veličini, postavljen na postolje — može se protumačiti i kao kastracija konjanika, jer bez konja (koji je obezglavljen i čija glava na postolju aludira na glavu Ivana Krstitelja na pladnju) on je nemoćan. Video *There Aren't Words for What We Do or How We Feel So We Have to Make Them Up* tjera nas da razmotrimo prisvajanje prirode — ovaj ljudski konstrukt često se koristi kao alat za nacionalističke mitologije koje netaknutu prirodu izjednačavaju s nacionalnim vrlinama. Pripovjedač nas vodi kroz videosnimku, a njegova poetika i rečenice služe kao skice, bez formiranja dramaturške cjeline. Ove nas skice vode kroz vizualni narativ slike hrvatskog krajolika — šume, planine, more i zalazak sunca. Potonje je element koji povezuje početak i kraj videa. Odnosi se na navodnu izjavu Alfreda Hitchcocka iz sredine šezdesetih godina da je najljepši zalazak sunca u svom životu vidio u dalmatinskom gradu Zadru. Izjava, nebrojeno mnogo puta citirana, postala je dio nacionalne predaje i ponosa i gotovo turistički slogan.

Odluka o umetanju slogana hrvatske turističke promidžbene kampanje (*Kakav je nekad bio*) u naslov izložbe logičan je nastavak teme o kojoj se raspravlja jer dodatno učvršćuje, ili bolje rečeno, dopunjava, poruku cijele priče. Naslov, koji se može činiti potpuno nevažnim dijelom prezentacije, često se predstavlja kao dodatak za bolje razumijevanje i rasvjetljavanje konteksta izloženih radova. Međutim, kod Fokus Grupe, naslov izložbe čini, baš kao i svi izloženi radovi, dobro promišljen i neizostavan dio cjeline. Izraz *Kakav je nekad bio* trebao bi naglasiti iskonsku, netaknutu hrvatsku prirodu, pravu stvar, za razliku od ostatka svijeta koji je otrgnut od iskonske prirode. Da, i naslovi mogu graditi narative, i da, turistički slogani mogu služiti za njegovanje nacionalnih osjećaja.

Treći dio instalacije je rad koji je doživio najveći broj permutacija kroz praksu Fokus Grupe i bavi se jednim od najkontroverznijih spomenika kojem se stalno vraćaju. Sporni je spomenik *Oltar domovine* na Medvedgradu iz sredine 1990-ih, postavljen u prirodi. U obliku šahovnice (hrvatski nacionalni simbol), sastoji se od dvadeset i devet kamenih blokova različite visine koji su doneseni iz različitih dijelova zemlje. Kombinirajući sve vrijednosti nacionalističke politike u Hrvatskoj nakon raspada Jugoslavije, spomenik je predmet stalnog ispitivanja Fokus Grupe. Kolektiv iznova izrađuje oblike svih elemenata spomenika koristeći reciklirane materijale, krhotine, koje ponekad pretvaraju u korisne galerijske predmete (sjedala, postolja, stolove). U kontekstu prezentacije na OFF bijenalu, elementi su sastavljeni u obliku stana za četveročlanu obitelj. Rad pod nazivom *Opis obiteljskog stana* subverzivna je transformacija koja govori o vezi između države i obitelji — osnovne društvene jedinice. Odnos država-obitelj postavlja pitanje definiranja nacionalnog identiteta i (ne)odnosa prema pojedincu.

U kontekstu varljivih zakona koji diskriminiraju manjine, umjetnici zaokružuju samu prezentaciju naizgled efemernom intervencijom, transformirajući svaki od dvadeset i devet jedinica rada *Opis obiteljskog stana* u dio inventara. Unutrašnju stranu svakog elementa Fokus Grupa označava pečatom — točnom, jednobožnom kopijom simbola hrvatske građanske inicijative U ime obitelji. 2013. godine navedena

je inicijativa uspjela prikupiti dovoljan broj potpisa za raspisivanje referenduma o obiteljskom zakonu, uz svesrdnu podršku Crkve kao jedne od najutjecajnijih institucija moderne hrvatske povijesti. Nakon rezultata referenduma, na kojem je većina odlučila o pravima manjina, usvojen je ustavni zakon koji propisuje da je brak isključivo zajednica muškarca i žene. Kako bi ukazali na neprihvatljivost donošenja takve odluke, umjetnici su otisnuli pečat na sav stambeni namještaj u stanu za četveročlanu obitelj (otac, majka, dvoje djece). Tijekom istraživanja teme naišli su na zanimljiv detalj da je gorespomenuta inicijativa pokrenula kampanju s plagijatom logotipa židovske udruge *Family Service of Los Angeles*. Za svoje potrebe i kako bi širila homofobne ideje, udruga *U ime obitelji* besramno je postojeći logo izmijenila (dvije starije osobe bez jasnih oznaka spola s djetetom) na način koji odražava njihove ideje savršene obitelji — muškarac, žena i dvoje djece.

Drugi dio naslova *Umjetnost izgradnje nacije* tako doslovno i figurativno zaokružuje priču koja naglašava potrebu osvješćivanja naizgled nevažnih, malih i često neprimjetnih oblika javne komunikacije. Označavanjem »stambenog namještaja« i pretvaranjem izložaka u dijelove inventara, oni stvaraju metanarativ — integrirani scenski narativ koji se sastoji od različitih nacionalističkih narativa koji ni na koji način nisu isključivo hrvatska osobitost.

As It Once Was —the Art of Nation Building

Alenka Gregorič

At the OFF-Biennial, Fokus Grupa (Iva Kovač and Elvis Krstulović) presented different projects which, combined, made up an entirely new coherent whole. The basic premise of the gallery presentation has been to interpret public monuments in Croatia and question the power of national myths and mythical dimensions of established historical facts. Rather than representing a mere selection of the existing works organised into a readable story, the exhibited projects have been brought together to form a dramaturgical arc that could be read as an exhibition with the classical elements of a Greek tragedy (the ancient Greek tragedy bore a ritual meaning and drew its themes from myths).

Recently, the theme of monuments has continuously played a central role in Fokus Grupa's artistic speech. Their careful research and observation of facts, as well as interpretation worked out to the last detail, question the role of public monuments, incitement of national sentiment through evocative suggestions present in important public sculptures, and consequent construction of myths. Fokus Grupa's project may be linked to rituality, as it creates a unique drama precisely through the aesthetic perfection and apparent spontaneity of the presentation, both marked by documentary value and mise-en-scène of different yet complementary elements. The message of the exhibition aims to deliver a slap in the face to every individual who in the seemingly unproblematic imagery of the monuments recognizes their own carelessness and lack of judgment, and confronts their ambivalence.

The presentation at the OFF-Biennial addressed the issues of public sculptures — as physical representations or materializations of national ideas — and the reasons why they are produced, removed, re-erected, demolished, or dealt with in some other way that reflects the changing political and social paradigms. Through this exhibition the artists encourage us to rethink certain facts or principles that the state apparatus places into the field of public discourse. They present us with the facts and cases of how the power of a political system is manifested through monuments with a considerable measure of perfidiousness. Just as religious institutions disseminate the necessary religious beliefs and dogmas through ritual imagery, state institutions construct history through public image formation and help create a myth, the basic instrument in ideological indoctrination of masses. Myths aim to explain good and evil, life and death, and the relationship of time to eternity. They describe the acts of heroes of some culture and provide a source of stability and consolation when humans are confronted with obvious contradictions. Even though science can refute literal interpretation of myths, these continue to serve as important emotional examples for society.

Reality, which at first glance has nothing to do with tales and myths, is thus laid bare in front of the viewer. Monuments, often an ephemeral element of the public space, have the capacity to confront us with our own lightness of acceptance of what is generally accepted to be real. Their significance and fate vary with time and from one political system to another. The fate of public sculptures is most directly presented in the work titled *People Love Monuments*, in which the collected archival photographic material chronicles what happened with the statue of Ban Jelačić in

the Zagreb main square. In the past, the sculpture of the horseman was repeatedly replaced with other political attributes, important for a given historical period; after 1991, the horseman was returned to his place and continues to stand there today. One part of Fokus Grupa's installation — a life-size 3D print of a horse head on the pedestal — may also be interpreted as the horseman's castration, because without the horse (which is beheaded, and its head sitting on the pedestal alludes to the head of John the Baptist on a platter), he is powerless.

The video *There Aren't Words for What We Do or How We Feel So We Have to Make Them Up* pushes us to consider the appropriation of nature — this human construct is often used as a tool for nationalist mythologies equating unspoilt nature with national virtue. We are guided through the video by a narrator, whose poeticism and sentences serve as sketches without forming a dramaturgical whole. These sketches take us through the visual narrative of the imagery of the Croatian landscape — forests, mountains, the sea, and sunset. The latter is the connecting element between the beginning and the end of the video. It relates to a statement supposedly made by Alfred Hitchcock in the mid-1960s that he had seen the most beautiful sunset in his life in the Dalmatian town of Zadar. The statement, quoted countless times, has become part of national lore and pride and almost a tourist slogan.

The decision to insert the slogan of the Croatian tourism promotion campaign (*As It Once Was*) in the title of the exhibition is the logical continuation of the theme under discussion, as it further reinforces or, rather, completes the message of the entire story. The title, which may seem a completely irrelevant part of the presentation, is most often presented as an addition for a better understanding and illumination of the context of exhibited works. With Fokus Grupa, however, the exhibition title constitutes, just as all exhibited works, a well-thought out and indispensable part of the whole. The saying *As It Once Was* is meant to place stress on the primordial, unspoilt Croatian nature, the real thing as opposed to the rest of the world torn away from pristine nature. Yes, titles too can build a narrative, and yes, tourist slogans too may serve to cultivate national sentiment.

The third part of the installation is a work that has undergone the greatest number of permutations through the artists' practice and addresses one of the most controversial monuments to which they keep returning. The debatable monument *Altar of the Homeland* in Medvedgrad from the mid-1990s is set in natural environment. Formed as a chequerboard (Croatian national symbol), it is composed of twenty-nine stone blocks of various heights that were transferred from various parts of the state. Combining all values of the nationalist politics in Croatia after the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the monument is under Fokus Grupa's constant scrutiny. The artists recreate the forms of all elements of the monument from recycled materials, splinters, which they sometimes turn into usable gallery objects (seats, stands, tables). In the context of the presentation at the OFF-Biennial, the elements were assembled to form an apartment for a family of four. The work titled *Description of a Family Apartment* is a subversive transformation that speaks of the con-

nection between the state and the family — the basic cell of society. The state-family relation raises the question of defining national identity and (non-)relation to the individual.

Within the context of deceptive laws that discriminate against minorities the artists round out the presentation itself with a seemingly ephemeral intervention, by converting each of the twenty-nine items of the work *Description of a Family Apartment* into an inventory item. They slap a seal into the interior of every element — a perfect monochrome copy of the symbol of the Croatian civil initiative In the Name of the Family. In 2013, the latter managed to collect a sufficient number of signatures for a referendum on the Family Code with ample support from the Church as one of the most influential institutions of Croatia's modern history. Following the results of the referendum, in which the majority decided on the rights of the minority, a constitutional law was passed exclusively stipulating that family is a union between a man and a woman. In order to point to the unacceptability of passing such decisions, the artists put stamps on all 'apartment furnishings' for a four-member family (father, mother, two children). During their investigation into this theme, they discovered an interesting detail, namely, that the aforementioned initiative mounted its campaign with a plagiarized logo of the Jewish association Family Service of Los Angeles. For its own purposes and in order to spread homophobic ideas, the group In the Name of the Family shamelessly changed the existing logo (two elderly persons without a clear visual stylization of gender and a child) to make it reflect their ideas of a perfect family — a man, a woman, and two children.

The second part of the title *The Art of Nation Building* thus both literally and figuratively rounds out the story that stresses the necessity to raise the awareness of seemingly unimportant, small and most often unnoticed forms of public communication. By stamping 'apartment furnishings' and converting the exhibition pieces into inventory items, they construct a metanarrative — an integrated stage narrative composed of different nationalist narratives which are in no way an exclusively Croatian peculiarity.

Najstariji rad predstavljen u ovoj publikaciji, DRAGA, OPROSTI ŠTO TI PIŠEM TAKO KASNO sastoji se od dvokanalne videoinstalacije i audiosnimke. Ljubavna retorika usmjerena je prema državi, koja pokajnički ispovijeda prijestupe koji bi mogli ugroziti inače idealan ljubavni odnos, suprotstavljena je dvjema snimkama krajolika koje se ponavljaju – prikazima netaknute prirode i arhaične kulture.

