

# EUROVIZION

FOCUSES ON THE CURRENT SITUATION IN EUROPE  
AND ON THE INCREASING DIVISION IN SOCIETY

# EUROVIZION

WILL NOT LOSE SIGHT OF SO-CALLED PERIPHERAL  
EUROPEAN REGIONS. THEIR POLYPHONY AND  
DIVERSITY REFLECT EUROPE'S CULTURAL IDENTITY

## CROSSING STORIES AND SPACES

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**ife** Institut für  
Auslandsbeziehungen

# EUROVIZION

STARTS IN SARAJEVO AND MOVES AROUND

# EUROVIZION

MAKES LOCAL IMPULSES VISIBLE AND GENERATES  
THE CONTINUOUS AND FLOWING DEVELOPMENT OF  
DIALOGUE SPACE

arheološki dokaz o evropskoj drevnoj civilizacijskoj razvijenosti? Šta je sa evropskim kolonijama, da li one postoje samo van granica Evrope ili i unutar nje? Ko je kome kolonija? A možda, nakon svih ovih pitanja, nema odgovora jer „niko u Evropi ne zna granice Evrope, niko ne zna gdje joj centar“, navodi književnik Dževad Karahasan<sup>9</sup>. Takođe, Evropa nije ostrvo izgubljeno u svemiru nego svoj identitet gradi kroz globalne interkontinentalne međudnose.

## PRIČE I PROSTORI IZMEĐU

Kako se identiteti prostora uglavnom formiraju u razlikama, suprotnostima i zamkama mogućih dihotomija: centar i periferija, razvijenost i zaostalost, kultura i varvarstvo i sl. tako se postavljaju izazovi novom projektu ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen) za kritičkom analizom antuelnog stanja. Kako koncipirati projekat koji razmatra *status quo* i evropski identitet danas, a ne uzeti u obzir slabije vidljive i marginalizovane geopolitičke i kulturne prostore? Koliko je važno ispitati priče i prostore između (*in between*), *poluperiferije*, *periferije* i mesta susreta različitosti, kako u metodološkom i medijskom tako i u sadržinskom i prostornom smislu? „Pojmom *poluperiferija* označavam pre svega bivše komunističke zemlje koje su bile relativno industrijalizovane i koje su završile ili još uvek prolaze kroz *tranziciju*“, navodi Marina Blagojević<sup>10</sup>. U određenom smislu uvođenjem ovog pojma kreira se distinkcija u odnosu na zemlje trećeg sveta. Naime, *poluperiferije* su mesta između centra i periferije, mesta na margini, zapostavljena kako u mnogim teorijskim raspravama tako i izložbenoj praksi velikih međunarodnih izložbi<sup>11</sup>. U formalnom smislu u pitanju je svojevrsna neuređenost koja je posledica stalnih promena, strategija koje se nalaze u gotovo stalnoj nestabilnosti i tranziciji, procesu prelaska i putu dostizanja cilja koji je upitan. Takođe, to su otvorene strukture koje omogućavaju istovremenu koegzistenciju različitih elemenata, kako društvenih tako i umetničkih, arhitektonskih i kulturnih.

Evropa se danas još uvek bavi posledicama ključnih situacija prisutnih u svojoj nedavnoj istoriji – padom Berlinskog zida 1989, momentom kada se Evropa ujedinjavala, 'Toto Kutunjo pevao' „Zajedno: 1992“ na Evroviziji u Zagrebu 1990, a Jugoslavija se raspadala surovim ratovima devedesetih. Događaje je pratilo rasparčavanje mape Istočne Evrope, teško i dugotrajno tranziciono menjanje društvenih poredaka i sistema koji su postali teret budućim generacijama stanovnika. Postavlja se pitanje važnosti univerzalne i lične priče umetnika, njihov individualan odnos prema promenljivim društvenim kretanjima, aktuelnim socijalnim i političkim narativima, vidljivim u savremenoj umetničkoj praksi.

Tokom devedesetih godina 20. veka, raspad Jugoslavije (SFRJ) označen je regresijom u svakom smislu – serijom ratova, militarizacijom država i društva, nacionalizmom, genocidom, migracijom stanovništva, međunarodnim sankcijama, hiperinflacijom, ekonomskom nemaštinom stanovništva i bombardovanjem. Procese je pratila pojačana retradicionalizacija, repatrijarhalizacija i klerikalizacija društva na osnovu uspostavljanja etnonacionalističke ideologije i ratne politike, koje su zaustavile i unazad vratile prekopotrebne demokratske i emancipatorske društvene fenomene.

