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Photography and Cultural Memory:

Artistic reflection of Post-Yugoslav Transition

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Abstract

The focus of this paper is identification, research and presentation of the tendencies of engaged post-Yugoslav contemporary photography in relation to its immediate surroundings. The paper deals with some of the artists working in the field of photography who have been reacting to the processes of their immediate surroundings and showed consequences of the disintegration of Yugoslavia. In their works, the artists mirrored consequences of the turbulent events and its trace in the physical and mental environment and everyday life, and observed how it has been reflected in the broad and narrow sense on a specific cultural environment. The latter is utterly significant for the nature of local art making. Through the photographs we can discover what the main characteristics of post Yugoslavian cultural milieu are, what are the particular authenticities and if there is a common element that connects former republics and regions.

In this paper, contemporary photography is being observed as an artistic reflection of the aftermaths of turbulent events that happened in the territories of former Yugoslavia in the recent past. The focus is on the role of photography in monitoring, documenting and interpreting social, economic, cultural and political changes that occurred on the territory of ex-Yugoslavia during the last two decades. Photographs attempt to show the aftermaths of a moment and its various effects.

The paper also explores the impact of photography on the cultural and collective memory and in what way cultural memory and collective memory are influenced by the artistic works in a form of photographic medium. It examines aspects related to cultural memory and photography by exploring key notions with references to the manner in which memory is being represented in photographs, cultural memory is being constructed and whether photography affects its creation and how. It relies on accepted various theories of memory and photography studies.

Photography is one of the factors that influence creation of cultural memory. Cultural memory, in a more general sense, implies a set of forms and media of cultural mnemonics which help groups and cultures build collective identity and orientation in time. Photographs affect memory, consciousness and identity. Memories legitimize, establish communities, form basis for a more or less critical image of a community and interweave with other

memories. What has been captured on a photograph remains and becomes a part of the artist's consciousness as well as individual and collective consciousness of those affected by one's art. It remains, as an artefact, to be transmitted in the future. Photographs influence people's sense of identity and their perception of themselves.

Through art, memory becomes a part of social and cultural memory; individual and collective memory encounter and overlap. Through material pictures as symbolic representations, the past becomes communicatively transferable. Photographs can encourage critical understanding of memory and history. They help us deal with the past and nurture cultural memory and places of memory. The impact of the photographs may be in surfacing a discourse; those photographs that attempt to represent the events or the social reality, the impact on society, and the difficulties of coming to terms with it.

Although photographic knowledge of the world can initiate conscience, it is limited by the fact that in the end, it can never be ethical or political. The ultimate wisdom of the photographic image is to make us wonder what is behind the surface, what the reality must be like if this is what we see on the photograph.

Key words: photography, cultural memory, collective memory, history, identity

Introduction

“Memory work, a mode of inquiry embodying certain methodological assumptions, may be defined as: an active practice of remembering which takes an inquiring attitude towards the past and the activity of its (re)construction through memory. Memory work undercuts assumptions about the transparency or the authenticity of what is remembered, taking it not as “truth” but as evidence of a particular sort: material for interpretation, to be interrogated, mined, for its meanings and its possibilities. Memory work is a conscious and purposeful staging of memory. “ (Kuhn, 2000:186)

During the last 20 years a large area of the former Yugoslavia went through wars, traumas, social changes and painful transition process that it is still going through. Consequences of war and radical economic changes brutally changed the lives of individuals, affected the general climate and directly created new social values. These economic, social and political changes have been reflected in the photography as a medium through which various phenomena can be expressed. Those records of significant events in society affect the creation of its cultural and collective memory.

In addition to the ideological, economic and value transitions of the countries, Yugoslavia was fatally marked by a brutal interruption of connections (economic, political, cultural and almost everything relating to everyday life) between once closely connected territories. Thus the transition process left profound scars on the physical as well as mental environment.

Disintegration of the federation in 1991 and the civil war that followed represent a sharp cut between new and old; a decisive ideological division that marks the beginning of a new era. The birth of new states brought also a re-writing of history and the emergence of nationalist ideas and often violent modifications of cultural identities. As a result, art practice was confined to working within renovated social contexts. The change of social system radically marked this territory. “The mental shifts of society, supported by the tendentious activities of the mass media and new propagandists, occurred at numerous levels of cultural, political and ideological life” writes Dubravka Ugrešić in her essay *The Culture of Lies*, and

continues: “The great manipulators and their well-equipped teams (composed of writers, journalists, sociologists, psychiatrists, philosophers, political scientists, and generals) composed a new vocabulary of ideological formulas: democracy, national independence, europeisation, and created new symbols: parliaments, emblems, anthems; they changed names of streets and markets, and inhabited the same buildings. They dismantled the old system in order to build a new one from the same elements.”

Integral Yugoslav cultural space that existed until the early 90s of the 20th century facilitated the flow of information and artists and their increased presence in all major exhibitions in the former Yugoslavia, which also meant a greater dynamism on the art scene in general. After the disintegration of Yugoslavia circumstances have significantly changed and caused the deadlock, a break in communication between until recently closely related areas; cultural disintegration happened. We had different organs developing in total isolation from other parts of the formerly same body. The consequence was closing of the scene into micro-frameworks, in a kind of cultural isolation in which it was difficult to make a significant progress.

Changes in the region over the past two decades have left an indelible mark on the state of mind of the inhabitants of former Yugoslavia countries, causing great mental and physical consequences. Wars, development of market economy, stratification of society, growing consumerism, new forms of aggressive marketing and different types of media control and manipulation, managed to completely change the social and cultural landscape of the entire region.

This paper will be dealing with tendencies of contemporary photography as an artistic reflection of the aftermaths of turbulent events that happened in the territories of former Yugoslavia in the recent past, its various effects, its role and purpose in representation of past, as well as with its impact on the construction of cultural and collective memory. Emphasis will be placed on photographs taken on the ex-Yugoslav territory and the ways in which they portray and mirror the period between the disintegration and the present moment.

Theoretical framework

Collective memory

Institutions and bodies such as cultures, nations, states, churches or companies, do not have memory but they generate it with signs and symbols, thus simultaneously creating their own identities. Such, created memory does not occur spontaneously but is intentionally constructed and supported by symbols. (Assmann, 2006:37) Collective memory is a social product. Individual and collective memory are being less and less seen as spontaneous, natural or sacrosanct acts, and more as a social and cultural constructions that change over time and have their own history.