U popularnom viđenju državu, često personificiranu u liku žene, (muški) pjesnici uzdižu zbog njezine ljepote. Prikazi prirode i arhaične kulture koriste se kako bi se ovi osjećaji povezali sa specifičnim narativom o nacionalnom identitetu. Istražujući politički govor, s naglaskom na prikrivenoj seksualnosti koja se koristi kako bi se potaknuli osjećaji i uživljavanje kod naroda, Fokus Grupa pripovjedačici daje ženski glas. Retoričko bogatstvo, koje kad se koristi u uobičajenom političkom diskursu zauzima poziciju racionalnosti, pretvara se u emotivan govor o seksualnim prijestupima.





Draga,

ovim se pismom
izlažem nelagodi,
jer želim pretočiti misli
na papir,
a bojim se da riječi nisu
dostatne.

Izlažem se
nelagodi, a moguće i
nerazumijevanju.
Ipak,
želim da izdržimo našu
kušnju
pa prihvaćam ovaj
nemogući zadatak.

Osjećam mučninu
nakon učinjenog
prijestupa
i sramim se slasti koje
sam se naužila s njim.

Možda te je patnja
navela da učiniš isto,
ali moram ti reći da su
mene tvoje strasti s njom
osvijestile.

Misli o nama
i vama
mute mi razum i
raspojasavaju maštu.

Plašim se podjednako
jave i sna.
»One« me misli ne
napuštaju ni kada sam
među ljudima,
a izluđuju me u
trenucima samoće.

Možda ti pišem
prekasno,
ipak, pišem u nadi da
ćemo se izvući iz ovog
začaranog kruga

i vratiti se u sigurnost
doma i pouzdanost
ljubavi.

Ljubavi tako
neuhvatljive da mnogima
izmiče.

Kako smo samo bile
lude, mislivši da svojom
vladamo?

Sada kada žudim za
novim uzbuđenjima,
što ih je u meni
pobudila ona,
zaista sva treperim,
draga, od ove strasti koja
me plaši.

Ova nas ludost uvijek
iznova dovodi do ruba,
no težeći rubu,
riskiramo i nas.

Sada smo opet same,
ti i ja.
Pitam se možemo
li razdvojene uopće
postojati?
A razdvajanje postaje
sve izvjesnije.

Draga,
možda pišem
prekasno.



Chronologically, the oldest work in this publication, DARLING, SORRY FOR WRITING SO LATE includes a two channel video installation and an audio recording. A love speech directed towards the state, regretfully confessing transgressions which might damaged an otherwise ideal love relationship, is put against two looping landscapes; an image of unspoiled nature and an image of archaic culture.

In popular imagination, the state, many times personified as a woman, is praised for her beauty by (male) poets. The imagery of nature and archaic culture is used to tie these emotions to a specific narrative about national identity. Exploring the political speech, focusing on the covert sexuality employed in order to raise emotions and popular empathy, Fokus Grupa gives its orator a female voice. Rhetorical exuberance, which when employed in regular political discourse claims rationality, is transformed into a rather emotional speech about sexual transgressions.



U umjetničkoj knjizi PERFECT LOVERS (2002.–2012.) Fokus Grupa nastavlja istraživanje pisanog ispovjednog jezika, koji se povezuje s pojmovima istine i kontrole, kao oblik vježbe za budući rad na filmu *There Aren't Words for What We Do or How We Feel So We Have To Make Them Up*. Sastoji se od poetskih uvida u ljubavne odnose koji su se odvijali tijekom deset godina. Ispovjedna proza koja otkriva »istinu« o emocijama, iskustvima i željama, suprotstavljena je fotografijama protagonista koje dokumentiraju njihove trenutke intime. Fotografirana tijela protagonista odražavaju druga tijela koja se uvode kroz tekst. Pripovijedanje koje je izvor rada također je pokušaj jačanja zajedništva među protagonistima. Napetost između zajedništva i oblika kontrole čini bit knjige.

K. was attracted to me, we both knew that, she was also scared of me in a way which made me feel



good. Talking about sex with K. and D. was a flirting and positioning game, like that night when we had sex while they were in the bed in the same room knowing that they can hear us. Before you came that night to K.'s house the three of us met. We were drinking and listening to music. K. was the first one to suddenly kiss me standing in front of a TV set and then I

remember she turned around looking at D. who then kissed



me as well. Three of us kissed shortly and then made remarks about it and giggled. From their gestures it seemed that they had been preparing to do this. I later lost both of them – and even more sadly they didn't lose only me.

There have been years since
I parted with P. without ever
declaring the end.



I received his postcard when
my doubts in our love were at



their highest. I didn't
reply P. and I placed the postcard
among the branches of a tree
beside the American embassy.



I believe this foreshadowed my
infidelity.

After you went to work I almost forgot S. called me to come in 30 minutes so she can give me a



present.

As we spoke on the phone, I remembered she asked for a phone number when we first



met.

When I saw S. this time she looked much better, and I came out in my pajamas looking cute to her this way I guess. She gave me these presents

that were so obviously chosen to flirt with me, and I was stuck in this situation trying to figure out what was happening. S. is much older than me, which made this situation confusing and her especially attractive. As I realized later, the fact that I am so much younger made her want me.

It's a pity I am not a student any more since that was her fantasy, but the story she left behind although a porn storyline cliché changed so much for us.



When I first met K. I didn't think much of him and was jealous of him at the same time.



He was too beautiful, still he flirted with me. You knew I was attracted to



him, you were, too. Meeting K. later, in very different circumstances, we would talk for hours but he stayed even when there was nothing more to say. I interrupted his kisses with a

'Brechtian' remark: "I am allowed to sleep with you". K.'s answer was that he chose to and we separated in the morning. (...) I met K. again. We were together for a week. He was very nervous which made me nervous too.



We don't write each other just send hidden signals of affection. I am K.'s big secret.

Did she first get me with her voice or her image? To love K. is



so slow and careful. The attraction we have for each other is so strong and it makes me genuinely happy.



Attraction is strong but I need alcohol to further my advances. K. is also sometimes painful to us and sometimes she is our joy. You change often, what you think of her, but all three

of us learn so much from this relationship.

Sometimes I wonder with excitement how much of what K. and I say to each other she keeps as secret, and we say so much to one another. I enjoy the little step-by-step advancements we make in our letters and talks ... and physical signs of affection we allow to each other. If K. was only free to do what she wants.

I love and hate the word and gesture games N. and I play on each other, yet I love to talk to her. I wouldn't know the attraction is mutual if you haven't said this to me. And possibly nothing would



ever happen. Before we all kissed that night, we also challenged each other to kiss while you were in another room, not knowing for sure what your



reaction would be.

Now I think of N. as, in the same time, the most open and relaxed sexually and the most complicated. We were so happy after that evening, weren't we?

I. reminded me of high school even though he is older than me and he liked me even though I was not as young as his many lovers. I kissed I. and persuaded him to keep kissing me back, convincing him that you will not mind. We kept talking about relationships and bragging with affairs. Our kissing was short and



the conversation easy. I hoped it would happen again, I. agreed but nevertheless made me ask one too many times.

In the artist book PERFECT LOVERS (2002–2012) Fokus Grupa continued to explore the written confessional language, associated with the notions of truth and control, as a sort of language exercise for the film *There Aren't Words for What We Do or How We Feel So We Have To Make Them Up*. It consists of poetic insights in love affairs that took place within a span of ten years. Confessionary prose revealing the “truth” about emotions, experiences and desires is juxtaposed with protagonists' photographs documenting their moments of intimacy. The photographed bodies of protagonists reflect other bodies introduced through text. Storytelling that is the source of the work is also an attempt to strengthen the commonness between the protagonists. The tension between commonness and control forms the basis of the book.



PRIJEDLOG SPOMENIKA NOVOM (INTER) NACIONALIZMU pokušava dekonstruirati ulogu i funkciju spomenika i nacionalnih mitova. Predloženi spomenik koristi simbol hrasta koji se veže uz mnoge indoeuropske narode, dok ga mitovi svakog od tih naroda smatraju prvenstveno svojim. Fokus Grupa predlaže da hrastova grančica preuzme značenje neke vrste internacionalizma, da postane »ready-made« spomenik za niz različitih naroda. Krhka grančica ovdje se pojavljuje kao označitelj resursa, odnosno, utilitarne primjene simbola, koji se također pojavljuje na hrvatskoj valuti, kao podsjetnik na nekadašnju gospodarsku važnost hrasta.



A PROPOSAL FOR THE MONUMENT TO THE NEW (INTER)NATIONALISM, attempts to deconstruct the role and function of monuments and national myths. The proposed monument uses a symbol of an oak tree that is at once linked to so many Indo-European nations, while each nation's myths treat it as essentially theirs. Fokus Grupa proposes that the oak twig should signify a sort of inter-nationalism, a ready-made monument for a variety of nations. The frail twig appears here as an emblem of resources, that is, the utilitarian application of symbols, also featured on Croatian currency, as a reminder to its former economic importance.



**I spomenike ubijaju,
zar ne?**

Jasna Jakšić

Javni i tajni život spomenika, posebno onih vezanih uz nacionalnu samoreprezentaciju, odražava cijelu lepezu političkih mijena i događaja što mogu izravno utjecati na njihovo stanje, postav i, posljedično, javnu recepciju. Izložba Fokus Grupe, umjetničkog tandema koji svoj naziv preuzima iz terminologije istraživanja tržišta, temu spomenika reinterpreтира u javnom, privatnom, i konačno, intimnom, gotovo introspekcijskom kontekstu. Alenka Gregorič u svom će tekstu primijetiti da postav izložbe slijedi strukturu grčke tragedije, iz čega se može pretpostaviti da će doživljaj i iskustvo izložbe pročistiti osjećaje publike. Doista, u njihovom vizualnom i tjelesnom ispipavanju prirode i mogućnosti spomenika prekrivenih nacionalističkim označiteljima, istovremeno će se empatijski, gotovo emotivno, ali i analitički dohvatiti općih mjesta nacionalnog ponosa. Tako se publika kroz događaje što su oblikovali izgled glavnog zagrebačkog trga uvodi u odnos spomenika i javnog prostora, da bi se ulaskom u model, odnosno *Opis obiteljskog stana* našla unutar reciklirane instalacije koja je postala prostorno vježbalište za eksperimentalni stan u kojemu je ideologiju ruske avangarde u današnje vrijeme potencijalno zamijenila IKEA-ina lakoća, briga za okoliš i, naravno, fleksibilnost, kao u katalogu: »S fleksibilnim namještajem, lako ćeš nakon noći spremno dočekati dan«. Konačno, emocijama nabijeni klimaks izložbe je sugestivna projekcija filma *There Aren't Words for What We Do or How We Feel so We Have to Make Them Up* u kojemu kameru u potrazi za nadahnjućim i lijepim kadrovima, prati izgovoreni tekst visokog stila koji podsjeća na vrijeme romantizma i nacionalnih buđenja u deventaestom stoljeću kada je osnaženo građanstvo kroz nacionalizam rušilo velika kraljevstva i carstva i zahtijevalo nove teritorije.

