

Odavde *Otuda*

(from here) (from there)

An International Exhibition of Contemporary Bosnian Artists

Alen Bašić

Isak Berbić

Zlatko Ćosić

Šejla Kamberić

Margareta Kern

Damir Nikšić

Nebojša Šerić

Curated by Jeffrey Hughes and Dana Turkovic

On Odavde/Otuda (from here/from there)

The present exhibition includes works by seven contemporary artists from Bosnia; the majority of whom were displaced and immigrated to various countries as a result of the Bosnian War (1992-1995). St. Louis became one of the primary locations of migration due to the war and presently has one of the largest populations of Bosnian immigrants in the United States. This community has had a major impact on the broader fabric of the St. Louis region's cultural life. *Odavde/Otuda* seeks to engage the viewer/participant in an awareness of the significant contributions being made to contemporary global art by artists from Bosnia, and how their vision is an emphatic connection to past, present and place.

The signing of the Dayton Peace Accords (21 November, 1995) brought an end to hostilities, and resulted in the creation of a joint multi-ethnic and democratic government. Yet, in addition to the myriad human atrocities associated with the infamous ethnic cleansing, another type of cleansing took place during the war – an attempt to destroy cultural artifacts and historical records. This was accomplished by literally attacking libraries and cultural repositories, both as what is dispassionately discounted as collateral damage and as a deliberate action to destroy historic collections. As mosques and churches were shelled, burned and razed, so too were libraries, museums and their holdings destroyed.¹ Much as the remembrance of a past moment, action or a people is imbedded in its written records and literary accounts, art and cultural artifacts serve as a means to recall the past and to comment on the present.

One of the major consequences of the war was the displacement, diaspora, of hundreds of thousands of Bosnian families, primarily Bosniaks. Taken from the Greek verb diaspeirein, meaning 'to scatter or sow seeds,' diaspora, refers to the relocation of great masses of population. The first usage of the term is often thought to be in the Septuagint (Deuteronomy 28:25), and was used to describe the scattering of Jewish peoples following the Babylonian captivity. Throughout history there have been numerous periods of constant dislocation and relocation and massive migrations for varying reasons. Forced programmatic dispersal, as an agent of ethnic conflict has been one of the saddest, yet demarcating aspects of the twentieth-century. By definition, diasporas are necessarily transnational, and therefore, ultimately have been interlinked with racial, colonialist and hegemonic discourses.² Historically, the politics of alienation, assimilation, and acculturation,

have played heavily in this regard as multiple ethnic groups become interspersed and interconnected. These movements of vast numbers of people include not only a dislodging of an individual's existence in a particular location, but also a transferal of their personal and group experiences into a new locale, a new home. The diaspora considered here is not only one of enforced ethnic exodus, but also one of singularity among individuals and families. The painter R.B. Kitaj described diasporist art as though it were a commentary or contemplation on transience.³

The majority of works in *Odavde/Otuda* suggest a state of being caught in-between times, cultures or locales either as that which forces the viewer to be actively engaged, as though locked into a position of intercession, or alternately works that directly address a disjunction of opposing forces often providing scant visual or psychic resolution, reminiscent of Foucault's heterotopias. Foucault's loosely defined heterotopias as those places that are simultaneously real and mythic, and therefore can expose the illusory qualities of either.⁴

The Bosnian experience is fraught with binary oppositions: Muslim/Orthodox Christian; Serb/Bosniak; Communist/Capitalist; Ottoman/Austro-Hungarian; tradition/modern; from here/from there. The idea of being 'from here,' where you are or being 'from there' are markers of geographic location, but have implications of time, politics, and identity as well. Jacques Derrida often referred to the term hymen, as an in-between, as a sign not merely of fusion nor separation, so that there is no real confusion between opposites.⁵ Taken from the Greek word for skin or membrane, Derrida's notion of hymen is an intersection, not really on the inside, nor on the outside, but rather a disappearance of mutually exclusive terms. In similar manner, the idea of being "from here" and "from there" simultaneously is a break down of dialectical opposition.

A great deal of critical writing has examined place as both a literal construct, the location of the work, and as conceptual or speculative entity. Site can be connected with diverse substantive, ambiguous, pre-existing and socio-historic agendas that adduce a supraliminal understanding of object and place. As usefully described by James Meyer as functional site,⁶ site/place can transcend a specific location, to be less associated with physical space than with personal, discursive history. Douglas Crimp has posited the site of the work as a primary component of its content, making the particularized experience of viewer, object and context an integrated totality.⁷

As culture is encoded in language, the nuance of meaning is often exceedingly complex and itself comprised of multiple binary oppositions. Many examples of this have been pointed out to me, by several of the artists in *Odavde/Otuda*. The word ovdje or ovde, 'here' can be generated into one word, odavde, 'from here.' 'Here and there' can be constructed to include a sense of 'now and then' or 'every once in awhile,' or something less specific as tu i tamo.⁸ 'From there,' otuda, literally connotes place, but imbedded in that construct there is also time, as though as place of generation, a place to be from, and a place to return, from here now and then.

In the contemporary world, a former dependence on traditional notions of place in diasporic communities has become transformed into complex communicative systems connected via international travel, mass media and the internet.⁹ With increased globalization, much recent art practice has emphasized a multi-dimensional understanding of identity and contemporary diasporic artists from Bosnia are at the forefront of this global approach.

