

A gentle kiss on the mouth

Defying romantic vistas such as those smirking at us from tourist postcards, we come across the stumbling blocks arising from our home grounds in these times of post-transition. Difficulties in adapting to the altered political, economic and cultural framework, ambivalent attitudes towards language and history, confusion in “self-understood” patriotic and religious categories, are all a part of the reality of living; not to mention the disorientation on the seemingly hospitable map of Europe, where each movement is defined by the priorities of favorable citizenship and market profitability.

The works of the invited artists – Gildo Bavčević, Fokus Group, Ana Hušman, Nika Rukavina and Davor Savincenti – provide a shelter in the contemporary living space, while moving away from artificial creations that divide people based on territorial affiliation and sums in their bank accounts. Reminding us that definitions of borders – national or regional – are the privilege of cultural, economic and political elites, Nika Rukavina raises the issue of natural resources as a common good that should belong to everyone. Along the same utopistic lines, Davor Sanvincenti depicts the spaces of the sea as the common good where little stories and unnoticed experiences flow in the sounds of waves and form bonds that link people, regardless of the temporal and spatial distances. By challenging artificial distinctions and landscape manipulations, the products of harsh identitarian politics aimed at promoting the national unity, Ana Hušman and Fokus Group take notions such as “original”, “pure” and “unique” and put them under a critical magnifier. These artists explore the strongholds of (the Croatian) nationalism, historical and mythical themes, linguistic formulas and stylizations of natural and cultural surroundings. By doing so, they point at the bizarre relationships between the abovementioned identitarian politics and consumerism, where communications gaps, latent aggression and anger form the usual epilogue.

Gildo Bavčević exposes the deceiving mechanisms of the contemporary political and economic system which propagates free trade, elimination of borders and the illusive freedom of choice, while the notion of a free human being loses its meaning. Seemingly vast and intractable space of the sea serves as a metaphor of *terre firme*¹, the territory whose borders are strictly monitored and where movement is limited.

¹ See: <http://balticworlds.com/on-the-liquefaction-of-culture/>, 10/06/2014

Mirroring the problems of everyday life, these works warn against the dark side of globalization and integration processes, against the weak points of bureaucracy, and offer some hidden alternatives. Resisting the predator logic of capital accumulation and redistribution of borders, the logic that cuts through the mainland and the sea, they suggest that a brighter future should be sought away from the principles of quantity and classification habits. We have been taught that the grand inquisitor cannot be sent away, "...but we can astonish it with a gentle kiss on the mouth",² and, instead of falling into general despondency because the dominating system is unjust, we should feel the urge to explore different possibilities: out of necessity, out of spite; for the sake of pleasure offered by imagination.

Ksenija Orelj

(Artists selection: Ksenija Orelj and Slaven Tolj)

² Govedić, Nataša: 2014, *Ispraćaj? Optužnica? Tragedija? Spektakl? Crna kutija?*; Zarez XVI/385, June 5, p. 33.