U centru zbivanja se nalazilo Sarajevo, nekadašnje srce zajedničke države Jugoslavije, multietnički glavni grad Bosne i Hercegovine, grad

when we need archaeological evidence of Europe's ancient development of civilisation? What about the European colonies, do they exist only outside the borders of Europe or inside it too? Who is whose colony? Maybe, after all, there are no answers to all these questions because 'no one in Europe knows the borders of Europe, no one knows where its centre is,' as the writer Dževad Karahasan<sup>9</sup> states. Likewise, Europe is not an island lost in space, it builds its identity through global intercontinental relations.

## STORIES AND SPACES IN BETWEEN

As the identities of space are mainly formed in differences, opposites and the traps of possible dichotomies, such as centre and periphery, development and backwardness, culture and barbarism, so does the new ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen) project face rising challenges when it comes to critical analysis of the current situation. How can a project that examines the status quo and the European identity today be conceived without the less visible, marginalised geopolitical and cultural spaces being taken into consideration? How important is it to explore stories and spaces *in between*, the *semi-peripheries*, the *peripheries* and the meeting places of diversity, when it comes to both methodology and media, content and space? 'By the term *semi-periphery*, first of all I refer to the former communist countries that were relatively industrialised and that have completed or are still going through the *transition*,' states Marina Blagojević<sup>11</sup>. In a certain sense, the introduction of this term creates a distinction from Third World countries. Namely, *semi-peripheries* are places between the centre and the periphery, places on the margins, neglected in many theoretical discussions, as well as in the exhibition practice of large international exhibitions<sup>12</sup>. In the formal sense, it is a kind of disorder that is a consequence of constant changes, of the strategies that are in almost constant instability and transition, in the process of shifting and on the path to achieving a problematic goal. Moreover, these are open structures that enable a simultaneous coexistence of different elements, both social and artistic, architectural and cultural.

Europe today is still dealing with the consequences of key situations in its recent history – the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the moment Europe was uniting and Toto Cutugno singing 'Insieme: 1992' at the 1990 Eurovision Song Contest in Zagreb, while Yugoslavia was falling apart in the brutal wars of the 1990s. These events were followed by the fragmentation of the map of Eastern Europe, a difficult and long-lasting transitional change of social orders and systems which became a burden to generations of its residents. The question of the importance of universal and personal stories of artists about their own attitudes towards changing social movements and current social and political narratives, visible in contemporary art practice, was raised.

During the 1990s, the break-up of Yugoslavia (SFRY) was marked by regression in every sense – a series of wars, militarisation of the state and society, nationalism, genocide, migration, international sanctions, hyperinflation, economic poverty and aerial bombing. These were accompanied by increased retraditionalisation, repatriarchisation and clericalisation of society based on the establishment of ethnonationalist ideology and war policies, which stopped and reversed much-needed democratic and emancipatory social trends.

In the centre of these events was Sarajevo, the heart of the former Yugoslavia, the multi-ethnic capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a city considered to be the *Jerusalem of the Balkans*. A city that was a symbol of the *Eastern sin*, the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, European and global conflict, became a victim of the disintegration of Yugoslavia and nationalist politics in the 1990s. After almost four years of siege, huge human and material losses, today it is administratively divided, economically and politically destabilised,

JOHANNA DIEHL



*Braclav*, from the *Ukraine Series*, C-print, laminated, framed, 126 x 159 cm, Braclav/UA, 2013. Photo: courtesy of the artist and Galerie Wilma Tolksdorf

Johanna Diehl's photographic work *Braclav* is part of the *Ukraine Series* (2013–2015). The series documents the appearance of former synagogues in Ukraine today. In 1941, German occupiers launched a genocide of the Jewish

population that resulted in the destruction of their communities. As a result, when the country returned to Soviet communist control, former synagogues were converted to secular use. Some of these sacred places were turned into cinemas, sports halls and clubs that still exist today, while others are no longer used, have fallen into disrepair, or become ruins. ☹ In her artistic practice, Diehl sets off on an archaeological search, using her works to visu-

alise the sacred remains of former religious sites. The architectural spaces she reveals subtly reflect religious dispossession and cultural annihilation. Empty spaces within the collective cultural memory are explored, making visible overwritten memories and 'the presence of the absent'.



*Souskiou, Cyprus (South)*, C-print, laminated, framed, 95 x 122 cm, *Souskiou/CY*, 2009.  
*Karavas/Alsancak, Cyprus (North)*, C-Print, laminated, framed, 95 x 122 cm, *Karavas Alsancak/CY*, 2009. Photos: courtesy of the artist and Galerie Wilma Tolksdorf

Johanna Diehl's works *Souskiou, Cyprus (South)* and *Karavas/Alsancak, Cyprus (North)* are part of the *Displace*

series (2009), whose creation was inspired by the 1974 partition of Cyprus. The partition of the island into the Republic of Cyprus in the south and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus resulted in the forced resettlement of the population to facilitate ethnic and territorial separation. ☼ Johanna Diehl's photographs document the consequences of this division. With the series' title, she describes not only the process of expulsion, but also the

process of replacement. *Souskiou, Cyprus (South)* shows the remains of a mosque in a deserted space on the Greek part of the island. *Karavas/Alsancak, Cyprus (North)* depicts a church in the Turkish part of the island that was converted into a mosque. Even if the cultural and religious identity of the former residents has been suppressed and superseded by territorial appropriation in each case, traces of the past continue to be visible.

rife with accumulated pain and traumas that are little talked about and that remain trapped in oblivion, in untold stories with no end, in the feeling of emptiness, injustice and uncertainty about what the future brings.