Ljudi vole spomenike se polazeći iz javnog prostora, kojeg predstavlja serija fotografija, gotovo slučajnih razglednica, bavi sudbinom spomenika banu Josipu Jelačiću koji se nalazi na istoimenom zagrebačkom trgu od 1866. Spomenik je u svojih gotovo 150 godina postojanja promijenio pet država, uz jednu cezuru: uklonjen je 1947. s glavnog trga, preimenovanog u Trg Republike, i to nakon što je tijekom dvije godine, kao što pokazuju izložene fotografije, prilikom važnih datuma i obljetnica bivao prekriven prigodnim drvenim kulisama. Među autorima jedne od kulisa, one podignute za skupštinu Antifašističke fronte žena 1945., bio je i tada mladi kipar Vojin Bakić. Nakon uvođenja višestranačja spomenik je vraćen, no na drugo mjesto i s drugom orijentacijom — generalova je sablja ranije bila usmjerena prema sjeveru, prema Mađarskoj, čiji su ustanci 1848. predstavljali prijetnju Banovini Hrvatskoj. Jelačićevo sudjelovanje u gašenju revolucionarnih pokreta u Mađarskoj i u Beču kao i njegova karijera carskog generala učinile su ga, iako je bio omiljen među seoskim stanovništvom, nepoželjnom osobom u novom, besklasnom društvu što se gradilo nakon 1945. i koje je nacionalizmu barem deklarativno pretpostavljalo bratstvo među narodima. Toj je reinstalaciji prethodila radikalna obnova glavnog zagrebačkog trga, s granitnim pločama što će otvoriti vrata kao model za kasnija preuređenja, ili, preciznije, devastacije, kao što je istaknula urbana antropologinja Sonja Leboš u magazinu Novosti: »Da devastacije kod nas imaju dugu povijest možemo ilustrirati i razdobljem socijalističkog modernizma u njenoj nekrološkoj fazi, drugoj polovici 1980-ih, kada se za Univerzijadu uređivao sadašnji Trg bana Jelačića. Ni tada nije

provedena procedura usuglašavanja s građanima o tome kako da se uredi tadašnji Trg Republike, a bilo je boljih projekata od ovoga što danas imamo: brisani prostor na kojem nas ljeti prži sunce, a zimi brije hladan vjetar.¹»

Uz fotografije na postamentu je izložen trodimenzionalni ispis detalja spomenika — riječ je o položenoj konjskoj glavi. Naime, u hrvatskom se lokalnom filmskom žargonu »konjska glava« odnosi na kadrove u kojima se nakratko, u montaži, kamera odmiče od protagonista i zaustavlja na sporednom detalju dovoljno dinamičnom da gledateljima na neko kraće vrijeme zaokupi pozornost. U klasičnom je vesternu taj detalj, ne previše udaljen od glavnih junaka koji su vjerojatno u sedlu, upravo — glava konja. Kao suputnici, uglavnom u sjeni velikih ličnosti koje nose na svojim plećima, konji nekada i izlaze na pozornicu povijesti u velikom stilu. To se dogodilo i legendarnom konju Aleksandra Makedonskog, Bukefalu — kako za života tako i u današnje vrijeme, kada je helenizirajući graditeljski zamah što je trebao legitimirati mladu i od grčkih susjeda nepriznatu naciju nazvan upravo prema konju — bukefalizacija. Njezin vrhunac predstavljalo je podizanje dvanaest metara visoke skulpture Aleksandra Makedonskog, dakako na konju. Makedonski slučaj čini se kao još brži i ostrašćeniji primjer samolegitimiranja nacije i stvaranja mitološkog narativa o njoj, procesa koji je u državama nastalima nakon raspada Jugoslavije nastavio živjeti u vakuumu nacionalističkih stranputica devetnaestog stoljeća. No ono na što će uputiti Bukefal iz paralelnog, tek nešto intenzivnijeg makedonskog primjera, ili »konjska glava« u filmskom žargonu, jest da postoje čisto dramaturški elementi u konstrukciji takvih naracija. Da bi nekada poprimili svoje realno naličje i pojavili se kosturi iz ormara, ili ispod postolja, baš kao što se odrezana konjska glava pojavila u krevetu filmskog producenta Jacka Woltza u filmu Kum.

Opis obiteljskog stana reinterpreтира i objedinjuje, kako u materijalu tako i koncepcijski, dva prethodna rada Fokus Grupe: instalaciju *Oltar domovine* i *Excercising Novy Byt* realiziran u ljubljanskog galeriji ŠKUC kroz izvedbu eksperimentalnog fleksibilnog namještaja kojeg su, u pripremi novog vremena koje se u potpunosti nikada nije ostvarilo, projektirali učenici Aleksandra Rodčenka. *Oltar domovine*, reinterpretacija je spomenika što ga je u neposrednoj blizini utvrde Medvedgrad iznad Zagreba u čast palima za domovinu, u prividno minimalističkoj maniri izveo skulptor Kuzma Kovačić. Fokus Grupa ga je reinterpretila u tri navrata do sada, svaki put pronalazeći mu novu funkciju da bi u ovoj izvedbi, rastavljen, postao nizom novih, modularnih gradbenih jedinica za privremenu izvedbu namještaja namijenjenog dvosobnom stanu četveročlane obitelji. Kroz odgovornu reciklažu korištenog materijala umornom spomeniku daje se nova uloga i funkcija, i on iz minimalističke instalacije postaje dizajnerskom vježbom na tragu, za prva desetljeća dvadesetog stoljeća, radikalnog ukidanja rascjepa između privatnog i javnog iz vremena povijesnih avan-

gardi, koje je trebalo dati kontekst za nastanak novog čovjeka. U eseju *Remaking the bed: utopia in daily life* književna teoretičarka Olga Matich piše o alternativnim obiteljskim i bračnim zajednicama, među kojima je u književnom svijetu dvadesetih godina prošlog stoljeća najpoznatija bila ona pjesnika Majakovskog i bračnog para Ljilje i Osipa Brika². Jedna od prvih nekonvencionalnih zajednica opisana je čuvenom romanu iz 1863. *Što da se radi* Nikolaja Gavriloviča Černiševskog koji donosi priču o bračnom paru, Veri Pavlovnoj i Lophutkinu, koji u ime ravnopravnosti i ženske emancipacije napuštaju instituciju bračnog kreveta i koriste odvojene spavaonice, unatoč skromnim prostornim uvjetima. Organizacija obiteljskog doma i bračnog života nije izostavljena iz odgovornosti za javno djelovanje, a kao što kaže citirani slogan »Brzo spavaj — tvom drugu treba tvoj jastuk« svaka je aktivnost javna i kolektivnog dosega. Tako i namještaj nije samo namještaj. Mogućnošću brze promjene i prilagodbe namještaja, što će iz apstraktnih kubusa dobiti funkcionalnu namjenu, u promjenjivu se skulpturu upisuje nekoliko značenja, koja su ponekad naizgled suprotna avangardnim nastojanjima da se u programiranom privatnom okolišu istežu žene i muškarci za novo doba, u čijim će težnjama opće i pojedinačno postati jedno. Tako će dom koji se u svaki trenutak može preobraziti u ured u današnjem kontekstu prije ukazivati na prekarni rad za potencijalno i poželjno beskonačnim radnim vremenom i stalnom dostupnošću i raspoloživošću. Nadalje, sraz privatnog i javnog, ili ako se pozovemo na feminističke slogane, »osobno je političko« u ovom će se slučaju, posebno kada Oltar domovine postaje bračnom posteljom, prizvati neke konzervativne građanske pokrete, formirane upravo u obrani modela heteroseksualne obitelji koju nameću kao jedini mogući model društvene reprodukcije.

Prema riječima samih autora, ishodište filma *There Aren't Words for What We Do or How We Feel so We Have to Make Them Up* je njihov pohod u prirodu, koji je počeo upravo od Medvedgrada. Izleti na Zagrebačku goru nisu bili eskapistički protest poput rada *Hallelujah the hills grupe* Weekend art (Tomislav Gotovac, Ivana Keser Battista, Aleksandar Battista Ilić), već hodočašće na mjesto koje je u nedavnim medijskim budnicama postao jedna od novih ikoničkih slika što potvrđuju identitet stanovnika Lijepe naše. Iz njih su proizašli posjeti nacionalnim parkovima praćeni profesionalnom kamerom, u namjeri otvorene izloženosti opjevanom pejzažu. Napuštajući sigurnost ironijske tradicije i odmaka, Fokus Grupa kreće u potragu za »iskonskim nacionalnim identitetom« u krajoliku lišenom neposrednih biljega civilizacije i povijesnog taloga, čak i u formi romantizmu tako dragih ruševina.

Film se otvara aluzijom na anegdotu koja potvrđuje mit o »najljepšoj zemlji na svijetu« — riječ je o poznatom divljenju Alfreda Hitchkoka zalasku sunca na obalama Zadra, no filmsko se traganje za Arkadijom i nepatvorenim ganućem koje ona budi pretvara u meditaciju o neuspješnom pokušaju konstrukcije slike i vizije koja bi izrav-

1 Leboš, Sonja. »Duga povijest devastacije urbanog«. Intervju s Mirnom Jasić. *Novosti*, 24.3.2015. <http://www.portalnovosti.com/sonja-lebos-duga-povijest-devastacije-urbanog> (6.5.2015.)

2 Matich, Olga. »Remaking the bed: utopia in daily life« u *Laboratory of Dreams: The Russian Avant-garde and Cultural Experiment*, ur. John E. Bowlit, Olga Matich. Stanford University Press, 1996, str. 59–78.

no, neverbalnim jezikom, prenosila pojmove kao što su iskonsko, jedinstvo, čistoća, bezvremensko. Jezik, još jedno od uporišta nacionalnog identiteta, u filmu postoji u izvedbi muškog govornika, na internacionalnom engleskom začinjnim slavenskim akcentom. Krećući na pohod izvan sigurnog gradskog rastera ulica, kao i izvan uobičajenog medija vlastitog umjetničkog djelovanja, Fokus Grupa se otiskuje u potragu za »stvarnim mjestima« koja leže izvan medijski posredovanih instrumenata nacionalne samoidentifikacije i svaki od manje ili više prisutnih mitskih toposa, poput velebitskog Svetog brda, obilaze. Njihovi likovi nisu zabilježeni filmskom kamerom, oni se upisuju u film u procesu montaže, objedinjeni u tek prividno neutralnom sugestivnom baritonu koji ispovijeda potragu u prvom licu.

Među najpoznatijim, najutjecajnijim i najreproduciranim spomenicima u umjetnosti dvadesetog stoljeća svakako je *Spomenik Trećoj Internacionali* Vladimira Tatlina. Izveden tek kao model u mjerilu 1:80, spomenik je bio zamišljen kao sjedište Kominterne i njezin izvršni ured te kao press centar i radio stanica, odnosno »multimedijalni višenamjenski propagandni centar« u konstatnom pokretu, koji je trebao konstatno proizvoditi i emitirati nove informacije. Kako u eseju *Model Exhibition* piše Maria Gough³, osim nedvojbenih utjecaja i izravnih citata u umjetnosti 20. i 21. stoljeća, nedovoljno je istraženo izlaganje modela Spomenika na sovjetskim gospodarskim izložbama, koje su trebale svjedočiti o napretku i blagostanju novog društva. U tom je kontekstu Tatlinova konstrukcija svojim neortodoksnim i dinamičnim spiraloidnim oblikom koji se činio kao da je u permanentnom kretanju doista, barem djelomično, vršila svoju propagandnu funkciju. Tu će formu El Lissitzky u suradnji s Gustavom Klucisom i Nikolaiem Simonom prilagoditi i obogatiti industrijskim atributima i postaviti kao agitacijske strukture na međunarodnim izložbama kao što je to bila *Pressa* u Koelnu 1928. Moglo bi se reći da je jednim još tradicionalnijim derivatom te forme bio prekriven i Jelačićev spomenik na glavnom zagrebačkom trgu. Spomenik nije tek lebdeći označitelj, on ima jasno određenu funkciju (ili više njih), kao i nova inkarnacija *Oltara domovine* izvedena u drvu. Naravno, Tatlina, uz Šklovskog, Olga Matich u svojem eseju spominje kao umjetnike aktivne u *Lef*-u te njihovo otvoreno zalaganje za tzv. *Novy byt* ili za novu formu osobnog i obiteljskog života, suprotnu građanskoj tradiciji⁴. Konačno, i postav izložbe Fokus Grupe donosi poetsku nenarativnu i nelinearnu filmsku projekciju koja zasipa publiku lijepim slikama i uzvišenim riječima. No namjera i utisak su daleko od agitacijskog, posebno u kontekstu nacionalne prezentacije. Prije da je riječ o melankoliji, tako inherentnoj ideji nacionalne države, a sve zbog manjka i isključenja koje ona podrazumijeva.

3 Gough, Maria. »Model exhibition«, u *October Magazine* br. 150, jesen 2014, str. 9–26.

4 Ibid, str. 25.

Vježbanje novog bita / Exercising Novy Byt, 2014

prototip namještaja, foto-kolaži, postav izložbe: *Smisao za rad*, Galerija Škuc / furniture prototype, photo collages, exhibition view: *A Taste for Work*, Škuc Gallery (foto/photo: Dejan Habicht)



They Kill Monuments as Well, Don't They?

Jasna Jakšić

Public and secret life of monuments, especially the ones related to national self-representation, reflects a full range of political changes and events than can directly affect their condition, position and, consequently, public reception. Fokus Grupa's exhibition, an artistic tandem that appropriated its name from the terminology of market research, reinterprets the topic of monuments in public, private and finally, intimate, almost introspective context. Alenka Gregorič observed in her text how the exhibition follows the structure of Greek tragedy, from which one can assume that the impression and the experience of the exhibition will purify the feelings of the audience. Indeed, in their visual and physical probing of the nature and possibilities of monuments covered in nationalist signifiers, they will at the same time emphatically, almost emotionally, but also analytically reach the commonplaces of national pride. So through the events that have shaped the appearance of the main Zagreb square the audience is introduced to the relationship between monuments and public space, only to, by entering the model, i.e. *The Description of a Family Apartment*, find themselves within a recycled installation that became spatial arena for an experimental apartment in which the ideology of Russian avant-garde has nowadays been potentially replaced by IKEA's ease, environmental concern and of course, flexibility, like in the catalogue: "With flexible furniture, you can go from night to day easily". Finally, the emotionally charged climax of the exhibition is a suggestive projection of the video titled *There Aren't Words for What We Do or How We Feel so We Have to Make Them Up* in which the camera, in search of inspiring and beautiful scenes, is accompanied by a spoken text of a refined style reminiscent of the time of Romanticism and national awakenings in the nineteenth century when the empowered citizenry used nationalism to tear down great kingdoms and empires and require new territories.