Sejla Kamerić and **Alen Bašić** confront memory and loss directly. Both of these artists lost several family members to the war, Bašić's installation specifically commemorates those individuals who were killed, while Kamerić addresses the broader outcomes of prejudice and the incipient incivility of conflict with works such as *Bosnian Girl* (2003). **Zlatko Ćosić** refers to the former Yugoslavia, which has become an evocative symbol of both historic occasion and location. **Isak Berbić's** *Perfect Cube* (2006) explores the space and constraint of a large apartment complex and with works like *Bosnia is Slightly Smaller than West Virginia* (2006) has juxtaposed the curiously similar silhouettes of geo-political boundaries. **Margareta Kern's** *Graduation Dresses* (2005/2006) suggest a global dialogue of international commercial appeal with traditional necessity and response. **Nebojša Šerić-Shoba's** video *Joy Division* (2005) evokes the incredibly dark tone of post-punk band Joy Division's half sung and half sprechstimme song *Passover* the haunting lyrics of which begin with "This is a crisis I knew had to come, destroying the balance I'd kept." With the Brooklyn Bridge in the background, the juxtaposition of musical forms speaks concisely to a synthesis of numerous oppositions of sites and cultures. **Damir Nikšić** re-enacts Chaim Topol's Tevye from the film *Fiddler on the Roof*. Instead of Tevye's fictive lament for money, the refrain *If I wasn't Muslim* (2004) provides one of the most engaging riffs on popular culture in recent art practice, while at the same time using the well-known story of shtetl life in Tsarist Russia as figurative parallel for the Bosnian situation. The work was filmed in a Croatian barn close to the Bosnian border and Brezovo Polje, the town where the artist was born. Jacques Rancière in defining the relational na-

ture of politics describes equality, not as a goal to be attained, but rather a presupposition in need of constant verification.¹⁰ The confirming evidence in all of these works has an underlying theme of that invisible ideal made visible.

Additionally, Hunt Gallery is presenting a small ancillary exhibition of the emerging talents of St. Louis-based artists Amela Sinanagić (b. 1985) and Belma Pervan-Kundalić (b. 1981). Although contemporaries, in some aspects these young women suggest yet another dichotomy of the diasporic experience, in one instance having migrated after already attending university in Sarajevo, while the other migrated as a child. Sinanagic relies on the memories of family and her own awareness from travel “back” to Bosnia to create powerful symbolic forms. Pervan-Kundalić produces works based on family data, the relevance of which is indexical and emotionally explicit.

The destruction that took place in Bosnia, the diaspora of the Bosniaks, and the construction of a new country Bosnia-Herzegovina are in one sense part of a continuum of linked historical events, and in another a metaphor for the tenuous possibility of understanding memory and response as a mechanism for mediation and transformation. Often different discourses, internal and external and new constructs contribute to result in artworks that have a completely new meaning. The dialectics of refugee, migrant, etc. are influencing a direction of cultural activity that although predicated on the events and experiences of the past is not simply recording, but rather demonstrating a changing role of artist as intercessory interpreter due to those circumstances. Working in places as varied as London, Dubai, Stockholm, New York, St. Louis and Sarajevo, the artists in *Odavde/Otuda* are allied by heritage, but pertinently by an ability to surmount the challenges of both tradition and Modernity. They have created works presenting a global hybridity that is inclusive of legacy, while capable of addressing a very particular, personal and national tragedy, and moreover, speaking to a universal human drama of loss, remembrance, and the reinvention of hopeful dialogue.

Jeffrey Hughes

1. The destruction of cultural property as a result of the Balkan Wars has been systematically documented by Dr. Andrés J. Riedlmayer of the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at Harvard University. See Riedlmayer, “From the Ashes: the Past and Future of Bosnia’s Cultural Heritage,” in Ed. Maya Shtatzmiller, *Islam and Bosnia: Conflict Resolution and Foreign Policy in Multi-Ethnic Studies*, (Montreal: McGill-Queens University), 2002, pp. 98-135.
2. See Nicholas Mirzoeff, “Introduction: The Multiple Viewpoint: Diasporic Visual Cultures,” *Diaspora and Visual Culture Representing Africans and Jews*, (New York: Routledge), 2000.
3. See R.B. Kitaj, *First Diasporist Manifesto*, (London: Thames and Hudson), 1989.
4. Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” (trans. Jay Miskowiec) in Thom Collins, *Somewhere Better Than This Place*, (Cincinnati: Contemporary Arts Center), 2003, pp. 59-73.
5. See Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination* (Trans. Barbara Johnson), (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago), 1983.
6. James Meyer, “The Functional Site; or, The Transformation of Site Specificity,” in Erika Suderburg (Ed.), *Space, Site, Intervention* (Minneapolis, MN: Univ. of Minnesota Press), 2000, pp. 23-37.
7. See Douglas Crimp, “Redefining Site Specificity” in *On the Museum’s Ruins* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), 1993.
8. Personal correspondence with Damir Niksic, 2 June 2007.
9. Steven Nelson, “Diaspora: Multiple Practices, Multiple Worldviews,” In Ed. Amelia Jones, *A Companion to Contemporary Art Since 1945*, (Oxford: Blackwell), 2006, p. 296.
10. Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics* (trans. Gabriel Rockhill), (London and New York: Continuum), 2004.