#### INTERSECTING DIFFERENT VIEWS HERE AND NOW

The new co-create project under the name *EVIROIZION. CROSSING STORIES AND SPACES* critically explores the current socio-political situation in Europe through the prism of various views and opinions. The necessity to inspect the present moment by intersecting different views into the project is emphasised by the inclusion of curators and artists outside the German cultural space, from the so-called marginal concepts of Europe, as well as by the choice of specific presentation locations for this modular exhibition's perennial tour. The selection of the Southeast/Eastern European region therefore has a significant role in exhibiting the interdisciplinary, cross-media and process-oriented studies of contemporary art practice. The exhibition structure will strive to observe the project concept with its open and permanently fluid form that develops and changes, and constantly expands through fresh local perspectives, all the way to the tour finale in Germany, where perhaps a *different* Europe will be presented instead of the usual representative array.

- 1 Beker, Nurgul. 'Zeitgeist in Europe: Rise of far-right and racism continues. Europe saw slow rise of extreme right in the first quarter of 2000s, now faces mounting racist attacks.' AA, 28 Feb 2020. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/analysis/zeitgeist-in-europe-rise-of-far-right-and-racism-continues/1749026> ('When it is considered that German statistics show one in every five people see Muslims as enemies, it would not be wrong to argue that the far-right is getting stronger each and every day.')
- 2 2019 European Parliament elections also point to that. In Becker, Joachim. 'Ko je ko u evropskoj desnici', Mašina, 15 Nov 2019. <https://www.masina.rs/?p=11419>
- 3 Bratton, H Benjamin. '18 Lessons of Quarantine Urbanism'. The Terraforming, 4 March 2020 <https://strelkamag.com/en/article/18-lessons-from-quarantine-urbanism>
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Sejdinović, Nedim. 'Veliki Eksperimentator i Veliki Respirator'. Danas, 3 April 2020
- 6 Noam Chomsky: Coronavirus - What is at stake? | DIEM25 TV, 28 March 2020 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-N3in2rLi4>
- 7 Beker, Nurgul. 'Zeitgeist in Europe: Rise of far-right and racism continues. Europe saw slow rise of extreme right in the first quarter of 2000s, now faces mounting racist attacks.' AA, 28 Feb 2020. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/analysis/zeitgeist-in-europe-rise-of-far-right-and-racism-continues/1749026>
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Luketić, Katarina. 'Intervju: Balkan je pojam za stereotip', Europa, Aug 2013, page 20.
- 10 Karahasan, Dževad. 'Bh. političare treba poslati u Gvantanamo', Europa, Aug 2013, page 28.
- 11 Radović, Nadežda. 'Intervju: Marina Blagojević. Ko sme da zna. Koncentrični krugovi isključivanja znanja', Womenggo, <http://www.womenggo.org.rs/sajt/sajt/saopštenja/marinablagojevic.html>
- 12 Kojić Mladenov, Sanja (2011) 'Istraživanje zastupljenosti umetnika na osnovu roda, mesta rođenja i života na Bijenalu u Veneciji'. Novi Sad: ACIMSI

Bošnjaka, Hrvata i Srba, u čijem centru se u neposrednoj blizini nalaze džamija, katolička crkva, pravoslavna crkva i sinagoga, tzv. *Jerusalim Balkana*. Grad koji je bio simbol *istočnog greba*, izbijanja Prvog svetskog rata 1914. godine i globalnog konflikta Evrope i sveta, 1990-ih je postao grad žrtva raspada Jugoslavije i nacionalističke politike. Nakon skoro četiri godine opsade, ogromnih ljudskih i materijalnih gubitaka, danas je administrativno podeljen, ekonomski i politički destabilizovan, ispunjen nakupljenim bolom i traumama o kojima se nedovoljno govori, koje su ostale zarobljene u zaboravu neispričanih priča bez kraja, osećaja praznine, nepravde i neizvesnosti koju budućnost nosi.