The concept of *collective memory*¹ was introduced by a French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs in 1925, based on ideas of Emile Durkheim. Collective memory discourse began with the work of Emile Durkheim, a French sociologist, social psychologist and philosopher. Although never using the term ‘collective memory’, Durkheim noted (Durkheim, 1995) that societies require continuity and connection with the past to preserve social unity and cohesion. His study of traditional religious traditions suggested that rituals transmitted traditional beliefs, values and norms and that shared rituals provided a transcendence of the individual and the profane into united sacred group. Durkheim stated (ibid.) that collective thought required individuals to physically join together to create a common experience that was shared by the group. Since the collective experience required the physical gathering of the community, it was important for groups to devise methods of extending that unity when the group broke up. He believed that totems, natural items that have been deemed sacred, held immense power and suggested that they provided individuals with a device to individually remember the unity of the group experience. His emphasis on collective thought was based upon individual memory and the celebrations and totems that triggered those memories. (Durkheim, 1995)

¹ The term ‘*mémoire collective*’ (collective memory) first appears in Halbwachs’s *Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (1925) but its full definition appears in his later work, *Mémoire et Société* published posthumously in 1949 and republished as *La mémoire collective* (1959).

Maurice Halbwachs, a student of Durkheim, was the first sociologist to use the term 'collective memory' and his work has been considered the foundational framework for the study of societal remembrance. Halbwachs suggested (Halbwachs, 1992) that all individual memory was constructed within social structures and institutions. He claimed (ibid.) that individual private memory is understood only through a group context; these groups may include families, organizations, and nation-states. Halbwachs argued (ibid.) that the only individual memories that are not constructed through the group context are images from dreams. He believed (ibid.) that dreams are different from virtually every other human thought because they lack structure and organization. Individuals organize and understand events and concepts within a social context, thus they then remember them in a way that rationally orders and organizes them through that same social construction. Halbwachs stated (ibid.) that every collective memory depends upon specific groups that are delineated by space and time; the group constructs the memory and the individuals do the work of remembering.

He expanded the idea of totems to include commemorative events that serve as reminders of a collective memory. Halbwachs suggested (ibid.) commemorative events were important to reinforce autobiographical memories that he believed faded with time without periodic memory reinforcement. Halbwachs showed (ibid.) that memories are constructed in language exchange with other people and their memories. As Jan Assmann believes, much of which we recall happens to the extent to which we have reason to tell about that. Storytelling is elaborated encoding and thus translating the experienced into history. (Assman, 2006)

Halbwachs adopts an instrumental presentist approach to collective memory. A presentist approach states that social constructions of memory are influenced by the needs of the present. He stated that collective memory is shaped by present issues and understandings. Groups select different memories to explain current issues and concerns. In order to explain the present, leaders of a group reconstruct past using rationalization to choose which events to remember, which to eliminate, and rearrange events to conform to the social narrative.

Halbwachs certainly, with his writing on the social construction of memory, did propose a new way of thinking about memory. He addressed the question of how we use our mental images of the present to reconstruct our past. The power of Halbwachs' ideas of collective memory is in the very fact that they are not a given but rather socially constructed notion. Collective memory, according to Halbwachs, exists outside time and space and it

continues throughout the generations. It is neither intricate nor detailed and is in a state of constant change according to society's needs. It is not one or something unified. Collective memory is, in fact, an assortment of collective memories. It is adapted to various groups and interpretations, and is therefore flexible and fluid, inaccurate and sometimes even self-contradictory. Collective memory sustains society as such and is therefore inward-turned and culturally subjective. Halbwachs viewed collective memory as a social fact and as something which exists outside the individual consciousness and therefore an inherent part of social life. (Halbwachs, 1992)

Pierre Nora expand upon Halbwachs' instrumental presentism by stating that collective memory is used by groups to interpret past, and yet these memories become detached from the past. Nora further claimed that groups select certain dates and people to commemorate, deliberately eliminate others from representation (collective amnesia), and invent traditions to support the collective memory. He noted that the representations of collective memory are those that have been selected by those in power; collective memory is both a tool and an object of power. Nora claimed that as modernity emerged, traditions lost social meaning and significance. As a consequence, he suggests that elites in the society produced simulations of natural memory that supported emerging nation-states. (Nora, 1999)

Eric Hobsbawn, upon Nora's interpretation of collective memory in modernity, suggests that the social changes that occurred as a result of modernity destroyed customs and required the establishment and modification of new traditions for the purpose of establishing authority, social control and solidarity. These invented traditions imprint certain values, beliefs and norms that suggest a continuity of a nonexistent past and create social identity and the rituals and symbols are used to unite and energize modern society. (Hobsbawn, 1992)

Both Halbwachs and Nora suggest that the 'collective memory' of any group is actually a manipulated construction of those who maintain the power and status to define those memories. David Lowenthal (Lowenthal, 1985) joins the chorus of instrumental presentists. He suggests that national histories are constructed to address present interest and cites the development and commodification of a heritage and nostalgia industry in the British heritage sites as examples of this social construction. Michel Foucault also suggested that the

postmodern desacralization of tradition has created a social void that has been filled with commemorative activity that is used as a tool of those in political power. (Foucault, 1977)

John Bodnar states that public memory is not an accurate representation of the past, but is focused upon the needs of both the present and the anticipated future. The inclusion of the future to the present/past debate substantiates the premise of memory as a contested social construction that protects the power of the status quo. Bodnar differentiates between vernacular and official representation. Vernacular memories originate from the people and are used to explain those events that most immediately impact the masses. Official memory is created for a purpose of the status quo. The sanctification of the official memory suggests that a memory has been selected by some group that has obtained the power to represent and interpret these memories. (Bodnar, 1993)

“For this purpose we should conceptualize collective memory as the result of the interaction among three types of historical factors: the intellectual and cultural traditions that frame all our representations of the past, the memory makers who selectively adopt and manipulate these traditions, and the memory consumers who use, ignore or transform such artifacts according to their own interest.” (Kansteiner, 2002)