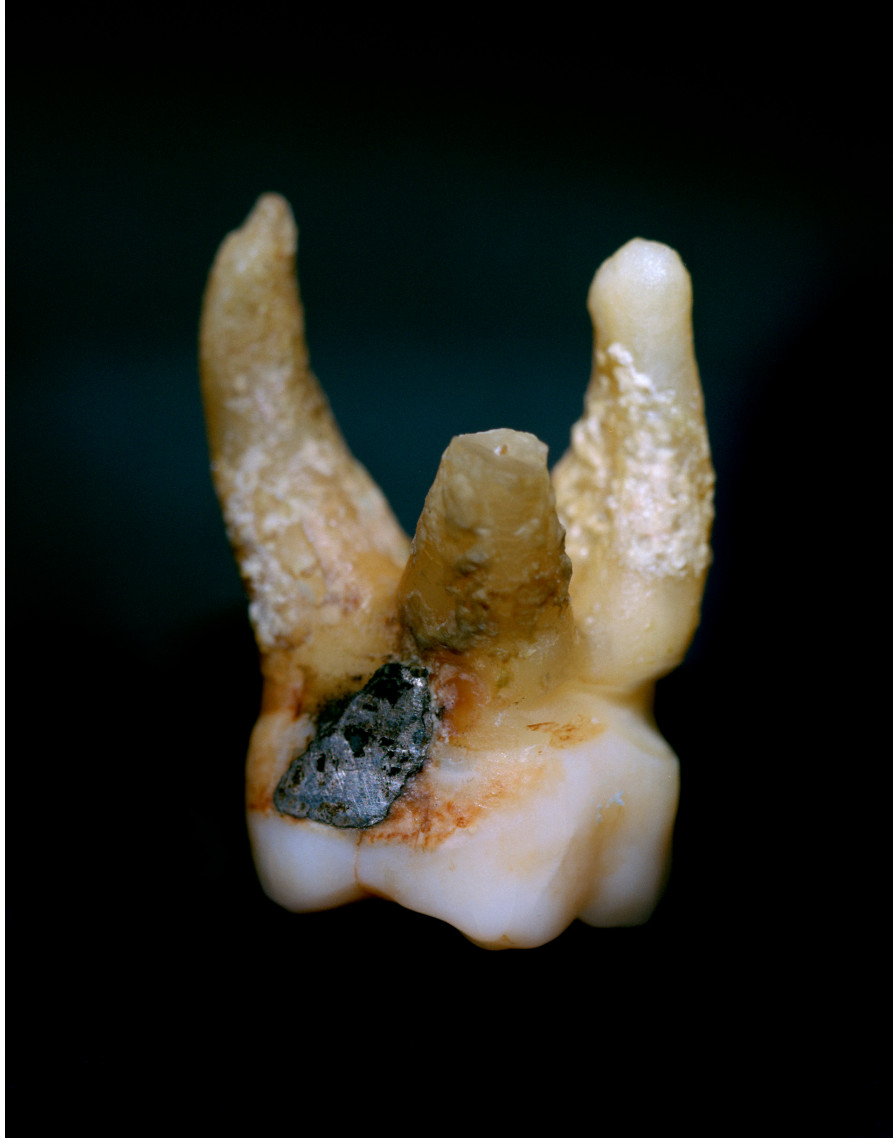
In **Alen Bašić's** installation entitled *Kotor Varoš 1992* he presents a memorial dedicated to the atrocities inflicted upon his family in his hometown of Kotor Varoš, Bosnia-Herzegovina. The monumental installation lays out the 31 wartime deaths in his family in chronological order, giving delicate indications of their history and physicality. Using three different sizes of C-shape planes, Bašić arranged them with specific reference and diagrammatical relationships between the floor, which symbolizes the earth, and on the wall, which is meant to symbolize the sky and/or heaven shaped on a slight curve and meant to act as a tunnel or hiding place. The three planes represent the three months June, July and August in 1992, as the period during which his family members were killed. The silk-screened names are represented family members and include relatives on both his father's and mother's sides. Building upon many layers, the frosted glass has been burned and scratched to create wounded surface areas that relate to the scars of wartime. His use of microfilament line to physically connect these people to one another is also meant to create an atmosphere corresponding to the legions and stitches inflicted and repaired during this horrific period in recent Bosnian history. Bašić differentiates his father's and mother's sides by alternating the use of color and serif v. sans serif typefaces in an effort to bring them back together as one unit. Arranged chronologically, the C-shape planes, or Nišani or gravestones, are designed to represent each victim's height and month in which they were killed, and run the length of the installation aimed to place the viewer in what he explains as "the moment of tragedy." *Kotor Varoš* draws on Chris Burden's *Other Vietnam Memorial* (1992), a massive series of aluminum plates physically reminiscent of Moses' tablet with transferred names of the millions of victims on the Vietnamese side of the conflict. Whereas Burden's memorial is meant to reflect the scores of faceless people killed during the war in Vietnam, Bašić's memorial reflects a minute and extremely personal notation and experience of tragedy and loss. More importantly, while the viewer passes through the installation, Bašić presents a powerful documentation with a universal message on the feeling of loss experienced by all victims of war. [DT]

Bašić holds a BFA in Graphic Design from Webster University and is currently pursuing a Master of Architecture degree at Washington University in Saint Louis.