People Love Monuments takes as its starting point the public space represented by a series of photographs, almost accidental postcards, and deals with the destiny of the monument to Ban Josip Jelačić located at the Zagreb square of the same name since 1866. During its 150 years of existence the monument changed five states, with with one caesura: it was removed from the main square in 1947, renamed into Trg Republike (Republic Square), and after it had been, on important dates and anniversaries, covered in appropriate coulisse for two years, as the exhibited photographs show. Among the authors of one of the coulisse, the one put up for the Assembly of the Women's Antifascist Front in 1945, was then a young sculptor, Vojin Bakić. After the introduction of multiparty system the monument was put back, but somewhere else and with a different orientation — previously, the General's sabre had been pointing towards the north, towards Hungary, whose rebels posed a threat to the banate of Croatia in 1848. Jelačić's participation in extinguishing the revolutionary movements in Hungary and Vienna, as well as his career of an imperial general, although he was popular among the rural population, made him an unwelcome person in a new, classless society built after 1945 and which, at least declaratively, put brotherhood among peoples before nationalism. This reinstallation was preceded by a radical renovation of the main Zagreb square, using granite

plates, which then served as a model for later renovations or, more precisely, devastations, as a prominent urban anthropologist Sonja Leboš pointed out in *Novosti Magazine*: “That devastations have had a long history in our country can also be illustrated by the period of socialist modernism in its necrotic phase, in the second half of the 1980s, when the present Ban Jelačić Square was being prepared for the Universiade. Even then, there were no consultations with the public on what the then Republic Square should look like, and better projects were proposed than the one we have today: the open space where in summer we are scorched by sun and in winter cold wind freezes our breath.”¹

Along with the photographs, a three-dimensional print of a segment of the monument is also exhibited on the pedestal — it is a horse head laid down on its side. Namely, in the local Croatian film jargon “horse head” refers to shots in which, for a short period of time, in editing, the camera moves away from the protagonist and focuses on some detail of secondary importance, but dynamic enough to distract viewer's attention for a short while. In classical western, this detail, not too far away from the main protagonists who are probably in the saddle, is precisely — the head of a horse. As travelling companions, mostly in the shadow of great characters on their back, horses sometimes come to the limelight of history in grand style. This also happened to the horse of Alexander the Great, Bucephalus — both during his life and nowadays, when the Hellenistic architectural momentum that was supposed to legitimise a young nation unrecognised by its Greek neighbours, was named after the horse — *bucephalization*. Its climax was represented by the erection of a twelve-meter high sculpture of Alexander the Great, on the horse, of course. The Macedonian case looks like an even faster and more impassioned example of self-legitimation of a nation and creation of a mythological narrative about it, the process that, in the countries created after the breakup of Yugoslavia, continued to live in the vacuum of nationalist sideways of the nineteenth century. But what the Bucephalus from a parallel, slightly more invasive Macedonian example points to, or “the head of a horse” in film jargon, is that there are purely dramaturgical elements in the construction of such narrations. To sometimes show their real other side and the skeletons from the closet, or from under the pedestal, just like a severed horse head appeared in the bed of movie producer Jack Woltz in the movie *Godfather*.

The Description of a Family Apartment reinterprets and integrates, both in material and concept, two previous works of Fokus Grupa: the installation *Altar of the Homeland* and *Exercising Novy Byt* realized in ŠKUC Gallery in Ljubljana by making experimental flexible furniture designed by Aleksaner Rodčenko's students in the preparation of the new era that never completely came to life. *Altar of the Homeland* is the reinterpretation of the monument created, in minimalist manner, by the

1 Leboš, Sonja. “Duga povijest devastacije urbanog”. Interview with Mirna Jasić. *Novosti*, 24/03/2015, available at <http://www.portalnovosti.com/sonja-lebos-duga-povijest-devastacije-urbanog> (May 6, 2015)

sculptor Kuzma Kovačić placed near the fortress of Medvedgrad above Zagreb, in honour of those who fell for their country. Fokus Grupa has reinterpreted it three times so far, each time finding it a new function, and this time, dismantled, it becomes a series of new, modular building units for the temporary design of furniture intended for two-room apartment for a four-member family. Through responsible recycling of used materials the tired monument is given a new role and function, and from a minimalist installation it becomes a designer exercise on the trail of, for the first decades of the twentieth century, radical abolition of the gap between private and public from the time of historical avant-garde, which was supposed to provide the context for the creation of the new human. In her essay *Remaking the Bed: Utopia in Daily Life*, literary theorist Olga Matich writes² about alternative families and marriages, among which the most famous one in literary world was the one of the poet Mayakovsky and the married couple Ljilja and Osip Brik. One of the first unconventional marriages was described in the famous novel from 1863 *What Is To Be Done* by Nikolay Gavrilovich Chernyshevsky which talks about a married couple, Viera Pavlovna and Lopukhof who, in the name of equality and female emancipation, abandon the institution of the marriage bed and use separate bedrooms, despite modest spatial circumstances. The organisation of a family home and married life is not exempt from the responsibility of public action, and as the quoted slogan says, “Sleep faster — your comrade needs your pillow” each activity is public and of collective outreach. Thus the furniture is not just furniture. With the ability of quick change and adaptation of furniture, which will transform abstract cubes into a functional purpose, several meanings are inscribed into the changeable sculpture, sometimes seemingly contradictory to the avant-garde efforts to model women and men for a new era in a programmed private environment, in whose aspirations general and individual will become one. So the home, which can be transformed into office at any moment, will, in the present context, rather point to precarious work for potential and desirable infinite working hours and continuous availability and accessibility. Furthermore, the collision of private and public, or if we refer to feminist slogans “the personal is political” will in this case, especially when *the altar of the homeland* becomes a marital bed, recall some conservative civic movements, formed precisely in the defence of model of a heterosexual family that is being imposed as the only possible model of social reproduction.

According to the authors, the origin of the film *There Aren't Words for What We Do or How We Feel so We Have to Make Them Up*, and of the entire project presented in the Gallery, is their visits into nature, which had begun precisely in Medvedgrad. Their trips to Medvednica were not escapist protests like the work *Hallelujah the hills* by the group Weekend art (Tomislav Gotovac, Ivana Keser Battista, Aleksan-

2 Matich, Olga, “Remaking the bed: utopia in daily life”, in *Laboratory of Dreams: The Russian Avant-garde and Cultural Experiment*, ed. John E. Bowlit, Olga Matich; Stanford University Press, 1996, pp. 59–78.

dar Battista Ilić), but a pilgrimage to the place that has in recent media reveilles become one of the new iconic images that affirm the identity of the inhabitants of “Our Beautiful.” The authors’ visits have resulted from them, followed by a professional camera through national parks with the intention of being openly exposed to the celebrated landscape. Giving up the safety of the ironic tradition and distance, Fokus Grupa embarks on a quest for the “genuine national identity” in a landscape devoid of immediate markers of civilization and historical sediment, even in the form of ruins so dear to Romanticism.

The film opens up with an allusion to an anecdote that confirms the myth of “the most beautiful country in the world” — a well-known admiration of Alfred Hitchcock for the sunsets of Zadar, but the filmic quest for Arcadia and the authentic emotion it awakens, becomes a meditation on the failed attempt to construct the image and vision that would directly, nonverbally, mediate concepts such as origin, unity, purity, timelessness. Language, another stronghold of national identity, is performed in the film by a male speaker, in international English seasoned with a Slavic accent. Embarking on a trip outside the secure city street raster as well as beyond their usual media of artistic work, Fokus Grupa commence their search for the “real places” that lie outside the media-mediated instruments of national self-identification and pay visits to all the more or less present mythical topoi, like the Veljebit's Holy Hill. Their characters are not recorded on camera, they are inscribed in the editing process, integrated only by the seemingly neutral suggestive baritone that confesses the search in the first person.

Among the best known, most influential and most reproduced monuments in the art of the 20th century is definitely the *Monument to the Third International* by Vladimir Tatlin. Built only as a model in 1:80 scale, the monument was designed as the headquarters of the Comintern and its executive office and as the press centre and radio station, i.e., “multipurpose multimedia propaganda centre” in constant movement that was supposed to constantly produce and transmit new information. As Maria Gough writes in the essay *Model Exhibition*, besides indubitable influence and direct quotes in the art of the 20th and 21st century, exhibiting the model of the Monument at the Soviet fairs of economy that were supposed to testify about the progress and prosperity of the new society was never researched enough³. In that context Tatlin's construction, with its unorthodox and dynamic spiral-like shape, which seemed like it was in permanent motion, truly, at least partially, performed its propaganda function. In cooperation with Gustav Klutss and Nikolai Simonov, El Lissitzky adapted and adjusted that form with industrial attributes and exhibited them as agitation structures at international exhibitions, such as *Pressa* in Cologne in 1928. It could be said that Jelačić's monument on the main Zagreb square was covered in an more traditional derivative of this form. Monument is not merely a

3 Gough, Maria, “Model exhibition”, *October Magazine* no. 150, Fall 2014; pp. 9–26.

floating signifier; it has a clearly defined function (or functions), as well as the new incarnation of the *Altar of the Homeland* done in wood. Of course, in her essay, Olga Matich mentions both Tatlin and Shklovsky as artists active in *Lef* and talks about their open advocacy of the so-called *Novy byt*, or the new form of personal and family life, as opposed to bourgeois tradition⁴. Finally, the exhibition of Fokus Grupa brings poetic non-narrative and non-linear film projection that bombards the audience with beautiful images and sublime words. However, the intention and impression are far from agitated, especially in the context of national presentation. It is more about melancholy, such an inherent idea of the nation state, and all because of lack and exclusions it implies.

4 Ibid, p. 25.

OLTAR DOMOVINE svoje ime i oblik preuzima od »spomenika svim hrvatskim junacima« podignutog u blizini glavnoga grada 1994. godine. Kuzma Kovačić izradio je neobičan oblik »minimalističke« skulpture izrađene od kamenih blokova donesenih iz svih dijelova Hrvatske te od staklenih blokova koji predstavljaju more. Spomenik predstavlja jedinstvenost domovine u obliku svetišta naciji, njezinoj krvi i njezinu tlu, udaljen od politike minimalizma zahvaljujući svom alegorijskom i transcendentálnom korištenju materijala.

Oltar domovine, u reartikulaciji Fokus Grupe, izgrađen je od korištenog namještaja kako bi se stvorila hibridna skulptura. U svakoj novoj instalaciji rad se sastavlja od materijala prikupljenog na licu mjesta, čime se napušta svaka ideja transcendentálnosti toliko važna Kovačiću. Novi *Oltar domovine* istovremeno postaje upotrební i semantički objekt; on služi kao gledalište, sjedište za gledanje projekcije filma, kao i konceptualni okvir projiciranog filma *There Aren't Words for What We Do or How We Feel So We Have To Make Them Up*.







ALTAR OF THE HOMELAND takes its name and shape from the “monument to all Croatian heroes” erected near the capital in 1994. Kuzma Kovačić created a peculiar kind of “minimalist” sculpture arranged out of stone blocks brought from all regions of Croatia and glass blocks, which represent the sea. The monument represents the total unity of the homeland in a form of a sanctuary to the nation, it's blood and it's land, detached from the politics of minimalism due to it's allegorical and transcendental utilization of material.