According to Todor Kuljić, collective memory refers to the part of social and integrative oral and/or written knowledge that forms an image of the past of a certain group. Social groups (family, nation, political parties, religions, etc.) as a "community of memory" determine what should be remembered and what forgotten. The collective (family, class, religious community, and nation) decides what is valuable to remember. This determined collective memory represents a mosaic of selected contents important for the survival and integration of group and for the preservation of group identity. Collective memory strengthens the bond of the collective; mediates a collective identity. Collective memory is not static, but dynamic and reconstructive, given that the characteristics and needs of social group are variable. Collective memory is not aimed at finding the truth, but it seeks to strengthen the identity of groups in the past. Everyday life is characterized by the presence of many images of the past (cross-cutting, competitive, or even opposing), and within that mosaic hegemonic image of the past imposed by the ruling group dominates. However,

collective memory and cultural memory do not show only the past, but they shape the present by designing existence of individuals and groups and providing them with the ability to understand the meaning of the world and the vision of the future. Pictures of the past reduce the vastness of past events, separate important from unimportant events, establish criteria of tradition and the formation and maintenance of identity for the new generations, and become emotional basis for comparison between present and past states, and stimulus for awakening feelings of (dis)satisfaction with the present building more desirable vision of future state (Kuljić, 2006).

Cultural memory

Cultural memory – *“body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose ‘cultivation’ serves to stabilize and convey that society’s self-image.”* (Assman, 1995:132)

On the surface, memory seems as something that belongs to the past, something inert, a memory of something that has happened and that is frozen in time. But going deeper reveals that memory is dynamic and that it connects the three temporal dimensions: the present where it is evoked at, the past to which it refers to and the future that it always looks at. According to Aleida Assmann, memories do not exist as closed systems. In the social reality they always meet, amplify, intersect, modify, and polarize with other memories and impulses of forgetfulness. (Assman, 2006)

While its range is vast, the major concern throughout all memory work is how societies and individuals construct their identity and give meaning to their lives through what they choose to remember or indeed to forget. Since the 1980s, in what often feels like an increasingly fragmented, fast-moving world, and when there seems to be an ‘acceleration of history’, to borrow Pierre Nora’s expression, much has been written about memory, of its uses and abuses (Nora, 1989:7). For Nora, however, there is no such thing as spontaneous memory, instead we must ‘deliberately create archives, maintain anniversaries, organize

celebrations, pronounce eulogies, and notarize bills because such activities no longer occur naturally' (ibid. p.12). The act of remembering is creative and active as opposed to something spontaneous, and such acts of remembrance are parts of culture. This apparent 'collapse of memory' is attributed to the rapid move towards democratization and mass culture on a global scale and without taking defensive action. Nora believes that history would sweep memory away. Taking his cue from Maurice Halbwachs, who first coined the term 'collective memory', Nora suggests that there is a fundamental opposition between memory and history:

"Memory is life, born by living societies in its time. It remains in permanent evolution, open to dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformation, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer." (Nora, 1989:8)

In her book *Tangled Memories: the Vietnam war, the AIDS epidemic and the politics of remembering*, Marita Sturken gives a more nuanced interpretation suggesting that while cultural memory can be distinct from history, it is nevertheless essential to history's construction, and that cultural memory and history should thus be seen as 'entangled rather than oppositional' (Sturken, 1997: 4-5).

Memory forms the fabric of human life, affecting everything from the ability to perform simple, everyday tasks to the recognition of the self. Memory establishes life's continuity; it gives meaning to the present, as each moment is constituted by the past. As the means by which we remember who we are, memory provides the very core of identity.

A form of cultural memory that is in tension with personal memory is postmemory. Postmemory is distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection. Postmemory is a powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation. That is not to say that memory itself is unmediated,

but that it is more directly connected to the past. Postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated. (Hirsh, 1997:22)

What does it mean for a culture to remember? The collective remembering of a specific culture often appears similar to the memory of an individual – it provides cultural identity and gives a sense of the importance of the past. Yet the process of cultural memory is bound up in complex political stakes and meanings. It both defines a culture and is the means by which its divisions and conflicting agendas are revealed. To define a memory as cultural is, in effect, to enter into debate about what the memory means. This process does not efface the individual but rather involves the interaction of individuals in the creation of cultural meaning. Cultural memory is a field of cultural negotiation through which different stories compete for a place in history. (Sturken, 1997)

The last few decades have seen a flowering of research and scholarship on cultural memory across the humanities and social science. Cultural memory as a research area has become an integral part of various disciplines in the last twenty years: socio-cultural anthropology, sociology, cultural geography, history, cultural studies of literature, art history and film studies.

In a broader sense, cultural memory means public use of the past, while in the narrow sense it represents scientific discipline that deals with the interpretation and explanation of the various ways of preservation and distortion of the past. Todor Kuljić points out that there can be two separate sides of the culture of memory: cultural memory as storage and holder of memories – made of patterns of inheritance, of transmission, planned or spontaneous forgetting or repression of memory that is consistent with the interests of different social groups. The ideological use of the past is about political use of history or the politicization of memory. Another side would be understood not so much in the ideological sense; memory is more or less conscious individual, group or collective relation to the events of the past, in which individuals and groups use past to demarcate from each other and build identity (Kuljić, 2006).

Taken in a broader sense and having in mind the second side of it, cultural memory can be considered as one segment of cultural identity. Cultural identity is the consciousness of members of one group that has been historically produced and developed according to the criteria established by the group in relation to other social groups. Thus, the field of cultural memory includes a set of beliefs in a common origin of those belonging to a certain social group, common myths, historical memories and orientation to the past. In that sense, cultural memory is made of methods and mechanisms of social transmission of knowledge of the past, fabrication, processing, maintenance, use, repression, forgetting and modification of the past. Cultural memory contains patterns of past processing within the everyday consciousness, repression, relativization, inventing, planning, oblivion, etc. that are parts of individual and collective, that is images of the past that individuals and groups create in certain situations in order to, with the help of the past, interpret the present, create a vision of future and determine or reinforce their own identities. (Kuljić, 2006)

“Cultural memory is formed by symbolic heritage embodied in texts, rites, monuments, celebrations, objects, sacred scriptures and other media that serve as mnemonic triggers to initiate meanings associated with what has happened. Also, it brings back the time of the mythical origins, crystallizes collective experience of the past and can last for millennia.” (Jan Assmann)²

Cultural memory asks a question: who remembers what and why, because the key question is not what are remnants of the past saying but how do we interpret them. Cultural memory segment as a part of cultural identity is aware of the internal heterogeneity, planned guidance, overlapping of public, official and personal memory, the ways in which images of the past shared by individuals who have experienced them, and those who have not but accept them as part of their identity. Cultural memory contains not only the material remains of the past, marked places of memory, different symbols and meanings of the past, but also ideologies, myths, prejudices and stereotypes present in the (current) use of the past.