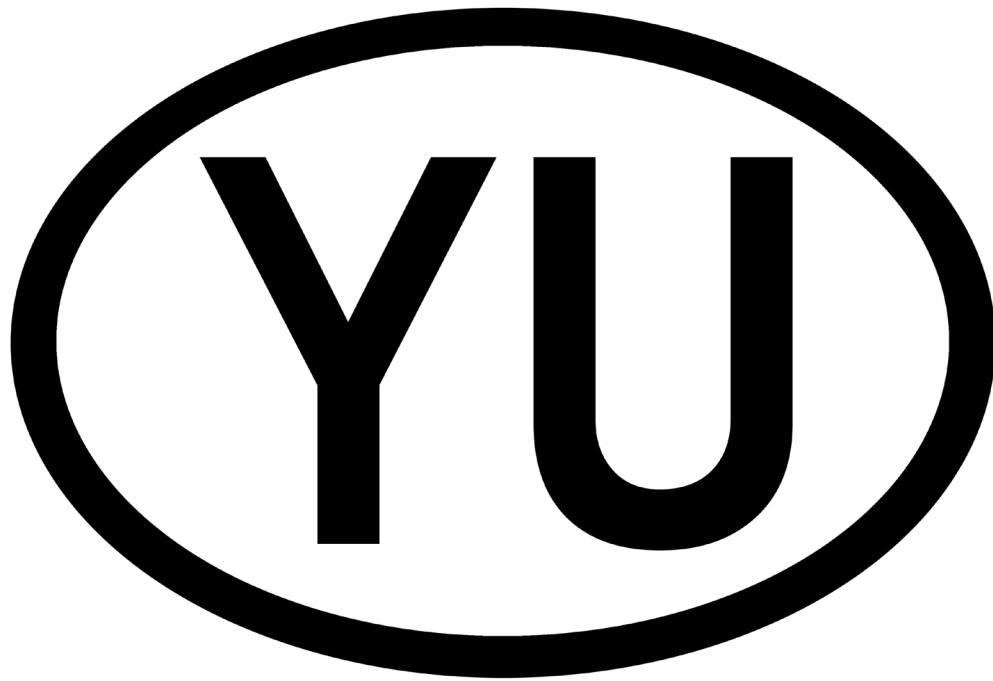
In his textual and photographic work, **Isak Berbić** questions the pretense of a national collective memory. In a series of disparate and derisive gestures, he is motivated by the idea of a “delusional positivism”, representing those specific instances where memory fronts as consequential history. His work also investigates the boundaries of representation, interpretation and disaster relating to the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, drawing from his own survival during and after that time, the concurrent media coverage of the tragedy in his country, and the complexities of distance and exile. His trio of works, *Perfect Cube* (2006), *My uncle gave me his tooth to take from Bosnia to America to photograph; and now I have sent it back* (2005) and *Spaceboat* (2006) are together an installation that also displays his interest in “realistic” representation and document as object and art practice, the habit of forgetting and how time renders history unclear, creating a tricky romanticism and allowing it to repeat itself. In his work *Perfect Cube*, Berbić applies aerial photographs he had taken of the city of Sarajevo—the photographs are assembled into a sound-infused cubical floor sculpture. Also, layered in to this piece are Berbić’s approach to the power of photographs to symbolize the silence of the current landscape in reference to housing, nomadic living and most importantly land and politics. Thinking of himself as both artist and activist, and motivated by timely social issues, he teeters between a disagreement about these positions, engaging in an ideological battle, and exploring the dubious nature behind the formation of understanding and/or interpretation through belief systems. In his work *My Uncle...*, Berbić presents the residue of a correspondence with his uncle living in Bosnia, in a layered gesture of art and old age, he offered the tooth to his nephew. The tooth was given—only to be used in a creative pursuit, to be rendered into art history, in what his uncle describes as: “a 60 year old art object induced with wisdom and with silver.” The photograph, the story and the physical transport of the tooth are the remains of their correspondence. [DT]

In 2007, Isak Berbić received his MFA from University of Illinois at Chicago School of Art and Design. In 2005, he earned his BFA in Photography, Film and Electronic media from the University of Illinois at Chicago. He also attended the Konsthögskolan i Malmö, Lunds Universitet / Malmö Art Academy. His selected exhibitions include: MA thesis exhibition, Gallery 400 – University of Illinois at Chicago, 2007; *Gallery Peep*; Malmö, Sweden, 2005; *Isak Berbić and Basma Al-Sharif*; New Works Gallery; Chicago, USA, 2005; *Around the Coyote Art Festival*; Thirteenth Floor Gallery, Chicago, USA; *SpeakUp*; Nova gallery, WHW, Zagreb, Croatia, 2004.