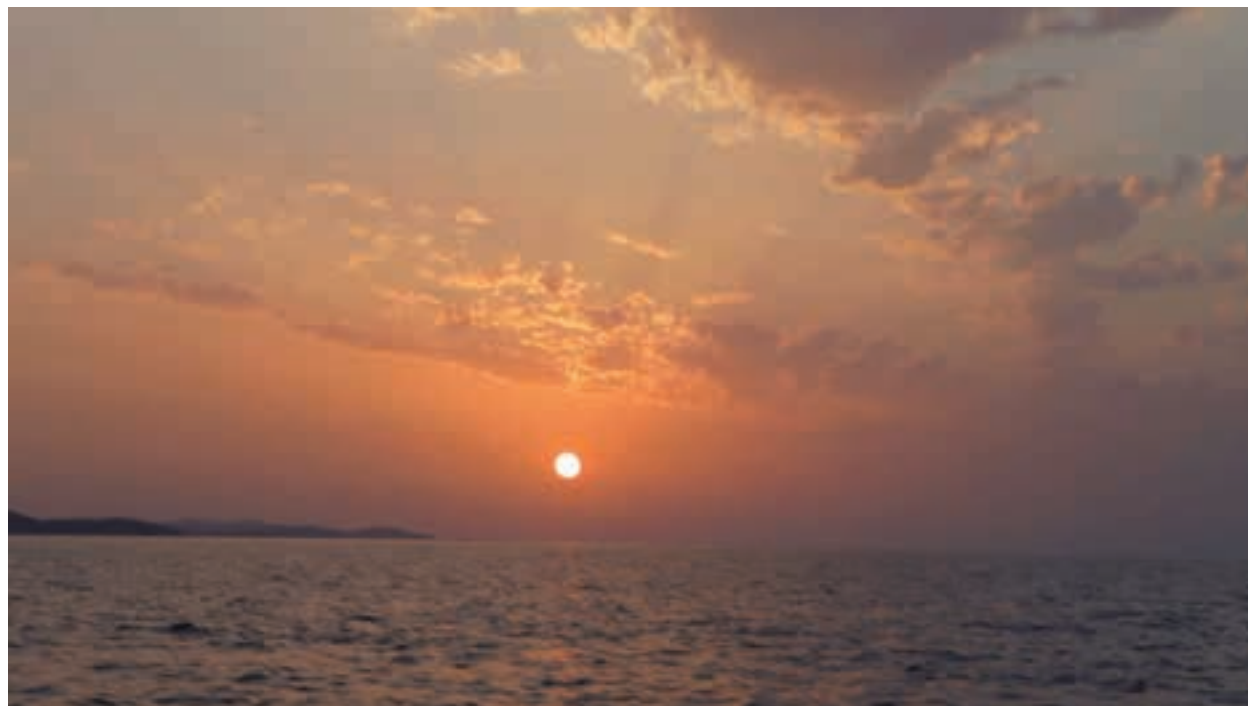
Altar of the Homeland re-articulated by Fokus Grupa, is built with used furniture in order to create a hybrid sculpture. In every new installation the piece is assembled from locally acquired material, abandoning any notion of transcendence so important to Kovačić. This new *Altar of the Homeland* becomes simultaneously a utilitarian and semantic object; it serves as an auditorium, a seating place for viewing the film projection as well as the conceptual framework for the projected film *There Aren't Words for What We Do or How We Feel So We Have To Make Them Up*.



Istražujući značaj prirode za nacionalistički diskurs, film THERE AREN'T WORDS FOR WHAT WE DO OR HOW WE FEEL SO WE HAVE TO MAKE THEM UP istovremeno je i politički i eskapistički. Kroz kontemplaciju pripovjedača i prizore nacionalnih parkova, video se bavi pitanjem reprezentacije i pojmom »nacionalne biti«.

Kako bi osmislila tekst naracije, Fokus Grupa svoj jezik preuzima iz niza različitih izvora, od hrvatske himne do dokumentarnih filmova o prirodi i turističkih promidžbenih kampanja. Kroz različite topografije, od otvorenih ravnica do planinskih vrhova, kamera istražuje pojmove uzvišenog uspostavljajući svoj (kritički) odnos prema romantizmu i čini puni krug vraćajući se na suvremeni (hrvatski) nacionalizam.

Kada se izlaže kao instalacija, teza filma o odnosu nacionalizma i prirode proteže se u galerijski prostor kroz rad *Oltar domovine*, koji državni spomenik transformira u gledalište za projekciju filma, a služi i kao njegov ideološki okvir.



Recording of the sunset Hitchcock called the most beautiful is the last recording of my travel.

Rocking of the waves makes it difficult to keep the Sun in the frame.

I do not use the recording because of the scene itself, but because of Hitchcock.

Although I do not look for them they often enter the frame and now I have numerous recordings of the Sun.

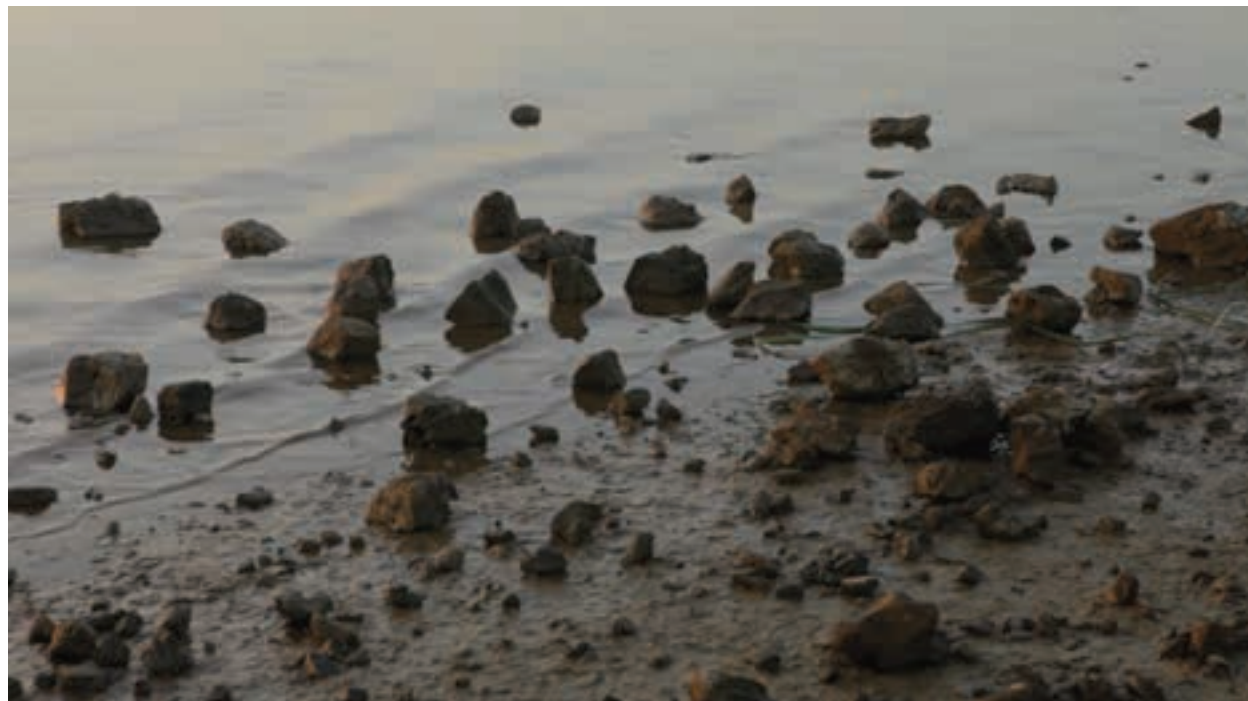
The suns don't rise nor set.
This is completely in my hands,
the word dominates the image.



Sunset.
Sunrise.

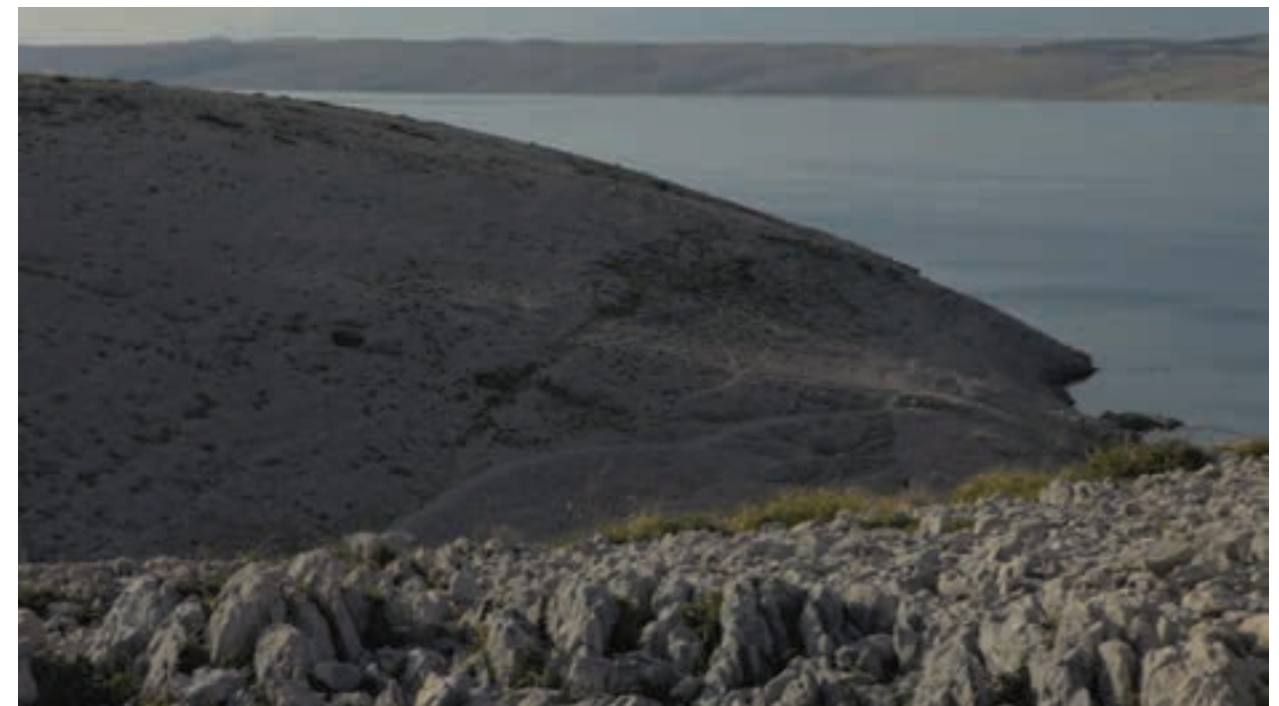
Before the beginning of the journey I knew what I wanted to find.
Scenes that I associate with this country and I cannot separate from the uttered word — homeland.

I wanted to face the locations, find the recordings that have so often been the background of speeches, manipulations and affectations.
I have come to know that these feelings can be found in the scenes of our turbulent past as well as in the recordings of untouched nature.



I am not so interested in the images of time,
times, as much as in the images of the
timeless.
I want to be able to deal with what I can
meaningfully associate with the terms;
essence, purity, unity.

I record at dawn while the world still
appears young.
Dawn.
East.
Towards your essence,
and mine.



Scenes I am looking for
are missing on the real site.
Again, it becomes clear to me that pureness
and unity are created through the camera.
Through careful planning.
But as soon as I start you slip away.

I can't seem to find vast plains.
I want to start this film
with the recordings of open space.
I want it to be abstract,
pure, complete — empty!



These spaces make me think of material reality and I am looking for the abstraction of the space. The myth of the unity is fragmented. Romanticists would look deeper in nature. I retract to go deeper, elsewhere.

I make several literal attempts. Attempt to come close, to immerse, in order to return altered. Digression. For a moment I exalt. For a moment I leave my position.



Television would be looking for you in a national park. I am doing just that but with uncertainty; how can I understand the allegory of a national park? That bubble.

As an intensified experience of nature? As nature saturated with representation? As discordance? How is my endeavour any different?



The emptiness I was looking for in the plain
 I unexpectedly encounter here.
 “Echoing” of the emptied riverbed.
 Filled with absence this space appears
 more literal, more real to me.
 I enjoy the movements,
 but I don't find what I came for.
 I don't find you.

Fog that disappears quickly
 reveals this scene as the image of dawn.
 In the next frame it is almost gone.
 Dawn becomes morning, and the image
 I have of myself changes moved by the
 environment.
 Alienation alternates with enchantment.