## UKRŠTANJE RAZLIČITIH POGLEDA, OČUDE I SUDA

Novi zajednički kreativni projekat pod nazivom *EVIROIZION. CROSSING STORIES AND SPACES* (*EVIROIZION. UKRŠTANJE PRIČA I PROSTOR*) kritički preispituje aktuelnu društvenopolitičku situaciju u Evropi kroz prizmu različitih stavova i mišljenja. Potreba za sagledavanjem sadašnjeg trenutka ukrštanjem različitih pozicija u projektu, naglašena je uključivanjem kustosa i umetnika i izvan nemačkog kulturnog prostora, iz tzv. rubnih koncepcija Evrope, kao i izborom specifičnih lokacija za prezentaciju modularne izložbe tokom njene višegodišnje turneje. Izbor regiona jugoistočne/istočne Evrope zato ima važnu ulogu za prikazivanje interdisciplinarnih, intermedijskih i procesualnih istraživanja savremene umetničke prakse. Struktura izložbe nastojeće da isprati koncept projekta s svojom otvorenom i trajno fluidnom formom koja se razvija i menja stalnim proširivanjem kroz nove lokalne pozicije, sve do finala turneje u Nemačkoj, gde će, nadamo se biti predstavljena neka *drugačija* Evropa, umesto one koja se uobičajeno predstavlja.

- 1 Beker, Nurgul. 'Zeitgeist in Europe: Rise of far-right and racism continues. Europe saw slow rise of extreme right in the first quarter of 2000s, now faces mounting racist attacks'. AA, 28.02.2020. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/analysis/zeitgeist-in-europe-rise-of-far-right-and-racism-continues/1749026> ('Despite political sociologists such as Ulrich Beck and EdgarGrande arguing that European identity should be defined upon the richness of co-existence of different cultures and hence a cosmopolitan social structure, many views on the subject focused mainly on the white racial and Christian characteristics.')
- 2 Na šta ukazuju i izbori za Evropski parlament 2019. u Becker, Joachim. 'Ko je ko u evropskoj desnici', Mašina, 15.11.2019. <https://www.masina.rs/?p=11419>
- 3 Bratton, H Benjamin. '18 Lessons Of Quarantine Urbanism'. The Terraforming, 04.03. <https://strelkamag.com/en/article/18-lessons-from-quarantine-urbanism> (Over these months we are witnessing the largest experiment in comparative governance we are likely to see in our lifetimes.)
- 4 Ibid. ('Each organism is a transmission medium for information.')
- 5 Sejdinović, Nedim. 'Veliki Eksperimentator i Veliki respirator'. Danas, 03. april 2020. <http://www.womenggo.org.rs/sajt/sajt/saopštenja/marinablagojevic.html>
- 6 Noam Chomsky: Coronavirus - What is at stake? | DIEM25 TV, 28.03.2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-N3in2rLi4>
- 7 Beker, Nurgul. 'Zeitgeist in Europe: Rise of far-right and racism continues. Europe saw slow rise of extreme right in the first quarter of 2000s, now faces mounting racist attacks'. AA, 28.02.2020. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/analysis/zeitgeist-in-europe-rise-of-far-right-and-racism-continues/1749026> ('Despite political sociologists such as Ulrich Beck and EdgarGrande arguing that European identity should be defined upon the richness of co-existence of different cultures and hence a cosmopolitan social structure, many views on the subject focused mainly on the white racial and Christian characteristics.')
- 8 Ibid. ('Moreover, prominent politicians claimed that Islam had no place in Europe and that Europe historically had Christian characteristics.')
- 9 Luketić, Katarina. 'Intervju: Balkan je pojam za stereotip', Europa, avgust 2013, str. 20.
- 10 Karahasan, Dževad. 'Bh. političare treba poslati u Gvantanamo', Europa, avgust 2013, str. 28.
- 11 Radović, Nadežda. 'Intervju: Marina Blagojević. Ko sme da zna. Koncentrični krugovi isključivanja znanja', Womenggo, <http://www.womenggo.org.rs/sajt/sajt/saopštenja/marinablagojevic.html>
- 12 Kojić Mladenov, Sanja (2011). 'Istraživanje zastupljenosti umetnika na osnovu roda, mesta rođenja i života na Bijenalu u Veneciji'. Novi Sad: ACIMSI

# BRUSSELS

CAPITAL OF THE EU

BRUSSELS (Bruxelles, Brussel), the eighth venue for the EVROIZION project, is the capital of Belgium. French and Dutch are the official languages, with English spoken as the third language. Since World War II, it has become a major centre for international politics and is home to numerous international organisations. Brussels is the de-facto capital of the European Union, as it hosts a number of principal EU institutions.

# KALININ-GRAD

RUSSIAN ISLAND IN THE EU

KALININGRAD (Калининград, Königsberg, Kjonigsberg, Кёнигсберг) is the eleventh venue for the EVROIZION project. It is the capital of the 'Oblast Kaliningrad', and since 1945 it has been a Russian 'island' and exclave in Eastern Europe. It is located on the southeast coast of the Baltic Sea. Today, the city boasts universities, monuments and places of worship that are reflective not only of the area's cultural diversity, but also of Kaliningrad's Prussian and Russian heritage.