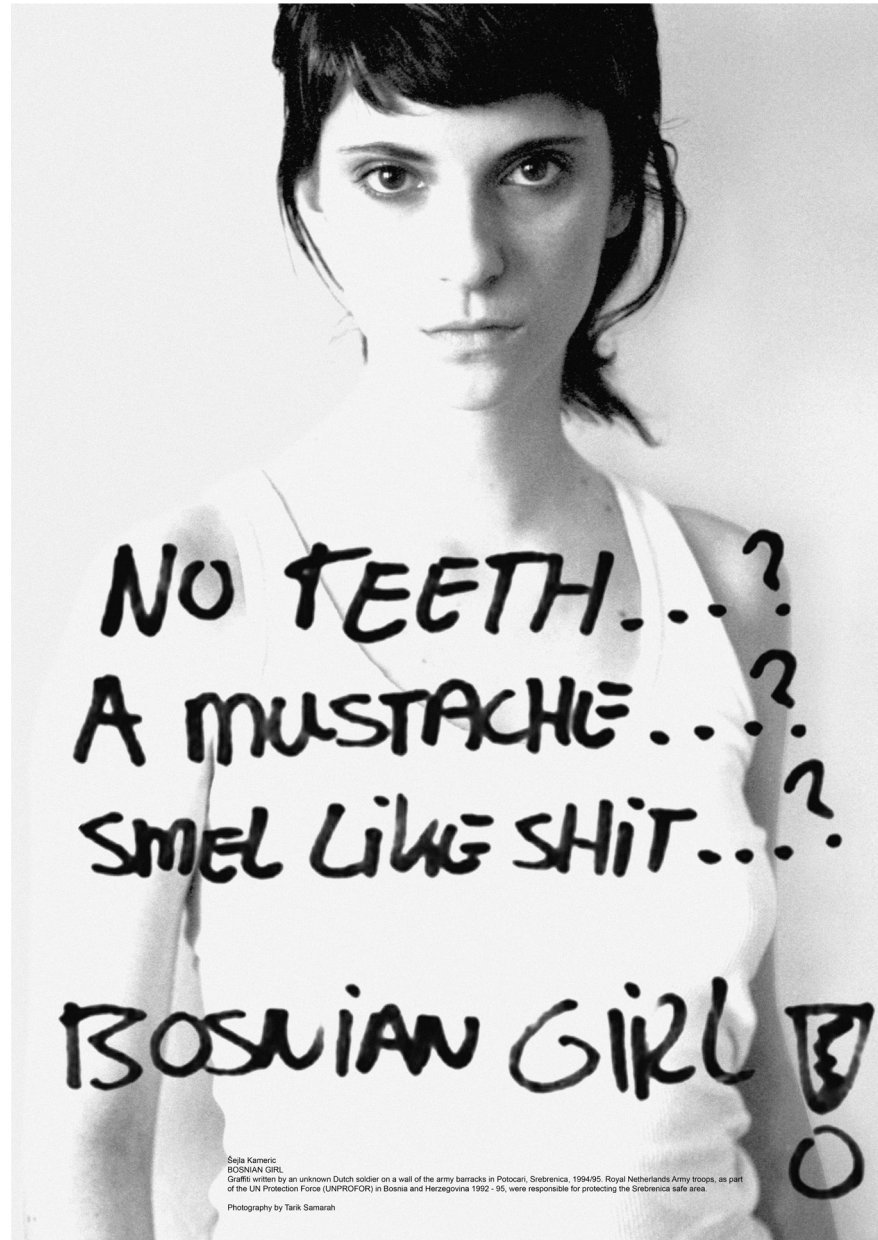
In **Zlatko Ćosić's** new video titled *Symbols of YU*, he has created a moving memoir that combines images, symbols, icons, logos and photographs to simultaneously evoke a state of remembrance and hope. He is careful to construct a piece that doesn't necessarily celebrate the old Socialistic Federal Republic of Yugoslavia but to show, by using many recognizable symbols, its past, present and its future. Through this work, Ćosić's goal is to project a sense of peace, love, balance and understanding, whether these ideas come from here or from there, he aims to project positive feelings and memories of times before the complications of war, and of a life Ćosić believes the people of Bosnia can have again. The complexity of this piece lies in the inherent political meaning of these symbols. To experience them now is without the intention of regurgitating communist or socialistic ideas or to poke fun of an all too recent traumatic time for his country but, more importantly, to delicately provoke thought and remembrance of more peaceful times. One very powerful and poignant gesture in the piece is a moment where Ćosić references his childhood experience as a PI-ONIR, (Yugoslav boy scouts) which eventually mutates and reveals into a detail of the Dinar (Yugoslav currency), in a powerfully symbolic gesture that brings connections between past and present, here and there, then and now. In *Symbols of YU*, he moves through a familiar landscape specific to the Bosnia/Herzegovina region, as he poetically constructs images of war-damaged architecture, the iconic red star, photographs of Marshall Tito, constantly re-drawn geographical maps, propaganda, historic monuments and other recognizable images in a gradual abstract gesture, and rhythmical transitional moments of reflection. Ćosić asks of his viewer, familiar with his chosen imagery, "to make an effort to think of those days, truly and without blame." [DT]

Zlatko Ćosić is currently pursuing his Bachelor of Arts in Video Production and Interactive Digital media at Webster University. He earned his Associate of Arts in Broadcasting at St. Louis Community College at Forest Park in 2007. He completed studies at Computer Science University of Electrical Engineering in Bosnia and Herzegovina. His selected performances, exhibitions and films include: *60x60 Project: Midwest Minutes*, 2007; *Constellations*, Electronic Music Midwest Festival, Kansas City, 2007; *Touch: Water Project*, The Pulitzer Foundation For The Arts, St. Louis, 2007; St. Louis International Film Festival at Saint Louis Art Museum, 2007; The Media Ecology Association Convention, Mexico City, 2007; *The Capsule*, St. Louis International Film Festival, 2006; *Secret: Josephine Baker FBI Files*, St. Louis Community College at Forest Park, 2005; *St. Louis Projections* by Krzysztof Wodiczko, public projections in collaboration with Wodiczko, Old Court House and Downtown Public Library, St. Louis, 2004; Independent Film Channel, Media Lab; USA Film Festival, 2003; Belgrade Alternative Film and Video Festival, 2003.