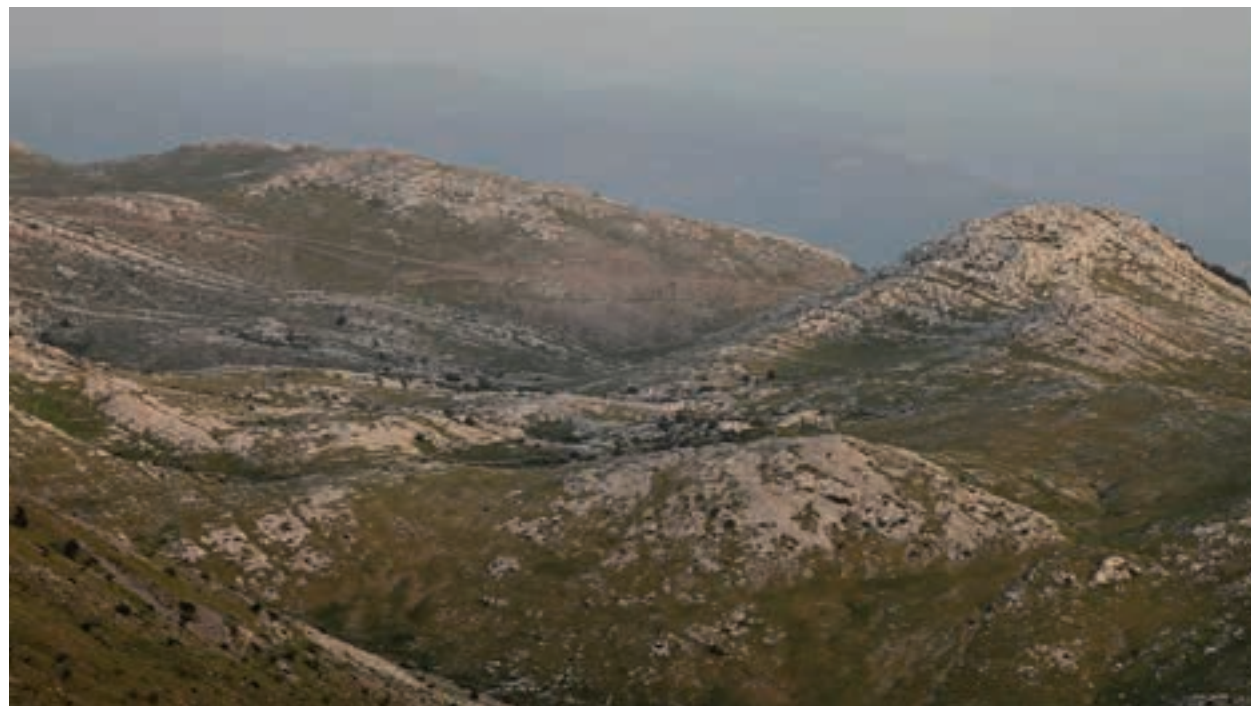
I am enchanted because I recognise media
 images in the real environment.
 Instead of you, I see “Brazil”!
 I have formed with regard to the living space.
 My atheism is the product of my environment,
 product of abstinence from nature.

This plateau ...
 Time and space.
 Another space, another time.
 The space that surrounds me now,
 fills me with a romantic feeling.
 Small faced with the mountain.



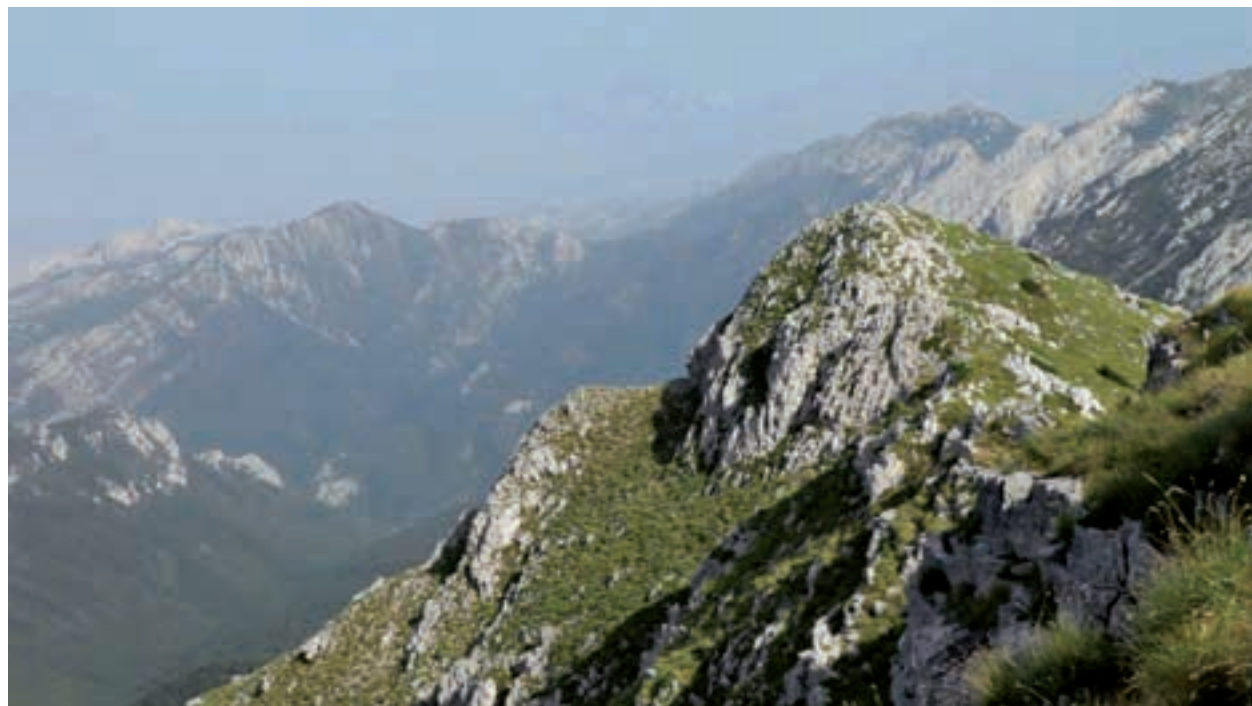
I lose the sense of space.
 The tree I'm recording
 seems smaller than it is.
 I had to move towards it to realise it.
 Conscious decisions don't count here.
 The subject here is — space!

I compare the failure in the mountains
 with the failure on the plain.
 This recording gives the illusion that the high
 grass is a more intense experience of
 nature than the vastness of the mountain.
 But only as a recording.



Recordings from the mountain
 are the symptom of camera's indifference
 to my excitements and my doubts.
 The camera retains the role of a skeptic
 that I'm losing here.
 I'm thinking I might have found myself.
 I might have found you.

Camera alienates me, flattens the space,
 one camera eye is not as involved
 as the pair of eyes are.
 The recordings I take away
 seem to deal with themselves.
 I recognise something sensual
 in our relationship.
 I try to capture it.
 Curves.



These are the recordings that
best represent my fluctuations.
What hurts the most
is that which is not visible in them.
The top “Holy Hill” is the highest point
of my shooting. But this is not the “Holy
Hill”.
I am near the top. Less than a hundred meters
separates me from the goal.

I frame the shots so that the top I never
reached cannot be seen
in any given moment.
This is where I find myself the most.
Almost at the top.
Return from the mountain
made me feel ashamed.
I realise I cannot keep the distance.
I’m trying to keep the island in the centre of
the frame while it is slipping away.
I try again.



I am interested in the images of the timeless.
I want to be able to deal with what I can
meaningfully associate with the terms;
essence, purity, unity.
Scenes I am looking for
are missing from the real site.
Again, it becomes clear to me that pureness
and unity are created through the camera.
Through careful planning.

But as soon as I start
the archipelago disintegrated.
In the swamp I shot the flight.
Recordings that move me.
Scenes that quicken the heart.
“Brazil”.

One thing I can be sure of;
this is the Sun.

Investigating the significance of nature for the nationalist discourse, the film THERE AREN'T WORDS FOR WHAT WE DO OR HOW WE FEEL SO WE HAVE TO MAKE THEM UP is both political and escapist. Through contemplation of the narrator and the imagery of national parks, the film explores the questions of representation and the notion of the “national essence.”

Fokus Grupa is taking its language out of a variety of sources from the Croatian national anthem to nature documentaries and tourist campaigns, in order to compose the text for the narration. Through various topographies, from open plains to mountain peaks, the camera explores the notions of the sublime, establishing it's (critical) relationship to romanticism, and making a full circle, all the way back to contemporary (Croatian) nationalism.

When exhibited as an installation, the film's premise about the relationship of nationalism and nature extends into gallery space via the use of the work *Altar of the Homeland* that transforms the national monument into an auditorium for the film, serving also as its ideological framework.



Instalacija P.H.S.H.N. sastoji se od 29 kocki od šperploče izrađenih prema elementima *Oltara domovine* Kuzme Kovačića. Korištenje šperploče priziva u sjećanje rane minimalističke radove, kao i namještaj. Organizacija modularnih elemenata nema namjeru oponašati izvorni raspored spomenika, *P.H.S.H.N.* posložen je da služi kao spremište, arhivski namještaj za različite dijelove istraživačkog materijala. Ti materijali uključuju medije, književnost, valutu, zemljopisne karte, itd. te otkrivaju »alate« kojima se »imaginarna zajednica« uspostavlja i održava. Ovom gestom »otvaranja« spomenik, njegova funkcija i podtekst dolaze u središte pažnje.







Installation P.H.S.H.N. consists of 29 plywood cubes made after elements of Kuzma Kovačić's *Altar of the Homeland*. The use of plywood invokes early minimalist works, as well as furniture. The organization of modular elements is not intended to mimic the original layout of the monument, *P.H.S.H.N.* is arranged to serve as storage, archival furniture for various bits of research material. These materials include media, literature, currency, geography etc., revealing the “tools” with which the “imaginary community,” establishes and maintains itself. In this gesture of “opening up”, the monument, its function and its subtext comes to the forefront.

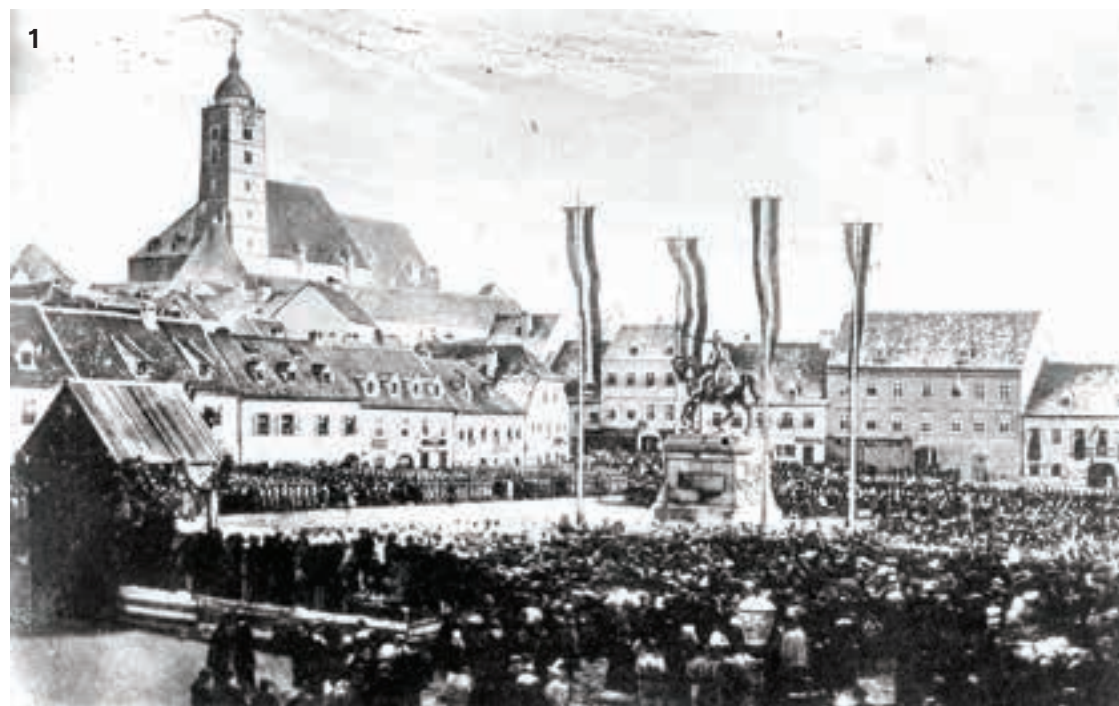


Parafrazirajući teoretičara filma Hrvoja Turkovića: »Konjske glave« su manje pamtljivi kadrovi, snimljeni prije ili poslije snimanja glavnog sadržaja, ubačeni kako bi premostili glavne snimke i pomogli narativnom toku. Najčešće su korištene u intervjuima kao detalji ruku intervjuiranih koji se isprepliću sa snimkama lica osobe koja govori.

LJUDI VOLE SPOMENIKE sastoji se od 3D printa glave konja bana Josipa Jelačića i niza fotografija koje dokumentiraju oko 150 godina života glavnog zagrebačkog trga. Konj, tradicionalni atribut vojničkih figura, kao dio konjaničke skulpture doslovno i metaforički uzdiže protagonista. Položen pred gledatelja, 3D print glave implicira čin sakaćenja označitelja te utjelovljuje tehniku izostavljanja, standardnu metodu montaže koja se koristi za uklanjanje problematičnih, neželjenih, začudnih elemenata u svrhu glatkog toka. Revolucionarni potencijal *reza* suprotstavljen je *finalnom rezu* kao privilegiji vladajućih.