² <http://www.iea.usp.br/en/news/cultural-memory-the-link-between-past-present-and-future>

Cultural memory represents complex ways in which societies remember their past using a variety of media. While earlier discussions of collective memory had a thematic focus and were connected above all with identifying the sites of memory, that act as placeholders for the memories of particular groups, attention had been shifting to the cultural processes by which memories become shared in the first place. It has become increasingly apparent that the memories that are shared within generations and across different generations are the product of public acts of remembrance using a variety of media. Stories, both oral and written, images, museums, monuments: these all work together in creating and sustaining sites of memory. Cultural memory is based on socially organized mnemonics, institutions, and media.

Jan Assmann (Assman, 2007) makes a distinction between two types of memory: communicative and cultural memory. Communicative memory is related to the diffuse transmission of memories in everyday life through orality. Cultural memory refers to objectified and institutionalized memories that can be stored, transferred and reincorporated throughout generations.

Cultural memory is formed by symbolic heritage embodied in texts, pictures, rites, monuments, celebrations, objects, sacred scriptures and other media that serve as mnemonic triggers to initiate meanings associated with what has happened. It also brings back the time of the mythical origins, crystallizes collective experience of the past and it is not time-limited. Collective memory differs from family and generational memory by the props that reinforce the memories, and obliges future generations to a common memory. Memories are being secured through material signs or periodic repetition. In this way, future generations are encouraged to grow into shared memory without personal involvement. (Assmann, 2006)

Communicative memory is limited to the recent past, evokes personal and autobiographical memories and is characterized by a short term (80 to 110 years), from three to four generations. Due to its informal character, it does not require expertise on the part of those who transmit it.

According to Assmann, cultural memory is the faculty that allows us to build a narrative picture of the past and through this process develop an image and an identity for ourselves. It preserves the symbolic institutionalized heritage to which individuals resort to build their own identities and to affirm themselves as part of a group. This is possible because

the act of remembering involves normative aspects, so that if you want to belong to a community, you must follow the rules of how and what to remember. (Assmann, 2007)

Aleida Assmann raised questions about the risks and benefits of the cultural memory derived from traumatic events: Does thus memory bring up an aggressive potential or does it result in greater respect and dialogue between neighbours? Does it build a society that is more vengeful and more aware of its past? Does it let the individual citizen more sensitive or insensitive to the violation of human rights or the condition of minorities? (Assmann, 2006)

Cultural memory should not be understood as an unhealthy fixation to the past, but as a back-up, a kind of background necessary for society to build its future. According to Aleida, this memory should be inspected critically.

We must take care that the negative past, once transformed into memory, does not wake the revanchism; memory can be dangerous and destructive if it digs up anger willing to revise history.

Each generation develops its own approach to the past. Dynamics of a memory of a society is essentially determined by the change of generations. With each change of generation, which takes place after a period of circa thirty years, the memory of a society noticeably changes. Attitudes which were once provisional or representative are gradually moving from the centre to the periphery. Then retrospectively we can establish that with the change of the dominant generation, a certain atmosphere of experiences and values, hopes and obsessions has disappeared replaced by some new modes. Generation change is of great importance for the change and restoring memory of a society and plays a great role during the processing of traumatic event. Public culture of memory is, as a rule, after traumatic events, being established not before a time interval of fifteen to thirty years. (Assmann, 2006:27)

From the above mentioned it is clear that similar categories of cultural memory and collective memory cover historic and symbolic – cultural attributes of ethnic identity, and therefore the ethnic and cultural component of national identity. Myths of common ancestry and shared historical memory as historical and symbolic-cultural attributes of ethnic identity, as well as ethnic and cultural component of national identities, exist only within the framework of collective and cultural memory.

Photography and cultural memory

“The camera as an active tool of mass representation is a vehicle for documenting one’s condition over one’s image; of presenting arguments and demands: of stimulating action; of expressing visual pleasure as a producer, not consumer of images; of relating to, by objectifying, one’s personal and political environment.” (Slater, 1999)

The assumption of cultural memory and the basis of it is overwriting of memory and experience on the material data holders. Without codification into signs and symbols, without the formation into texts and images, there is no cultural memory. Representation is the basis of cultural memory. (Assman, 2006)

None of what is happening in a society and what is being discussed does not happen without the involvement of the media, that is, without books, films, photographs, newspaper articles, etc. Mental, material and media images have an important function when a community creates an image of itself. The importance of the photographic medium in this process cannot be overstated. A combination of memory work and photography brings something entirely distinctive to the methods and findings of cultural memory research. Photograph as an important aid to the construction of the memory and identity. Through art, memory becomes a part of social and cultural memory; individual and collective memory encounter and overlap.

Many languages of memory and their different media (memoirs, testimonies, films, exhibitions) develop their own perspective and show different views of the certain events. This prevents creation of a unique and stoned picture of the past.

Photography is important as a part of cultural memory. What would the contribution of a photographic aesthetics to the production of cultural memory be? Photography is one of the significant factors that influence or affect and participate in the creation of collective memory, collective consciousness, collective identity and cultural memory and it can effect social awareness change and perception of the public.

Photographs can be etched in memory deeper than moving images, because they are pure slice of time, not a flow. (Sontag, 1971: 25) Through material pictures as symbolic representations, the past becomes communicatively transferable. A group of people who can see the pictures and make them part of their own memory is unlimited.

A movie, a novel, a photograph, as a work of art, is always a part of cultural memory and not an exclusive possession of a generation it belongs to. It opens a closed experience of a generation and allows it to become accessible to a wider audience whose experiential background is quite different. The way that the affected generation perceives would clearly differ from the way that a generation that is not affected perceives. For the first one it is about recognition and release of memory, and for the second about empathy and gaining knowledge that could fundamentally expand the horizon of our experience. (Assman, 2006)

By being photographed, something becomes a part of the information system. Images enter into material storage of memory that belongs to the archive of culture. Photographs/exhibitions become and remain part of the individual consciousness as well as collective consciousness. They remain to be transmitted to the future generations.