Šejla Kamberić's explores in her work the practice of self-representation by exploiting her own image, evoking different referential layers, and implying broader social and political context. In her piece, *Bosnian Girl* (2003), Kamberić particularly intensifies the gesture of self-reflection as she filters this common exploration through a series of cultural references. Her inspiration for the piece came from a racist joke scratched onto the wall of the military barracks of a Dutch UNPREFOR officer in the town of Potočari. It reads: "No teeth...? A mustache...? Smell like shi...? Bosnian girl!" *Bosnian Girl* is a powerful poster, postcard and advertising campaign where Kamberić portrays herself as a beautiful woman behind the "ugly" appropriated graffiti from Potočari scrawled across her chest. Here Kamberić deliberately evokes elements that are traditionally used to make an icon of the female, while documenting typical male desire, and twisting them with the soldier's racist statement. In its most basic translation, *Bosnian Girl* is dealing with issues of prejudice, racism and injustice. Much of Kamberić's work reveals a confrontational approach making it inseparable from her subject matter, simultaneously playing on inner perspective, a crucial tool in her work and varying degrees of complexity through an act of self-observation. She employs ideas that are intimate and melancholic, traversing between dream and trauma and torn between two extremes such as escape and resistance, helplessness and anger, victim and perpetrator. These feelings are causally connected and she channels the pain in two dissimilar directions: using cynical criticism of political conditions and a longing escapism. Her practice is primarily about directly communicating her experience, memories and opinions, which depending on the intent of her message, draws upon a need to either share with her viewers, or at times she may utilize to confront them. [DT]

In 1999 Šejla Kamberić completed studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Sarajevo, Department of Graphic Design. Her selected solo exhibitions include *Bosnian Girl*, Literaturhaus, Salzburg, Austria, 2007; *Brand New*, Contemporary Art Institute EXIT, National Art Gallery Pristine, Kosove, 2006; *Untitled*, Gandy Gallery, Bratislava, Czech Republic, 2005; *Close*, National Gallery of BH, Sarajevo, 2005; *Others and Dreams*, Portikus Frankfurt am Miane, Germany; 2004. Her selected group exhibitions include *Hell is... other people*, Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam, Nederland, 2007; *FREI*, Galleri Susanne Ottesen, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2007; *Between Borders*, MARCO, Museo de Arte Contemporánea de Vigo, Vigo, Spain, 2007; *Zones of Contact*, 15th Biennale of Sydney 2006, Sydney, Australia, 2006; *Conflict: Perspectives, Positions, Realities in Central European Art*, Slought Foundation, Philadelphia, USA, 2006; *Displaced*, Neuer Berliner Kunstverein (NBK), Berlin, Germany, 2005; *Migrations of Energies, Part 1: Clouding Europe*, Gandy Gallery, Bratislava, Slovak Republic, 2005; *Andre/Others*, Sorlandet Art Museum, Kristiansand, Norway.



Soja Kameric
BOSNIAN GIRL
Graffiti written by an unknown Dutch soldier on a wall of the army barracks in Potocari, Srebrenica, 1994/95. Royal Netherlands Army troops, as part of the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina 1992 - 95, were responsible for protecting the Srebrenica safe area.

Photography by Tarik Samarah

London based artist **Margareta Kern** is interested in exploring how intimate space, emotional and/or spatial, is affected by the socio-political events in contemporary society. In her photographic series *Graduation Dresses*, she maneuvers between these identities, societies and homes as they provide her with spaces within which she can resolve pertinent questions such as tradition, belonging, and place. She describes the ideas behind the work: “My work has always negotiated between the outer boundaries of identity, its socio-political context and the inner, subtler workings and needs of the self.” In this series, Kern photographs young women in Banja Luka (Bosnia & Herzegovina), who have recently completed their high school education. Made by Kern’s mother, the dresses are based on images of celebrities in red carpet, designer couture gowns for their graduation ball. Each work is photographed in the girls’ homes and personal spaces, disclosing both a maturity and vulnerability, but more powerfully documenting a transitional journey and the girls first public entrance into womanhood. Kern captures a poignant moment of change as the girls are fixed between the memories of the past and an unpredictable future. The work also portrays a sense of loss and curiosity, hope and fear, all in an effort to discover how these young womens’ identities are fashioned, as their future seems so volatile within the economic and political climate of their country. The girls in these photographs were children when the civil war began in the former Yugoslavia and their childhood has been formed by the unpredictability of post-war Bosnia. *Graduation Dresses* also encapsulates all of the timely issues particular to Kern’s own life experience as she explores notions of physical, cultural and political displacement with beautifully subtle references to the painful fragmentation of the former Yugoslavia. [DT]

She received her BA in Fine Art at Goldsmiths College, University of London in 1998 and earned her Post-Graduate Certificate in Digital Design at London College of Communications in 2002. Her selected group exhibitions include: *Make It a Better Place*, Holden Gallery, Metropolitan University, Manchester, 2007; *PureScreen 17, The Sun Always Shines On the Righteous*, Bureau Gallery, Manchester, 2007; *Making Journeys*, Djanogly Art Gallery, Nottingham, UK, 2006; *Necessary Journeys*, Tate Modern, London, 2005; *KnotWorks*, The Blue Elephant Theatre, London, 2005; *When in Rome*, Third Floor Art Centre, Portsmouth; Castlefield Gallery, Manchester; Midlands Art Centre, Birmingham and Habitat, 2005; *Ricky Romain & Margareta Kern*, White Space Gallery, Axminster, 2005; *Tito’s Angels*, Waterloo Eurostar Terminal, 2004/2005; *Leave to Remain*, Central Space, London; BBC London - Marylebone High Street and the Museum of Immigration & Diversity, London, 2004.