Paraphrasing the film theoretician Hrvoje Turković “Horses Heads” are less memorable shots, filmed before or after filming the main plot, inserted in order to bridge main shots and help the narration flow, most commonly used in interviews when the head shots are interwoven with close-ups of hands.

PEOPLE LOVE MONUMENTS consists of a 3D print of a part of an equestrian sculpture of Viceroy Josip Jelačić and a series of photographs documenting roughly 150 years of life on the main square in the city Zagreb.

Horse, a traditional attribute of figures of military power, when part of an equestrian sculpture, literally and metaphorically elevates the protagonist. Laid down in front of the viewer, 3D printed head implies an act of mutilation of the signifier, it also enacts a technique of omission, a standard editing method used to remove problematic, unwanted, uncanny elements in order to create seamless narration. The revolutionary potential of the *cut* is pitted against the *final cut* as the privilege of those in power.



Cheaper by the Dozen¹

Vladimir Čajkovac

1 Frank B. Gilbreth, istraživač studija pokreta i jedan od pionira znanstvenog menadžmenta, na pitanje kako prehranjuje dvanaestero djece, običavao je odgovarati da u tucetu sve dođe jeftinije. Prema: Frank B. Gilbreth und Ernestine Gilbreth Carey, *Cheaper by the Dozen*, Martino Fine Books, 2013.

Dva zidna sata, postavljena na zidu jedan pored drugoga, sinkronizirano mjere vrijeme. *Bez naziva (Savršeni ljubavnici)* Felixa Gonzaleza-Torresa, nastali su početkom devedesetih kada u jeku epidemije AIDS-a dolazi do zaoštavanja uvijek prisutnih debata o kontroli seksualnosti, tijelu i moralu. Dva sata, dva su sinkronizirana ljubavnička tijela koja otkucavaju zajedno, dok vrijeme i resursi to dopuste. Jednostavni, industrijski objekti masovne proizvodnje, suptilna su gesta otpora državnoj regulaciji intime. Jezična i konceptualna igra prenamjene svakodnevnih objekata promišljena je zamka aktivizma, koji ne djeluje otvoreno, stisnutim pesnicama i parolama, već kao špijun podriva samu mogućnost napada. U intervju iz siječnja 1995. reći će: »Kada sam imao izložbu u Hirshornu, senator Stevens, jedan od najhomofobnijih protivnika umjetnosti, rekao je da će doći na otvorenje i pomislio sam kako će imati prilično težak zadatak objasniti svojim sljedbenicima što je to toliko pornografsko i homoerotično u dva sata postavljena jedan pored drugog.«²

Fokus Grupa će preuzeti ovaj rad 2014. U ovom slučaju temu vremena i ideju partnerstva propustit će kroz ekonomsku prizmu³. Satovi su podijeljeni na osmosatne odsječke rada, spavanja i slobodnog vremena. Sinkronizirana ljubavnička tijela time više ne otkucavaju isključivo u ritmu intimnog prostora, nego u ritmu kapitalističke podjele radnog dana, iste one koja je izborna tijekom devetnaestog stoljeća u mnogobrojnim pokretima za radnička prava. Objekti koji sačinjavaju dom postaju politička gesta. Riječima Gonzaleza-Torresa: »Kao u filmovima Polanskog u kojima sve postaje prijetnja nevinosti: zidovi, pločnik, sve...«⁴

Istraživanje povezanosti forme umjetničkih i utilitarnih predmeta i njihovih političkih i ideoloških postavki, paradigma je djelovanja Fokus Grupe i u punoj mjeri dosljedno izveden u projektu *A Description of Family Apartment*. U galerijskom prostoru ostvaren je u punom mjerilu projekt modela opremljenog stambenog objekta, tipizirani okvir životnog prostora. Kao glavni protagonisti romana Nikolaja Černiševskog *Što da se radi* oni »osmišljaju zajednički život i svoje međuodnose kroz temeljito promišljanje prostornog rasporeda stana. Unutrašnja arhitektura stambenog prostora i namještaj u njemu razotkriva se kao formativni element novog društvenog poretka.«⁵

Oblikovanje i kontrola svakodnevice, planska izgradnja stambenih prostora i formiranje osnovnih životnih jedinica nalazi se u osnovi velikog broja progresivnih, (post)revolucionarnih i utopijskih društvenih pokreta neovisno o njihovom ideološkom predznaku. Rast industrijskog društva početkom dvadesetog stoljeća, praćen je

- 2 Robert Storr, »Interview with Felix Gonzalez-Torres by Robert Storr«, *ArtPress*, Januar 1995.
- 3 *Perfect Lovers* je također i ime umjetničke knjige predstavljene u ovom katalogu u kojoj Fokus Grupa špekulacijama o vlastitoj intimi progovara o ekonomiji žudnje, kontroli, tijelu i tekstu.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Prema razgovoru s Fokus Grupom.

i istraživanjima optimizacije i ekonomizacije kako radnog, tako i slobodnog vremena i prostora. Fordizam, tejlorizam i istraživanja optimizacije pokreta Frank i Lilian Gilbreth u SAD-u ili Alekseja Kapitonoviča Gasteva⁶ u postrevolucionarnom Sovjetskom savezu, suvremenici su avangardnim pokretima futurizma i konstruktivizma kao i daljnjeg razvoja industrije slobodnog vremena.

Novi društveni poredak građen je u ovom slučaju mjerilom postavljenim hrvatskim *Oltarom domovine*. Medvedgradski *Oltar domovine*, na koji se Fokus Grupa već referirala u različitim postavima rada *Oltar domovine* 2012. godine, prolazio je transformacije od skulpture do prostorne instalacije — sjedišta za gledanje projekcije filma. Između izlaganja skladišten je u zagrebačkom ateljeu Fokus Grupe gdje dobiva privremenu utilitarnu funkciju služeći kao polica za knjige. Ova naznaka utilitarnosti *Oltara* kasnije se seli i u galerijski prostor radom *P.H.S.H.N.* 2014. gdje *Oltar* postaje svojevrsni otvoreni arhiv da bi u *A Description of Family Apartment* postao gradivni element jedne od mogućih normativnih svakodnevnica.

Govoreći formalnim jezikom minimalizma i povijesnih avangardi novonastali objekti svedeni na nužno, građeni su armaturom Lissitzkog, Schwittersa, Artschwagera, Judda i Gorgone. U njima se taloži iskustvo minolog rada Fokus Grupe, kao i teorijskih postavki koje čine okvir njihovog umjetničkog djelovanja. Permutacija materijala ujedno je i permutacija različitih vremenskih i vrijednosnih okvira. Nacionalni spomenici se grade da bi trajali, galerijski namještaj kao potrošna roba od iverice i recikliranog materijala da bi se bacao, a umjetnički objekti da bi bili sačuvani.

Spomenici se grade od postojanih materijala, takoreći za vječnost. Priželjkivana vječnost pak često znači samo period do uspostave idućeg političkog poretka i činjenica je za koju većina političkih sistema ima namjernu ili slučajnu slijepu pjegu. *Oltar domovine* Kuzme Kovačića tu nije iznimka. Građen od kamena dopremljenog iz svih dijelova Hrvatske i češkog stakla koje simbolizira more, svečano je otvoren 1994. da bi već nekoliko godina kasnije pao u zaborav. Vrijeme Kovačićevog *Oltara* je nadolje mitsko vrijeme, resurs za gradnju novog nacionalnog i tradicionalnog identiteta postsocijalističke demokratske republike, koji trope »sandala i mačeva« nesmetano ugrađuje u simboliku nacionalnih mitova kraja 20. stoljeća. Jednako kao što je višestruko spominjani Hitchcockov citat dio »melting pota« koji uključuje rimske ruševine, srednjovjekovne sakralne građevine i suvremene arhitektonske interpolacije u službi izgradnje prepoznatljivog identiteta hrvatske turističke destinacije.

Fokus Grupa prenamijenjuje ne samo svoje radove nego permutira forme identiteta nacionalnog korpusa i upisuje ih u vlastito tijelo. Galerijski prostor privremeno postaje model stambenog prostora, stari radovi preoblikovani u nove objekte, a nacionalni spomenik postaje namještaj. Mitski narativi *Oltara domovine* prenose se tako u utilitarnu svakodnevicu obiteljskog/bračnog para. Stan je namijenjen i opre-

mljen za dvoje odraslih ljudi s dvoje djece, sliku tradicionalne i normativne nuklearne obitelji kojoj se kao jedinoj mogućoj diže nacionalni spomenik i čije je opravdanje tradicijom jednako uronjena u mitsko: »Unatoč još nedostatnim podacima i prazninama, osobito u poznavanju povijesti obitelji mediteranskoga kulturnog kruga, mogli bismo reći da se na području Hrvatske ukrštalo nekoliko obiteljskih sustava — onaj sa složenim višeobiteljskim ustrojem, zajedničkim upravljanjem imovinom i nasljeđivanjem svih muških osoba, najčešće zvanim zadružnim; onaj sa složenim ustrojem u kojemu samo jedan sin nasljeđuje imanje kakav se pretpostavlja da je bio u priobalju, te vjerojatno i onaj s nuklearnim obiteljima.«⁷

Demokracija nije usmjereni pravac razvoja, prije je to stanje stalnog građanskog rata u kojem se pregovori i sukobi određivanja vrijednosti i značenja odvijaju na svakodnevnoj razini. Fokus Grupa prenosi ove pregovore u područje bliskoga, u životni prostor.

6 Pjesnik, revolucionar i osnivač Centralnog instituta rada, gorljivi je zagovornik tejlorizma u Sovjetskom savezu koji promiče u znanstvenim radovima i člancima kao što su *Kako raditi* iz 1923. i *Taylor i Marx* iz 1927.

7 Jasna Čapo-Žmegač, »Konstrukcija modela obitelji u Europi i povijest obitelji u Hrvatskoj«, *Narodna umjetnost: hrvatski časopis za etnologiju i folkloristiku* 33, Br. 2 (19. prosinac 1996), str. 179, 195–195, 196.

Cheaper by the Dozen¹

Vladimir Čajkovac



Perfect Lovers, 2014

ready-made s intervencijom, postav izložbe: *Smisao za rad*, Galerija Škuc /
altered ready-made, exhibition view: *A Taste for Work*, Škuc Gallery

- 1 Frank B. Gilbreth, researcher of the motion study and one of the pioneers of the Scientific Management, to the question on how he managed to feed twelve children he would reply that everything is cheaper by the dozen, in: Frank B. Gilbreth and Ernestine Gilbreth Carey, *Cheaper by the Dozen*, Martino Fine Books, 2013.

Two wall clocks, placed on the wall side by side, measure time in synchrony. *Untitled (Perfect Lovers)* by Felix Gonzalez-Torres were created in the early nineties when, at the height of the AIDS epidemic, the always-present debates on the control of sexuality, body and morale got heated. Two clocks represent two synchronised lovers' bodies ticking together, so long as the time and resources allow it. Simple, industrial objects of mass production are a subtle gesture of resistance to the governmental regulation of intimacy. A linguistic and conceptual game of transformation of everyday objects is a deliberate trap of activism, which does not act openly, with clenched fists and slogans, but like a spy, undermines the very possibility of an attack. In an interview in January 1995 he said: "When I had a show at the Hirshhorn, Senator Stevens, one of the most homophobic anti-art senators, said he was going to come to the opening and I thought he's going to have a really hard time explaining to his constituency how pornographic and how homoerotic two clocks side-by-side are."²

Fokus Grupa appropriated this work in 2014. In this case they approached the topic of time and the idea of partnership through the economic prism. The clocks have been divided into eight-hour sections of work, sleep and leisure time³. The synchronised lovers' bodies thus no longer tick exclusively in the rhythm of intimate space, but in the rhythm of capitalist arrangement of a working day, the same one that was secured during the nineteenth century in numerous movements for workers' rights. Objects that make up a home become a political gesture. In Felix Gonzalez-Torres's words: "like in Polanski's movies where everything becomes a threat to virginity: the walls, the pavement, everything..."⁴

The exploration of connection between the form of art and utilitarian objects and their political and ideological foundation is the paradigm of Fokus Grupa's activity and it is fully implemented in the project *A Description of Family Apartment*. In the gallery space a full-scale project of the model of a furnished residential space was realised, a standardized framework of a living space. Like the main protagonists in Nikolay Chernyshevsky's novel *What Is To Be Done* they "design their life together and their interrelationships by carefully rethinking the spatial layout of the apartment. The interior architecture of a residential space and furniture in it are revealed as a formative element of the new social order."⁵

The shaping and control of everyday life, planned construction of housing and forming the basic living units is in the basis of a large number of progressive, (post)revolutionary and utopian social movements regardless of their ideological

- 2 Robert Storr, "Interview with Felix Gonzalez-Torres by Robert Storr", *ArtPress*, January 1995.
- 3 *Perfect Lovers* is also the title of the artist book presented in this catalogue in which Fokus Grupa speaks about economy of desire, control, body and text through speculations about their own intimacy.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 In conversation with Fokus Grupa.

prefix. The growth of the industrial society in the early twentieth century was accompanied by the research of optimization and economization of both working and leisure time and space. Fordism, Taylorism and research of movement optimization by Frank and Lilian Gilbreth in the USA or Aleksei Kapitonovich Gastev⁶ in post-revolutionary Soviet Union, were contemporaries to avant-garde movements of Futurism and Constructivism, as well as the future development of leisure industry.