# VILNIUS

FROM THE JERUSALEM OF THE NORTH TO THE ROME OF THE EAST

VILNIUS (Vilno, Вильня, Vilnja, Wilne, Вильнюс, Wilnius), the tenth venue for the EVROIZION project, is the capital city of the Republic of Lithuania. The southernmost of the three Baltic States borders on Russia's 'Oblast Kaliningrad', Poland, Belarus, and Latvia. Vilnius was a centre of Jewish life for many centuries, and was considered to be the 'Jerusalem of the North' until the persecution of the Jews during the World War II. Today the city is often referred to as the 'Rome of the East' on account of the many churches and cathedrals found within its borders.

# BERLIN

THE MOST-POPULOUS CITY OF THE EU

BERLIN, the last venue for the EVROIZION project, is Germany's capital. With approx. 3.8 million inhabitants, Berlin is the most populous city in the EU. There are more than 20 non-indigenous communities. After World War II the city was divided: West Berlin became a de-facto exclave of West Germany surrounded by the Berlin Wall (1961-1989) and East German territory, while East Berlin was declared capital of East Germany. In the years following German reunification in 1990, Berlin once again became the capital of all of Germany.

# KRAKÓW

THE OLD TOWN OF YOUNG PEOPLE

KRAKÓW (Krakau, Krakow, Krakow), the ninth venue for the EVROIZION project, is not only Poland's second-largest city, but also one of its oldest. Since the city's buildings emerged almost unscathed from World War II, Kraków has retained its appearance from that glamorous age when it was the capital of an empire stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea. In 1978 Kraków was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. The city is also known as the secret capital of Poland and the 'Polish Jerusalem'.

# VARNA

ADMINISTRATIVE CENTRE OF THE BLACK SEA EURO-REGION

VARNA (Varna, Варна, Одессос, Odessos, Stalin), the fifth venue for the EVROIZION project, is located on the eastern border of Europe. It is the third-largest city in Bulgaria and the largest city and seaside resort on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast. In the sixth century BC, Varna was founded under the name Odessos, and thereafter frequently became a flourishing trade centre under various different rulers and systems, as well as a crossroads between countries and continents. Numerous cultures and religions have shaped the city over the centuries, giving it its multi-ethnic diversity.

# CHIŞINĂU

A COUNTRY OF CHILDREN

CHIŞINĂU (Kischinau, Chişinău, Кишинёв, Kischinow, Кишинёв, Kişinöv), the seventh venue for the EVROIZION project, is the capital city of the Republic of Moldova and was formerly the capital of the historical region of Bessarabia. In her novel "Kinderland" [A country of Children] published in 2015, Moldavian-born Liliana Corobca depicts her homeland as a country of children, because so many people have left the country to work abroad that children and the elderly make up much of what is left.

# SARAJEVO

THE JERUSALEM OF THE BALKANS

SARAJEVO (Сарајево, Sarāy), the first venue for the EVROIZION project, is considered to be the 'Jerusalem of the Balkans' and is the capital city and seat of government of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Canton of Sarajevo. This multi-ethnic city, which suffered nearly four years of siege right in the middle of Europe during the war of the 1990s, has become a symbol for the break-up of Yugoslavia. In spite of the post-war traumas Sarajevo is still experiencing today, the city has retained its multicultural diversity.

# NOVI SAD

FIRST EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE IN AN EU CANDIDATE COUNTRY

NOVI SAD (Нови Сад, Neusatz, Újvidék, Nowy Sad), the second venue for the EVROIZION project, is the European Capital of Culture in 2022, and thus the first such cultural capital in a state currently applying to join the EU. Novi Sad is the capital of Vojvodina, an autonomous region in northern Serbia. It is a multicultural and multinational city. With its university, numerous museums, galleries and festivals, the city offers a vibrant arts and theatre scene and rich educational opportunities.

# TBILISI

BETWEEN THE ORIENT AND THE OCCIDENT

Tbilisi (Tiflis, Tbilissi, თბილისი, Тбилиси, Тифлиса), the capital city of Georgia, is the sixth venue for the EVROIZION project. As a result of Georgia's geographical location - sandwiched between the Black and Caspian Seas, Asia and Europe, and the Orient and the Occident - Tbilisi has repeatedly found itself at the mercy of major powers. The varied cultural influences to which the country has been exposed are particularly evident in the city's architecture. The Georgians not only have their own Caucasian language, but also their own alphabet. It is not related to either the Latin or Cyrillic alphabets.

# ATHENS

THE CRADLE OF DEMOCRACY

ATHENS (Athen, Αθήνα, Афины, Athína), the fourth venue for the EVROIZION project, is the capital city of Greece. From the time of its democratic government in antiquity, this city in Attica has been known as the cradle of democracy. Athens was the cultural, economic and historical centre of Greece, and it has never lost this status. In 2015 the city was the centre of media attention due to the national government-debt crisis and the threat of 'Grexit'.