Photography as a medium and art form

It is interesting to observe how the attitude of people towards photography has changed. In the past, people used to be afraid of being photographed because they believed that their soul was being trapped and thus lost in the materialization of the reflection on the paper. Today, on the contrary, people gladly accept to be photographed because they believe this preserves their souls.

What is it that photography says about the world, about time, and about the world in time? Occurrence of photography changes usual understanding of time, in a revolutionary and paradoxical way. Photography makes the time stop. It takes out a moment from a routine of existence, taking out a certain group of impressions localized in space. Those impressions can never again be grouped in the same way into given unique unit of reality, i.e. in our notion of reality. Is reality our relativized and subjective idea of it or a “real” reality? It could be explained on the example of photography. Two persons would photograph a same

phenomenon in a two completely different ways. That would give us two very different impressions of the world.

Impressions can never shape the same image of the world out of some previous state of affairs, thus there cannot be two identical photographs. The way that certain impressions are grouped in a photograph depends on various external (“reality”) and internal (perception of “reality”) factors that make each of the photographs seen with our eyes be unique and unrepeatable. That photograph is determined by the moment. Each passing moment takes away with it one image of given state of reality. If not recorded the image disappears irreversibly, unnoticed, unknown, forgotten. Occurrence of photography made it possible for the certain moment in which a certain image exists to be transferred to the photographic form and in that way be preserved from transitoriness.

Possibly, it could be said that perseverance of a moment is possible through the remembrance of some of the participants of the given event. However, the moment would still be transitory; having in mind that it exists in the remembrance of a being that is itself transitory. Not only that the moment is not being saved from forgetting if it continues to live in a memory of a person, but the person is also not being saved from forgetting if he continues to live as a part of the moment formed on the photograph.

What photography can save from time is much more abstract – it is actually time itself. There are two aspects of time: duration and existence. Photography provides persistence of moment through time which makes duration and existence identify. A moment now exists parallel to time while its essence is being kept and nothing from its transitoriness is being taken. It’s just that it has become static in space. And once it has gotten its place in space, it persists also through time. Before it persisted through time, joined together with time; now it persists through time, against time, in conflict with time. That’s how a moment lasts but also exists outside lasting. Photography transfers time into two-dimensional space by “frizzing” the moment.

Photography has privileged status among the arts since it imitates reality in the most direct way. All the other forms of art imitate reality in an indirect way and by that changing it to a much greater extent. Each photograph seems to have an innocent and therefore more accurate, realistic relationship to the visible reality than the other mimetic objects. (Sontag,

1971:15) Yet, photography is not, as Roland Barthes says, a copy of reality. It is, rather, an ‘emanation of past reality, a magic, not an art.’ (Barthes, 1980:88)

Film, as the most similar to photography, evolved as its sequel – it represents the sum of interrelated photographs, thus affirming it but at the same time denying it because it takes away its essence, timelessness or frozenness in time. Timelessness and immediateness are essential qualities of photography, because they are differentiating.

Photographic images now provide most of the information about the past as well as the present. What has been written about a person or an event is interpretation. The same goes for the hand-made visual statements like paintings or drawings. While painting or prose description can never be more than a narrow selective interpretation, photographs can be viewed as narrow selective transparency. Photographs do not act as statements about the world, but more as its parts, miniatures of reality, and a fraction of the world. What gives it authority is the assumed veracity. By feeling the pulse of the present, photography brings instant history, instant sociology, and instant participation. (Sontag, 1971: 14- 16)

Photography is a subjective and personal artistic act which aims to objectivity. It is a testimony of place and time, a testimony of the world around us. It has often been perceived as an objective, and therefore unbiased medium for capturing and preserving historical moments. Yet the choice made by a photographer, including how the image is composed, what is left in or out of the shot, and how it may be manipulated after it is taken – necessarily impacts how we perceive the image. It also raises critical questions about how willingly we accept any one photograph as the definite truth.

Susan Sontag, in her book *On Photography*, discusses the objectivity of photography, which is a strongly disputed subject within the photographic community. According to Sontag, photographing any subject should bring out the correctness and suitability of the thing getting photographed. One should put one’s self into a positive relation to the world that feels like knowledge and therefore like power. However, it is the photographers who decide what object to take a photo of, what angle to frame the photo, which photography technique to use and what elements should be excluded from the photograph. By making decisions about how the photograph will look like, photographers always impose criteria to the content.

All these factors may mirror a certain socio-historical context. Following these lines, the impact of photography on society cannot be ruled out. (Sontag, 1971)

Photographs obtain testimony. Something that we hear about, but we doubt about, seems proved when showed in a form of photograph. Photograph is regarded as an irrefutable proof that a given thing actually happened. (Sontag, 1971)

The image on paper can be a proof but photographs do lie, and have been doing so since the invention of the medium. Our media rarely show photographs that record reality and pictures are mostly used for manipulation of the public.

Memory can tell us about the influence of the past on the future as well as about influence of the present on understanding and interpretation of the past. Photographs can encourage critical understanding of memory and history. They help us to deal with the past and to nurture cultural memory and places of memory.

Well-known use of the photography is the awakening of consciousness. Photographs alter and expand our notion of what is worth seeing and what we have a right to observe. They are the grammar and, even more importantly, the ethics of seeing (Sontag, 1971:13). The great importance of art, and in this case photography, is that it can act as a *conscience of time*. Photographs are, in fact, captured experience, and camera is the ideal extended arm of consciousness. (Sontag, 1971:14) Its contribution being in the overview of tragic events and pointing out the problems of its time and speaking of a present as well or perhaps more than of a past. It can tell about the influence of the past on the present and it can have an influence in understanding and interpretation of the past urging us to reexamine the meaning of life and aiming towards creation of a better world. It is something that remains as a testimony (document) and transfers to future becoming a part of an individual and collective consciousness. During the last decades, engaged photography did as much to deaden conscience as to wake it up.

As an autonomous medium of expression, contemporary photography addresses various phenomena in its immediate environment, be it war, the manipulative function of

mass media, the visible consequences of a collapsing economy or the visual manifestation of national ideologies.