The new social order was in this case constructed in the measure defined by the Croatian *Altar of the Homeland*. Medvegrad's *Altar of the Homeland*, which Fokus Grupa already referred to during various exhibitions of their work *Altar of the Homeland* in 2012, went through transformations from sculpture to spatial installation — seats for watching film screenings. Between exhibitions, it was stored in Fokus Grupa's atelier in Zagreb where it got a temporary utilitarian function as a bookshelf. This indication of utilitarian purpose of the Altar was afterwards transported into a gallery space with the work *P.H.S.H.N.* in 2014 where the Altar becomes a sort of open archive, only to become a building block of one of the possible normative everyday lives in *A Description of Family Apartment*.

The experience of Fokus Grupa's past work sediments in these objects, as well as the theories that make up the framework of their artistic activity. Speaking in formal language of minimalism and historical avant-gardes the newly created objects reduced only to the essential, are built on the grounds of of Lissitzky, Schwitters, Artschwager, Judd and Gorgona. The permutation of material is at the same time the permutation of different time and worldview frameworks. National monuments are made to last, gallery furniture as consumables made of chipboard and recycled material to be thrown away, and art objects to be preserved.

Monuments are made of durable materials, for eternity, so to speak. The desired eternity very often means only the period until the next political order comes into power and it is a fact for which the majority of political systems have an intentional or accidental blind spot. *Altar of the Homeland* by Kuzma Kovačić is no exception to this rule. Made of stone from all parts of Croatia and Czech glass symbolising the sea, it was officially opened in 1994, only to be forgotten couple of years later. The time of the Kovačićs' *Altar* remains a mythical time, resource for the construction of a new national and traditional identity of post-socialist democratic republic, which uses sword and sandal tropes and freely embeds them into the symbolism of national myths of the late 20th century. Just like the repeatedly-mentioned Hitchcock's quote is a part of melting pot which includes Roman ruins, medieval religious buildings and modern architectural interpolations in the service of constructing a recognizable identity of the Croatian tourist destination.

Fokus Grupa does not only redesign its own works, but also permutes the forms of identity of the national corpus and inscribes them into its own body. The gallery space temporarily becomes a model of living space, old works are redesigned into new objects, and a national monument becomes a piece of furniture. Mythical narratives of the altar of the homeland are thus transferred into a utilitarian everyday life of a family/married couple. The apartment is meant and furnished for two grown-ups with two children, the image of the traditional and normative nuclear family, to which, as the only one possible, a national monument is being erected and whose justification through tradition is equally immersed in the mythical: “Despite the still insufficient data and gaps, especially regarding knowledge about the family history of the Mediterranean cultural circle, we could say that several family systems intersected on the territory of Croatia — the one with a complex multi-family structure, joint management of property and inheritance of all males, usually called *za-druga*; the one with a complex structure in which only one son inherits everything, which was supposed to be used in coastal region and probably the one with nuclear families.”⁷

Democracy is not a predetermined line of development, it is rather a state of permanent civil war in which negotiations and conflicts of determining values and meanings take place on an everyday level. Fokus Grupa transfers those negotiations into the area of familiar, into the living space.

6 A poet, revolutionary and founder of the Central Institute of Labour, was a keen advocate of Taylorism in the Soviet Union which he promoted in scientific papers and articles such as *How to Work* in 1923 and *Taylor and Marx* in 1927.

7 Jasna Čapo-Žmegač, “The Construction Of Family Models In Europe And Family History In Croatia”, *Narodna umjetnost: Croatian Journal of Ethnology and Folklore Research* 33, No 2 (December 19, 1996), pp. 179, 195–195, 196.

OPIS OBITELJSKOG STANA je instalacija koja predstavlja »idealni dom«, izrađena kako bi ukazala na političku i ideološku pozadinu dizajna »osnovne društvene jedinice«. Dvadeset i devet kocki od šperploče, koje oblik preuzimaju od spomenika *Oltar domovine*, pretvaraju galerijski prostor u prototip obiteljskog stana prema idealima konzervativne politike. Gradnjom privatnog prostora elementima državne reprezentacije, osvještava se distopijski kolaps podjele privatnog i javnog.

U Hrvatskoj je građanska inicijativa »U ime obitelji« 2013. godine pokrenula referendum za ustavno definiranje braka kao zajednice muškarca i žene, što je završilo afirmativnim ishodom. Fokus Grupa je elemente svog rada označila preuzetim logom te inicijative na kojem se nalazi heteroseksualni par s dvoje djece.







DESCRIPTION OF A FAMILY APARTMENT is an installation, which represents an “ideal home”, made in order to reveal the political and ideological background used to define “the basic social unit.” The 29 plywood cubes, taking their shape from the monument *Altar of the Homeland*, transform the gallery space into a prototype of the family apartment as proposed by conservative politics. By building the private space using the elements of state representation, a dystopian collapse of the division of private and public is made apparent.

In Croatia, the civic initiative In the Name of the Family initiated a referendum in 2013, in order to constitutionally define marriage as a union of a man and a woman, which had an affirmative outcome. Fokus Grupa branded the elements of their work using the logo of the organization, featuring a heterosexual couple with two children.



Fokus Grupa je umjetnički kolektiv iz Rijeke, osnovan 2012. Preuzevši ime od sporne istraživačke metode, koja se podjednako koristi za nezavisno istraživanje kao i za “odnose s javnošću”, Fokus Grupa upućuje na društvene, ekonomske i političke okvire umjetničkog polja. Njihova praksa je suradnička i interdisciplinarna, a proteže se kroz umjetnost, dizajn i kuriranje. Fokus Grupa se koncentrira na odnose između umjetnosti i njenih javnih manifestacija kao radne kulture, estetike i društvenih i ekonomskih vrijednosti. Kolektiv nastoji proširivati granice umjetničkog rada, koristeći tiskane materijale, film, skulpturu i instalaciju, radove na papiru, diskusije, radionice i tekstove.

Fokus Grupa izlaže u muzejima i institucijama međunarodno, uključujući, *OFF-Biennale Budapest* (2015); Visual Culture Research Centre, Kijev (2015); Kunsthalle Exerngasse, Beč (2015); Tranzit, Bratislava (2015); *A3bandas*, Madrid (2015); Magazzino del Sale, Vencija (2015); *Curated by Vienna*, Hilger Galerija, Beč (2014); *Rencontres Internationales*, Pariz & Berlin (2014); Kunstpavillion, Innsbruck (2014); Museo MACRO, Rim (2014); Kulturni Centar Beograd (2014); Galerija Škuc, Ljubljana (2014); Transmission Galerija, Glasgow (2014); Institut za suvremenu umjetnost, Zagreb (2014); Museo Pino Pascali (2014); Muzej suvremene umjetnosti Metelkova, Ljubljana (2013); Muzej suvremene umjetnosti, Zagreb (2013); Calvert 22, London (2013); Miroslav Kraljević Galerija, Zagreb (2012); New Art Exchange, Nottingham (2012); *Overlapping Biennial*, Bukurešt (2012); *Qui Vive — Biennial of Young Art*, Moskva (2010).

Fokus Grupa je su-osnivačica neformalne čitalačke grupe k.r.u.ž.o.k. s Martom Kiš, Natašom Bodrožić, Ivanom Meštrov, Karlom Pudar, Irenom Borić. Od 2011, Fokus Grupa je članica zajednice SIZ. Od 2012 ko-kurira izložbeni program SIZ galerije.

Fokus Grupa je surađivala na sljedećim publikacijama: *Art Workers – Material Conditions and Labour Struggles in Contemporary Art Practice*, uredile: Minna Henriksson, Erik Krikortz i Airi Triisberg; *Politics of Feelings, Economies of Love*, projekt k.r.u.ž.o.k.-a, izdavač Onomatopee i Slobodne veze; *Art Leaks Gazette, Breaking the Silence*, Art Leaks; *Micropolitics Notebook 2011*, izdavač [Blok], Zagreb; *Doing Art in the Market*, izdavač SAP, Seoul.

Fokus Grupa is an artist collective based in Rijeka, Croatia, founded in 2012. Borrowing their name from a contested research method, used equally for independant research as for PR purposes they point to the social, economical and political frames of the art field. Their practice is collaborative and interdisciplinary, and they work across art, design and curating. Fokus Grupa concentrate on the relations between art and its public manifestations, in terms of working culture, aesthetics, and social and economic exchange values. Their work investigates the inherent power structures of the art-system. To this effect, they explore its economic, spatial and legal implementations. The collective tries to expand the boundaries of their art-work, using printed matter, films and installations, works on paper, discussions, workshops and texts.

Fokus Grupa have exhibited in museums and venues internationally including, *OFF-biennial Budapest* (2015); Visual Culture Research Centre, Kiev (2015); *A3bandas*, Madrid (2015); Magazzino del Sale, Venice (2015); Tranzit, Bratislava (2015); Kunsthalle Exerngasse, Vienna (2015); *Curated by Vienna*, Hilger Galerie, Vienna (2014); *Rencontres Internationales*, Paris & Berlin (2014); Museo MACRO, Roma (2014); Transmission Gallery, Glasgow (2014); Museo Pino Pascali (2014); Institute for Contemporary Art, Zagreb (2014); Kunstpavillion, Innsbruck (2014); Škuc Gallery, Ljubljana (2014); Culture Center Belgrade (2014); Museum of Contemporary Art, Ljubljana (2013); Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb (2013); Calvert 22, London (2013); *Overlapping Biennial*, Bucharest (2012); Miroslav Kraljević Gallery, Zagreb (2012); New Art Exchange, Nottingham (2012); *Qui Vive — Biennial of Young Art*, Moscow (2010).

Fokus Grupa is a co-founder of informal reading group k.r.u.ž.o.k. with Marta Kiš, Nataša Bodrožić, Ivana Meštrov, Karla Pudar, Irena Borić. Since 2011, Fokus Grupa has been a member of SIZ community. Since 2012 they co-curate the exhibition program of the SIZ galery.

Fokus Grupa has collaborated on following publications: *Art Workers – Material Conditions and Labour Struggles in Contemporary Art Practice*, edited by Minna Henriksson, Erik Krikortz and Airi Triisberg; *Politics of Feelings, Economies of Love*, project by k.r.u.ž.o.k., co-published by Onomatopee and Loose Associations; *Art Leaks Gazette, Breaking the Silence*, Art Leaks; *Micropolitics Notebook 2011*, published by [Blok], Zagreb; *Doing Art in the Market*, published by SAP, Seoul.

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1STR 17–26 DRAGA, OPROSTI ŠTO TI PIŠEM TAKO KASNO / DARLING, SORRY FOR WRITING SO LATE 2011 dvo kanalna video i audio instalacija / two channel video and audio installation postav / exhibition view: <i>Disorder, WEYA</i> , New Art Exchange, Nottingham	5STR 73–86 THERE AREN'T WORDS FOR WHAT WE DO OR HOW WE FEEL SO WE HAVE TO MAKE THEM UP 2012 film / Full HD, boja, zvuk, 14'47" / film, Full HD, color, sound, 14'47" glas / voice: Bruno Bahunek, kamera / cinematography: Bojan Mrđenović, snimanje zvuka / sound recording: Boris Fischer montaža / editing: Hrvoslava Brkušić postav / exhibition view: <i>Horizon Tries</i> , Good Children Gallery, New Orleans	FOTOGRAFIJE PHOTO CREDITS	STR / PAGE: 101 (7) Pristaše Nijemaca slave njihov ulazak u Zagreb; srebroželatinska fotografija; foto: nepoznat, Zagreb, travanj 1941. MGZ fot. 21094	STR / PAGE: 102 (16) Jelačićev trg uoči 1. maja; srebroželatinska fotografija; foto: Vladimir Guteša, Zagreb, 30.4.1955. MGZ fot. 5089
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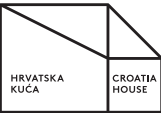
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