# NICOSIA

EUROPE'S LAST DIVIDED CITY

Nicosia (Λευκωσία, Lefkosía, Lefkoşa, Лёффа, Lédra), the fourth venue for the EVROIZION project, is currently the last divided city in Europe. It is the capital city of the Republic of Cyprus, and the northern part of the city is the de-facto capital of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, which is not internationally recognised.

EJROVIZION wants to explore the current socio-political situation in Europe while touring for several years. The first public event was supposed to be a get-together in Sarajevo in June 2020, but the corona virus made it impossible for the project participants to meet. In his essay, Sarajevo-born author, visual artist and director ADNAN SOFTIĆ, who lives in Berlin, reflects on the virus and how to deal with the pandemic.

# DAS NICHT-WISSEN STELLT SICH VOR

NOT KNOWING INTRODUCES ITSELF

ADNAN SOFTIĆ / AUG 2020

Vor fast zwei Jahrzehnten, relativ kurz nach dem 11. September 2001, tauchten in den Medien Fotos des damaligen US-Präsidenten George W. Bush auf, auf welchen er mit deutlichen Abschürfungen an seiner linken Wange und einer kleineren Verletzung an der Unterlippe zu sehen ist. Er sah aus, als ob ihm jemand einen Schuh ins Gesicht geschleudert hätte. Doch dazu soll es nicht gekommen sein – zu jenem Zeitpunkt nicht und auch zu keinem späteren. Der Präsident hatte sich beim Fernsehen an einer Brezel verschluckt, was seinen Vagusnerv reizte. Dieser Nerv signalisierte seinem Herz, die Schlagfrequenz zu reduzieren, und dies wiederum führte zu einer kurzen Ohnmacht und zu einem Sturz ...

Während der größten Krise seines Landes seit dem Zweiten Weltkrieg wird der am besten geschützte Mensch der Welt beinahe von einer Brezel getötet. Der Sicherheitsapparat hatte sie nicht auf dem Radar. Ein winziges Stückchen Brot verwies für einen Moment auf die in jedem Abwehrsystem vorhandenen Risse, bevor alles schließlich in Vergessenheit geriet – einfach deshalb, weil solche Gefahren nicht kalkulierbar sind. Die Akte „Brezel“ ist geschlossen, ein hinnehmbarer Kontrollverlust. Punkt.

Deswegen hatte jener Vorfall keinerlei Konsequenzen, und das Leben ging ungestört weiter: Der Krieg gegen den Terror mitsamt des Totalüberwachungspakets namens „US Patriot Act“ setzte sich durch. Den Zwang, alle denkbaren Bereiche des Gesellschaftskörpers vollständig unter Kontrolle zu bekommen, könnte man auch als eine ironische Lehre aus dem Fall „Brezel“ verstehen.

## BEFÖRZUGTE FEINDSCHAFTEN UND EINGESPIELTE PHOBIEN

Heute hat eine primitive biologische Struktur – dumm wie Brot, könnte man meinen – es innerhalb von wenigen Wochen geschafft, die

Nearly two decades ago, soon after 11 September 2001, photographs of the US president at the time, George W. Bush, appeared in the media, clearly showing grazes on his left cheek and a small cut on his lower lip. It looked as though someone had thrown a shoe at him. But this was apparently not the case, either then or at any time thereafter. The president had choked on a pretzel while watching television, and this had irritated his vagus nerve, which then signalled to his heart to reduce its rate, and this led to him fainting and falling ...

During the greatest crisis his country had seen since the Second World War, the most heavily guarded man in the world was nearly killed by a pretzel. This was not in the sights of his security team – in an instant a tiny piece of bread highlighted the gaps in every system of defence, and then all of that was forgotten again, just because risks like these cannot be planned for. The 'pretzel' file is closed, as an acceptable loss of control. Period.

Thus, this incident had no consequences, and life went on as usual. The war on terror and its total surveillance package, the 'US Patriot Act,' was implemented. The need to completely control all imaginable areas of the social fabric could even be seen as an ironic lesson learned from the 'pretzel' incident.

## PREFERRED ANIMOSITIES AND WELL-REHEARSED PHOBIAS

Today a primitive biological structure – as thick as a plank, one might say – has managed in just a few weeks to bring the most powerful countries in the world to a standstill and to provide people there with their first ever experience of an emergency situation. The world we knew is no longer turning. And here too the disaster has evolved in ways that no catastrophe profiling could have predicted.