Among the handful of insignificant moments, there are some that are part of an important historical context or the context gains importance just because it was photographed in a particular way, so that the photograph itself obtains historical-sociological significance.

Sometimes the specific moment gives the importance to the photography, and sometimes a photograph gives the importance to the moment. Or sometimes it can be both.

Photographs cannot stir up public opinion unless there is an appropriate context of feelings and attitudes. Photographs that Matthew Brady and his colleagues made about the horrors of the battlefields did not deter people from continuation of The Civil War. Photographs cannot create moral attitude, but they can intensify it and help build one that is in its infancy. What determines the possibility of moral action of photography is the existence of relevant political consciousness. Without a certain politics, historical photographs of killings would likely have been perceived simply as unreal. (Sontag, 1971: 25-26)

The quality of feeling, including moral indignation, that people are able to invoke in response to the photographs, depends on a degree to which these images are close to them. Photographs are shocking depending on the extent they show something new, unseen. Unfortunately, the stakes are constantly rising, partly by the multiplication of such images. The shock of the photographed atrocities is reduced by re-watching. Ubiquity of photography has immeasurably affected our ethical sensibility.

Photographs such as the one that made headlines of most of the world newspapers in 1972, made by Huynh Cong Ut, a naked Vietnamese child covered with napalm running with arms stretched, screaming in pain, shocked the world. It is that kind of photographs that probably did more to increase public hostility towards the war than hundreds of hours of television footage.

Although photographic knowledge of the world can initiate conscience, it is limited by the fact that in the end, it can never be ethical or political. The knowledge gained through photographs will always be some kind of sentimentalism, whether cynical or humanistic. It would be an illusion of knowledge, illusion of wisdom. The ultimate wisdom of the

photographic image is to make us wonder what is behind the surface, what the reality must be like if this is what we see on the photograph.

From the photographers is expected to do more than just perceive the world as it is. They should be using visual decisions to arouse interest, and to reveal the world that surrounds them. Images are usually considered as a tool for learning about things, for discovering them. Images can show what is missed to be seen with one's own eyes.

The revelatory nature of photography is generally known under the polemical term realism. Photographic realism can be defined not as what is really out there but as what I really perceive. While all modern art forms claim right to a privileged relationship to reality, that right seems particularly justified in the case of photography. In fact, all of the programs of realism within the photography imply the belief that reality is hidden, and since it is hidden, the veil should be removed from it. All that camera records is disclosure.

Socially engaged photographers find that their work can convey a kind of solid meaning, that it can reveal the truth. Photographer is a kind of ideal observer, as one who looks with the distance of a researcher or simply as one who looks with the eyes of a man from the street.

The impact of the photographs may be in surfacing a discourse; those photographs that attempt to represent the events or the social reality, the impact on society, and the difficulties of coming to terms with it. They assume some kind of status of mediation, as opposed to some direct translation of states into photographic forms.

The artists are not forgetting the events or ignoring the reality, they are rather proposing a cultural and historical criticism that can examine and problematize the ways that something has been taken for granted. It involves the examination of the rhetoric and representational forms of politicized memory-work around a wide range of issues. The articulation of the issues through photographic means is something that can help understand the present.

Photographs can bear witness to a definitive moment in history or even serve as a catalyst for change. They can foster sympathy and awareness or, alternatively, offer critical commentary on an historical figure or event. Photographs are also important because they help shape our understanding of identity, culture and history.

The break-up of Yugoslavia: a brief history

“While time is not part of the photograph,...the photograph itself is representation of time.”(Kracauer, 1993)

Concerning the art making in former Yugoslavia, it is impossible to comprehend the messages and intentions of the artists without understanding the basic local historical narratives and occurrences. To understand the message of the artist one has to know the circumstances in which the artist lived and worked. The lived effects of history must appear in images and memories.

Yugoslavia has long been an ethnic melting point where great civilisations and religions have met. People lived in peace often side by side with other ethnic groups. The Yugoslavia which emerged from World War II was a six republic federation. The political entities were Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia. The shape of Yugoslavia changed profoundly since its creation in 1945.

In 1989, Yugoslavia was a federal state consisting of six republics, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro. The crisis of the late 1980s raised tensions and encouraged hatred resulting in brutal and humiliating wars. The brutal and violent disintegration of Yugoslavia occurred as a result of a series of political upheavals, precipitated nationalistic propaganda and conflicts during the 1990s. By 1992 the Yugoslav Federation was falling apart. Nationalism had once again replaced communism as the dominant force in the Balkans. The unsolved issues caused bitter inter-ethnic wars that primarily affected Bosnia and Croatia. A civil war among the Croats, Serbs and Muslims erupted. Slovenia and then Croatia were the first to break away. In 1991, Slovenian and Croatian independence was marked by armed conflict and Macedonia declared independence. By 1992 a further conflict had broken out in Bosnia which also declared independence. In the next four years the war in Bosnia took central stage. Tragic ethnic and regional conflicts have irrevocably fragmented the country. The wars left long-term economic and political damage in the region. The five years of disintegration and war in 1990s led to boycott and embargo of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia whose economy collapsed as a result. American pressure to end the war eventually led to the Dayton agreement of November 1995.

Kosovo was a province of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, with a population consisting mainly of ethnic Albanians. Following the disintegration of Yugoslavia, it became a part of Serbia as an autonomous province. There had been a series of struggles for independence during 1990s. In 1998, nine years after the abolition of Kosovo's autonomy, the Kosovo Liberation Army came out in open rebellion against Serbian rule. The Kosovo war was an armed conflict fought by the forces of KLA and The State Union of Serbia and Montenegro. After the attempts of a diplomatic solution failed, the Kosovo war culminated in the NATO bombing of Serbia and Montenegro in 1999.

Yugoslavia has disappeared from the map of Europe, after 83 years of existence. By the end of 1999, only two republics, Serbia and Montenegro remained within the rump of the federation. The union was itself unstable and finally broke up during 2006 after Montenegro voted in a referendum for independence from the Union of Serbia and Montenegro.