In his work, *If I Wasn't Muslim*, **Damir Nikšić** cleverly plays with issues of individual and group identity, dealing specifically with his own cultural traditions and the prejudice and stereotypes applied to them. *If I Wasn't Muslim* -- a music video inversion of Tevyah's "If I Were a Rich Man", is sponged from the musical *Fiddler on the Roof*, and also engages in a compelling conversation between past, present and presumed identities. The space in which the video is staged is also plagued with meaning as it is filmed in a Croatian barn across from the Bosnian border and the town of Brezovo Polje, where Nikšić was born. His technique is both hilarious and disturbing, as he theatrically transitions through scenes of Tevyah dancing, shrugging and pleading to his higher authority, his worry and concern aim specifically to his thoughts on xenophobia. At times, people and identities are shaped by anxiety and ignorance, this work is a sarcastic statement about being a Bosnian Muslim in Europe and touches upon the issue of a growing misunderstanding from other Europeans about European Muslims. Believing his people are misunderstood, he aims to clear any former conception of Muslims as misguided, having been brainwashed by images from war in the middle east or horrible acts of violence from Islamic extremists. Paraphrasing Tevye's monologue, the video comments on stereotyping and the complexities of cultural and religious identity in Bosnia. Borrowing wittingly from the musical, Nikšić provides an honest piece contemplating religious and cultural identity in Bosnia and Herzegovina. His sarcastic approach and use of popular culture adds a complex layer of sympathy and similarity in recent historical and political hatred toward other religious groups. Working towards a sense of "publicness" or universality, *If I Wasn't A Muslim* makes a series of very compelling statements about the absurdity of fear and racism, but by using humor Nikšić aims to ease and even eradicate it. [DT]

Damir Nikšić received his MFA in 2004 in New Genre, from the University of Arizona, School of Art. His selected exhibitions include *Surrender of the Boogeyman*, Meeting Point, Sarajevo, 2007; Sarajevo - *Memory and Communication*, Cultural Promotion Cooperation of Shiga, Kyoto Art Center, Kyoto, Japan, 2007; *Eastern Neighbors*, Babel center, Utrecht, Netherlands, 2006; *Permanent Presence*, White Box Gallery, New York, NY, 2006; *Collective vs. Individual*, National Gallery of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, 2005; National Museum of Montenegro, Studio DADO, Cetinje, Montenegro, 2005; *Orhideja*, 5th Cetinje Biennial, Cetinje, 2004; 50th Venice Biennial: *Dreams and Conflicts: The Dictatorship of the Viewer*, Venice, 2003; *Searching for Identity*, Collegium Artisticum, Sarajevo, 2002; *What am I doing here?*, Skuc Gallery, Ljubljana, 2000; *Under Construction*, National Gallery of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, 1999; *Sarajevo 2000*, Palais Lichtenstein, Museum of Modern Art, Vienna, 1998.