It was clear that the governments of this world were not prepared, and it was obvious that existing scientific expertise on pandemics was of no significance to them. There was no file ready with even remotely appropriate measures for action, and even if there was one, it was simply ignored. Although everyone knows that pandemics may break out at any time, this one nonetheless seemed to come right out of a



Pan Chrzan, wool yarn, 200 × 300 cm, Łódź/PL, 2016.  
Ogórek Trocki, poster, offset print on paper, 71 × 50 cm,  
Warsaw/PL, 2016. (following page)  
Photos: courtesy of Slavs and Tatars

The artists' collective Slavs and Tatars is showing its *Pickle Bar* in the EJROVIZION exhibition. This work, a Slavic interpretation of an Italian *aperitivo* bar, is also an invitation to engage with pickled delicacies and a Slavic aperitif in an intimate and relaxed atmosphere and explore the boundaries and possibilities of languages. *Pickle Bar* features several pieces from Slavs and Tatars' *Pickle Politics* body of work. A two-headed horseradish, *Pan Chrzan*, acts as the collective's mascot, a transnational root considered indigenous to Slavs and Tatars' regional remit: between the Berlin Wall and the Great Wall of China. The scenography features one of two

posters – *Ogórek Trocki* or *Pickle Tits* – tiled and multiplied as wallpaper. *Ogórek Trocki* shows two pickled cucumbers wound together like a Torah scroll, referencing a singular specimen of cucumber introduced by Crimean Karaites, a Turkic-speaking Jewish sect whose practices are surprisingly similar to those of Muslims. The *Pickle Tits* poster references the disintegration of civil society – if the maternalist state provides nourishment akin to mother's milk, perhaps the social contract has soured – while *Open Mic* serves as a signal, an exclamation point, inviting us to loosen our tongues. Throughout the project tour, events developed in collaboration with Slavs and Tatars will take place involving local participants.

The *Pickle Bar* and the collective's residency-mentorship program will be realised as part of the exhibition. Both initiatives offer a platform of exchange and participation for the broader public beyond the institutional

framework of contemporary art. Both the residency-mentorship program and the *Pickle Bar* are situated in Berlin's multicultural Moabit district, and reflect the diversity of the district and the artists' studio where Russian, Polish, German, French, English and Turkish are among the languages spoken. The integration of *Pickle Bar* into the EJROVIZION project creates a space for local dialogues at every venue of this travelling exhibition. Before each exhibition opens, a young, local professional (be they artists, curators or researchers) from each venue of the exhibition will be chosen to participate in the mentorship program in Berlin. During these two months, they are integrated into the artists' studio as well as mentored in their personal projects, some of which may eventually be presented as part of EJROVIZION.

wiederm zu ignorieren versucht. Jene bekannten Katastrophen finden allerdings auf mehr oder weniger übersichtliche Weise statt – in angemessenem Abstand, der mithilfe von festen Grenzziehungen gepflegt wird. Wir sind daran gewöhnt, ja, sie sind zu einem Bestandteil unserer Kultur geworden. Sie sind Marker, die wir hinterlassen werden. Die künftigen Generationen werden uns zu Recht mit diesen Markern in Verbindung bringen.

Es drängt sich ein Gedanke auf: Wenn das allgemeine Verhalten wegen COVID-19 so radikal verändert werden konnte, sollten wir es dann nicht bei allen anderen Katastrophen ebenso ändern?

## DER ANDERE IST GLEICH DER EIGENE TOD

In physischer Hinsicht sind die Horizonte in der Isolation sehr beschränkt, die Horizonte der Imagination hingegen sind jetzt unendlich offen. In unterschiedlichen Inkubations-Denkräumen wird die neue Zeit nach dem Virus fleißig imaginiert.