The reality of the transition

The effects of the war were detrimental, measured through steep drops in economic performance and living standards. Bosnia and Herzegovina was particularly hit because the war lasted longest there. The other states of the former Yugoslavia were also severely affected by the war. The wars and the related sanctions created favourable conditions for dubious businesses and manipulation of the privatization processes. Under these conditions the main preoccupation of the political elites in power was to use the situation to their own advantage. Political transformation and socio-economic changes in Serbia to a significant level share the fate of other states in the region, however having their own specificities. In the aftermath of the Yugoslav breakdown, the economic situation in the seceding states was devastating. Economic activity fell, inflation and unemployment rose. The nineties were especially detrimental for the region's economies. Economic recovery resumed only after the year 2000. As a result of the economic decline, unemployment grew. Unemployment rates were especially detrimental in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia, and to some extent Serbia and Montenegro. As soon as the transition from socialism into market oriented economy started, the inequalities based on income grew. The rapid economic decline and the transformation of the social capital contributed to social stratification of the population. The socially adverse consequences of privatisation have occurred in cases in which privatization

has led to the monopolization of the market and where the institutions of public accountability have been weakened by civil conflict and a failure of democratic consolidation. The transition produced a rise in inequality in relatively egalitarian societies. During the transition, the population was additionally stratified, based on differences in income and assets. Inequality was lower in the countries where the transition occurred at a slower pace. The lack of employment opportunities and the income disparity brought about the spreading of poverty. After Yugoslavia's dissolution, different political groupings surfaced owing to the introduction of political pluralism. The political parties throughout the region have paid little attention to the social issues and have invested little energy in creating positions relating to them, except before elections and even then more in the form of electoral promises rather than consistent policies.

The consequences of the Yugoslav wars have manifested themselves in multitude of facets: from economic struggle, to persistent ethnic tension, with consequences and repercussions in various fields. In addition to the ideological, economic and value transitions of the countries, Yugoslavia was fatally marked by a brutal interruption of connections (economic, political, cultural and almost everything relating to everyday life) between once closely connected territories. The birth of new states brought also a re-writing of history and the emergence of nationalist ideas and often violent modifications to cultural identities.

Each country after the dissolution, resumed its individual path. All of the countries have manifested similar paths of transformations, through political and macroeconomic stabilization and the privatization of the social capital to reforms of the welfare system. (Bartlett, 2008)

While the country has ceased to exist as a political project, it lives on in the individual and collective memory. Hope remains in the new generations who have not seen war and whose desire is to coexist and potentially mutually benefit from their neighbours and ex-citizens.

Research methodology

This study is based on a constructivist-interpretive paradigm, according to which there is no objective reality, but only that which exists in the minds of people. The main emphasis is on understanding the subjective perception of reality and state of consciousness (Halimi, 2005., P. 161). The reality is constructed through interaction whereby a common meaning is developed in a specific context. This implies that the reality is manifold, because there are many different angles from which people understand and interpret social facts, so that reality actually consists of "mental constructions", the meaning or interpretation that people attach to reality. The goal of interpretive paradigm would be to discover and understand the basic meanings of the underlying actions of typical individual in typical situations (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 90).

This is a qualitative research which aims to understanding and interpreting the meaning and significance of actions of persons, their own experiences and everyday situations (Halimi, 2005., P.14); and as such is the most appropriate for realization of strategic objectives of this research.

The approach used carefully builds up explanations from clues and traces extracted from readings of objects of study: the cultural historian Carlo Ginzburg calls this kind of inductive approach a way of knowing characteristic of detective work, criminology, psychoanalysis and diagnostics "conjectural knowledge" (Ginzburg 1989). In work on cultural memory, the conjectural method involves taking as a starting point instances or cases, expressions of memory of some sort, and then working outwards from them. Treating what can be observed in the instances at hand as evidence pointing towards broader issues and propositions about the nature and the workings of cultural memory. This kind of inquiry can be productively conducted with singular instances (a photograph or a film) and with several or numerous cases. Methodological approaches and research designs range from textual analysis to ethnographic inquiry, and may include various combinations of the two. One central plank remains, however, that memory and memories are discursive and that through memory work of various kinds it is possible to come to an understanding of how memory operates as a type of cultural text (Radstone, 2000).

Memory work takes all forms of remembering, memory accounts and memory texts as material for interpretation, and opens to question what was taken for granted, or the transparency, or acts of memory in relation to the past. Taking expression of memory as material for interpretation, memory work may deploy established procedures for analyzing cultural texts, and these will be as productive and convincing as the practitioner's craft skills and insight allow.

As an approach to source material, evidence or data, this approach is qualitative rather than quantitative. The task is not merely to analyze but also to understand world of the text, the account, the performance and to have a fresh understanding and new insight. The interpretative procedures will necessarily be governed by the nature and the medium of the memory work itself. However, the researcher's attitude towards the "object" should remain respectful, open and unintrusive.

The research is conducted on several levels with an interdisciplinary approach. Theoretical background is based on reading theoretical literature on various disciplines connected to the subject of the thesis: semiotics of photography, visual anthropology, memory theories, philosophy, aesthetics and sociology, as well as on concepts such as cultural memory, cultural and national identity and collective memory. It tries to determine how those concepts are transferred to photography and how and to what extent it reflects them. Desk research of online and off-line resources relevant to the topic will encompass books, articles, academic texts, web portals and various publications which deal with this subject in order to gather different information. Research also includes identification of artist and projects in the field of contemporary photography that were realized in the region of former Yugoslavia and analysis of individual and group exhibitions that deal with the subject.

Artistic reflections

“It is an illusion that photos are made with the camera... they are made with the eye, heart and head.” Henri Cartier-Bresson

Photography is a means of expression of numerous social changes in physical and mental surroundings and photographer's work is connected to the conducting research in those surroundings. It is a sort of artistic analysis of social and political conditions. The principal role of art should be in addressing, reflecting and commenting on the state of mind of the place and time in which it is produced. How was this achieved in the field of contemporary photography? What was the art photography created over the past two decades within the territory of former Yugoslavia like? What are the common features of the artists, whose social environments and life experiences are so different and yet so similar? How similar or different are they? What is the impact of artistic reflections of turbulent events related to the Ex-Yugoslavia on collective memory? What is the role of the photographers in the representation of the past? Who are some of the key actors engaged in contemporary photography, active on the territory of ex-Yugoslavia? Who are the sensitive and critical observers that can reflect the phenomena of this altered cultural landscape through their artistic production? What are the possibilities of a creative, artistic contemplation in the given circumstances?