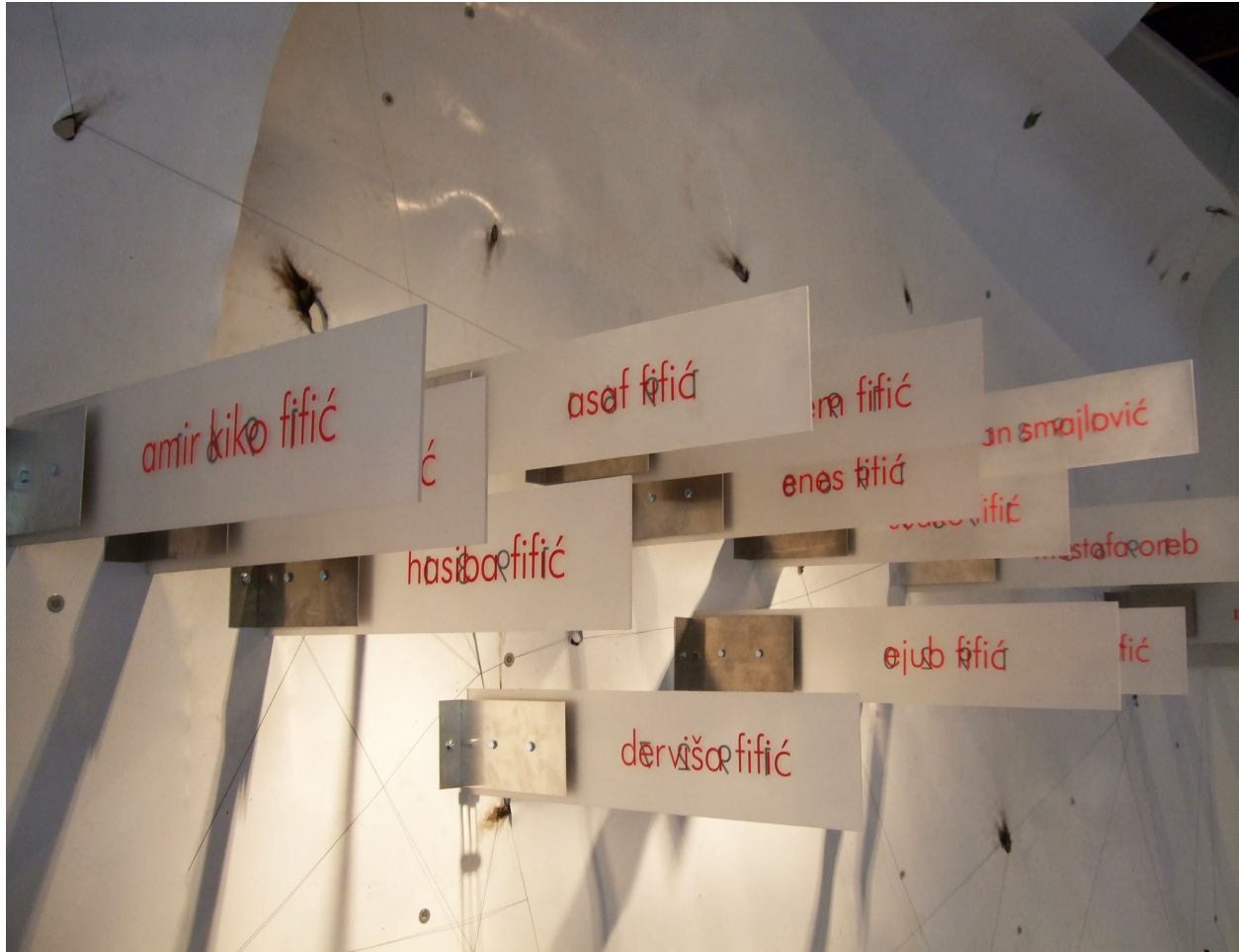


Nebojša Šerić's work creates a visual and conceptual conflict between art and war, and the laws or rules which govern these mediums. In his video *Joy Division* (2004), he has created a crude performative scene packed full of humor and irony as he criticizes a common apathy with those same images and devices that we use to find truth and our own sense of identity. Employing lyrics from the song "Passover" made popular by the 80s cult band Joy Division, Šerić raises a two-way mirror that presents us with an alternative meaning and/or interpretation of modern life. In this bizarre and ominous scene, the artist is positioned on the south side of the East River, in a strategic geographical placement as the beautiful view of the Brooklyn Bridge and New York skyline provides a faded backdrop. "Passover" is made indecipherable as he shuffles it, creating a sound similarity to well-known pop-folk songs from Bosnia. This complex mix generates a peculiar howling, yet comforting tune, unifying his own ideas of desire and belonging with global issues such as displacement, identity and race, and the sense of "otherness" experienced by immigrants. Šerić plays with a range of subjects and mediums, using painting, sculpture, film and installation; their commonality becomes the source of his personal opinion of the world in which he inhabits. The power of Šerić's work is steeped in his combination of wit and social satire as the techniques he uses to uncover his reality. *Joy Division* is a personal and political parody that speaks honestly and directly about pointless wars, power, ignorance, consumerism and manipulation. Through clever layering and remixing of the personal and political, *Joy Division* is a heroic, existential act as Šerić tapes himself standing in for a universal experience and an empathy for those looking to repair the wounds of war and start again. [DT]

His selected solo exhibitions include: *Any Given Place*, Miroslav Kraljevic Gallery, Zagreb, Croatia, 2004; *Conflict*, De Parel, Amsterdam, Netherlands, 2001; *Stayin' alive*, Kunsthalle, Bern, Switzerland, 2000. His selected group exhibitions include: *Legal Aliens*, Smack Mellon, New York, 2007; *Ahistoric Occasion: Artists Making History*, MASS MoCA, 2006; *Greater New York*, P.S. 1/MoMA, New York, 2005; Metropolis, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia, 2004; *Strangers to Ourselves*, Canterbury Royal Museum & Art Gallery, U.K. 2003; 50th La Biennale Di Venezia, Italia, 2003; *Lines of Conduct*, Raid Projects, L.A., 2003; *Basics*, Kunsthalle Bern, Bern, Switzerland, 2002; Tirana Biennial, Tirana, Albania, 2001; *Unlimited - 3*, De Appel, Amsterdam, Netherlands, 2000; *Aspects - Positions*, Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna, 1999; *Manifesta 2*, European Biennial of Contemporary Art, Luxembourg, 1998.











PLATES

Cover: Isak Berbić, *Spaceboat*, 2006. C-print.

1. Alen Bašić, *Kotor Varoš*, 2007. Mixed media installation.
2. Isak Berbić, *My uncle gave me his tooth to take from Bosnia to America to photograph; and now I have sent it back*, 2005. C-print.
3. Zlatko Ćosić, *Symbols of YU*, 2008. DVD video.
4. Šejla Kamerić, *Bosnian Girl*, 2003. Black & white photograph. Photography by Tarik Samarah.
5. Margareta Kern, *Nevena (John Galliano Dress)*, 2005. C-type print.
6. Damir Nikšić, *If I Weren't a Muslim*, 2004. DVD video.
7. Nebojša Šerić, *Joy Division*, 2005. DVD video.
8. Šejla Kamerić, *Untitled Daydreaming*, 2004. DVD video.
9. Alen Bašić, *Kotor Varoš*, 2007. Mixed media installation.
10. Zlatko Ćosić, *Symbols of YU*, 2008. DVD video.
11. Margareta Kern, *Ana (Jennifer Lopez Dress)*, 2005. C-type print.

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-the Curators

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Webster

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