Die Politik des nationalen Körpers, die unter anderem immer schon dem Glauben untergeordnet war, dass sich alles kontrollieren ließe, wird keineswegs durch SARS-CoV-2 eines Besseren belehrt. Im Gegenteil: In ihrer Denkweise bestätigt sich gerade die Vorstellung von gesellschaftlicher Gesundheit, ethnischer und kultureller Hygiene, mit der sie auch zuvor operierte. Ihrem Verständnis nach stand die Krankheit immer schon für etwas Fremdes, das von außen das intakte souveräne Subjekt infiziert und zerstört. Die Migranten und Migrantinnen selbst, ebenso wie alle anderen, die diesem Subjekt irgendwie fremd vorkommen, mutieren in diesem Weltbild zu Viren und werden als Aggressoren wahrgenommen. Die „Finde-den-Erreger-Brille“ setzt imaginäre Effekte frei, die eine ernst zu nehmende Krankheit in eine totalitäre Katastrophe verwandeln könnten. Das souveräne Subjekt meint andere bekämpfen zu müssen, um selbst Erfolg zu haben – und so wird jede Art von Regression, Abbau und Ableben automatisch mit dem Anderen in Verbindung gebracht oder verkürzt gesagt: Der Andere ist gleich der eigene Tod. Die Kontrollgesellschaften müssen jetzt nicht mehr fürchten, dass der Terrorismus als Rechtfertigung für außerordentliche Maßnahmen ausgedient hat. In vielen Ländern zeigt sich gerade eine fortgeschrittene Neigung, den Ausnahmezustand in ein normales Regierungsparadigma zu überführen: Intelligente Überwachung und andere automatisierte exekutive Werkzeuge sind für ihre Anwendung auf dem Markt der Angst reif. Dessen dunklen Horizonte zeichnen sich bereits ab: Mit ausgefeilten technischen Entwicklungen nähert sich China der totalen Überwachung, und damit einher geht die Disziplinierung aller gesellschaftlichen Abläufe. Videoüberwachungen in privaten Räumen, frei von toten Winkeln, ermöglichen den Kontrollorganen einen panoptischen Einblick in das private Leben der unliebsamen Minderheiten ... In den geleakten China Cables heißt es: „Ideologische Widersprüche sind effektiv aufzulösen und negative Gemütszustände zu besänftigen.“<sup>2</sup> Die Bezeichnung „negative Gemütszustände“ verweist auf eine psychische Störung – ein Staat verwandelt sich damit in ein vereinsamtes Subjekt und besitzt Gefühle. Diese Entwicklung ist nichts Neues, sondern eine Fortsetzung der Entwicklung des 20. Jahrhunderts. Identitätsneurotische Nationalstaaten drohen wieder einmal aufeinanderzuprallen.

all others that seem in whatever way alien to this subject, mutate in this world view to viruses and are perceived as aggressors. Looking through the 'find the pathogen' lens unleashes imaginary effects that can transform an illness that needs to be taken seriously into a totalitarian catastrophe. The sovereign subject believes it must combat others to be successful, and thus every form of regression, atrophy and decease is automatically seen in conjunction with the other. Put simply, the other equates to our own death. Control societies need no longer be concerned that terrorism has lost its function as the justification for extraordinary action. In many countries we are witnessing an advanced trend towards turning the state of emergency into the normal paradigm of government. Intelligent surveillance and other automated executive instruments are now ripe for market, and their dark horizons of fear are already in view. China is approaching total surveillance with its own highly developed technical tools, and this leads to a new discipline encompassing all social processes. Video surveillance in private spaces, with no blind spots, gives the controlling authorities a panoptic view of the private lives of unwanted minorities ... The leaked China Cables put it like this: 'effectively resolve ideological contradictions, and guide away students from bad emotions.'<sup>2</sup> The term 'bad emotions' indicates a psychological disorder, while the national state becomes an isolated subject with emotions. This development is not new, but rather a continuation of developments in the twentieth century. The danger of national states with identity neuroses clashing up against each other is again very real.



Schiffe mit Ware © Adnan Softić

### MEMBRANES AND PERIPHERAL AREAS INSTEAD OF FIXED BORDERS

There is another perspective, however, that brings a very different metaphor for this illness into play. The global economy, the cultural industry and science are attempting to explain that there is no distinct self and that mutations and transformations should be understood as a fundamental driving force of development. We no longer speak of fixed borders separating one thing from the other but of membranes and peripheral areas that permit both permeability and demarcation at the same time. We are observing the permanent exchange between different natural processes and discovering that entities are modifiable forms. Within us, as humans, live other complex entities, and we are ourselves bound up in an even more complex entity. Seen in this light, the idea of a distinct sovereign self seems to be very fragile indeed, or even false, and it certainly is not a useful idea. The other and the self are no longer in opposition – instead, they permeate each other in a search for balance. This pandemic is the proof that we require a different normality and a different understanding of ourselves in order to achieve this balance and something approaching the general good.

ADNAN SOFTIĆ



Room to Negotiate, mixed media installation, furniture made of wood and metal, shelf and tables, containing: videos, photos, books, texts, sound, all cities comprising the EVROVIZION tour, 2020-2027. Graphic: Nina Softić, courtesy of the artist

As part of a multi-month process, the artist Adnan Softić collaborated with the EUROVISION team to create archive furniture that would reflect and illuminate the complexity and processuality of the project. Taking an

overarching and ever-unchanging premise as a starting point, Softić develops a new multimedia artwork for each project venue: is the open society really a modern concept, or has this always existed? Are there, or were there, narratives that might be relevant for the Europe of today? ☆ The countries in which the exhibition is to be shown can be seen as part of Europe's so-called periphery. Over the centuries, these areas have repeatedly been home to a diversity of multiple ethnic groups living together. In collaboration with local figures, Softić

will use his artistic works to study and explore the idea of living diversity. More than anything, these works delve into the question as to why this diversity has so often been suppressed. ☆ The resultant series of works will link these places and make possible new synergies. Like a travelling, open archive, the work will grow and change continuously as the project progresses from venue to venue, creating a new image of Europe that may be unknown to us.