After 1991 when Yugoslavia was thrust into civil war, the connections between cities and republics were completely interrupted. Each of the former republics, now independent states, developed its own scene and institutional infrastructure. Although common social and cultural context was partly lost and each republic was facing very specific circumstances, the process of social and political transformation unified these histories again by the end of 1990s while over the 2000s all newly established states adopted principles of parliamentary democracy and free market economy.

There are authors that treat these issues and deal with this topic. They were interested in addressing issues that pertain to their own history and community. By being creatively engaged, those artists deal with different effects of the transition that has unconditionally and

brutally changed lives of people either during the bloody wars in the 90s, either by their direct or indirect consequences, radical economical changes that have influenced general situation and established new social values. They capture the consequences of past events and tell the story of the aftermath of an overall social transition as a process that has fundamentally marked the entire region. Transition has been present for so long in the area that it has almost become commonplace, it has nevertheless had a strong effect on all shapes of life and has become the common destiny of all neighbouring countries for over two decades.

While intending to express critical view of the current and former state of mind, artists have, based on their own criteria, comprehended everyday life and their view adapted to individual expressions. Their role is to shed light on the problems that arose after the breakup of Yugoslavia. They observe memories, traumas, and places and touch the sorest spots of the society. They speak about the problem of war and memories 20 years after the end of the war.

Since 1990s, the common subject of number of artists was often documenting and commenting on social developments and profound changes in their immediate surroundings. They would react to the vehement processes of political, ideological and economical transition. The changes of the mental and physical landscapes are so obvious that it is simply impossible to ignore them. In photography, the selection of motives and subjects can strongly define local discourse.

Every man is being influenced by certain key historical experiences and he, like it or not, shares with the members of his environment certain believes, attitudes, images of the world, social standards and social values and cultural matrix. An individual memory of each author is determined by the wider horizon of memory of entire generations. Each generation develops its own approach to the past.

The subjects addressed by artists-photographers in the former Yugoslavia region are often closely related the turbulent changes in the social, economic and cultural landscape-in a physical (direct) and a symbolic (figurative) sense. Over the past 20 years artists have attempted to critically illustrate the new economic reality, society's stratification and wild privatisation of public property. The artist are usually marginal voices within an ideologically

divided and materially stratified society, who, with their original artistic statements have no influence on the general state of mind, but nevertheless testify the reality.

What the photographers decide to choose as a subject is various: mass crime scenes, question of dislocation, forced or voluntary migrations, economic moments, young people that leave their countries (the result of the war), places of institutionalized memories and those that are not, anything that will be a testimony or a reminder of happenings in the last 20 years. They point to the nowadays problems and show the importance of cultural heritage as an essential element of cultural identity and are directed at encouraged and thoughtful action.

Following the heterogeneous social and political conditions within individual administrative enclaves, broader cultural and specific photographic production can be divided in two parts: the first and the second decade. The 1990s are a time of interrupted connections, the period when artists were forced to work on their own, more often than not in isolated contexts. Always explicitly aspiring to the western world, the Republic of Slovenia and Croatia immediately accepted the offer of political discourse leading towards an ideological shift, toward democracy, the free market and consequently a new cultural policy. On the other hand, whilst Bosnia was plunged in the chaos of total war, Serbia and Montenegro and in part Macedonia officially preserved the impoverished models of a former socialist social and economic system. Thus former Yugoslavia was actually divided in eastern and western blocks that didn't have much communication.

Over the last decade, the post-Yugoslav territory has again been unified under the brand of a uniform political and economic system. After 10 years of political instability the last features of socialism were finally eradicated and the area became completely open to ruthless economic exploitation.

What is the aim of the creation of a work of art, in this case photography? What kind of message does it convey and who is that message intended for? The question of the meaning: should works of art be a mere decoration for the existing social relations or be their analytical mirror?

It is memory in its various guises, private and public, individual and group, and its entanglement with history that the artists seek to explore. Each image, in their own way, can be read not only as a function of cultural memory, but also as the means by which memory is itself created and represented. For photographs are made to hold the fleeting, to still time, to

create memory. In their relationship with their referent, their reality effect and their irreducible pastness, photographs impose themselves on memory.

If we assume that a work of art is a kind of utterance, the work of art as text (engaged artistic expression), as a document and document, by definition, means evidence, a truthful testimony about a certain set of events backed by the authority of the law. Photography, since its inception, has been treated as an authentic and objective account, a record of events which, at a certain moment, took place in front of the camera. For quite some time the stance that the camera does not lie and that photography is an unbiased witness has been accepted as a universal cliché and as an unmediated transcription of reality. But the camera is never simply a means of recording things as they are; it is also a means of exposing and asserting certain frames of reference, as it always implies a privileged viewpoint and thus direct our perception of events. Due to its assumed truthfulness, photography unavoidably entails a specific bond between the represented subject and the position of the viewer. It is never neutral, disinterested witness to events. At best it is ambivalent, but in most cases, it is charged with moral implications. In that sense, it can be a powerful creator of public opinion. Images have become emblematic in our understanding of both the past and the present.

“We think of photographs as works of art, as evidence of a particular truth, as likenesses as news items. Every photograph is in fact a means of testing, confirming and constructing a total view of reality. Hence the crucial role of photography in ideological struggle. Hence the necessity of our understanding a weapon which we can use and which can be used against us.” (Berger, 1972)

By observing changes in cultural and mental landscape, we can now ask ourselves what were the causes. What is it that happened so that the consequences are what we see now? These photographs require reflection. What can we read from the photographs? How do we interpret them? What can be seen about us on those photographs? Telling stories of this region – specific and yet so very similar; stories about the way a national identity is being constructed; series of separate memories of the Yugoslav countries after the succession now having each former republic wanting to construct their national identity.

These photographs raise the question about the historical memory and networking of events, causes and consequences of these changes. They also raise awareness about events.

The selection of works is based upon a diversity of approaches to the photographic medium and on the variety of subjects which co-exist in a common aesthetic, social and ideological universe. The image these artists offer about themselves, their identity as well as their environment, acts as the complex image of the world from which they rise. They raise a number of new questions or offer answers to some raised long time ago.

These projects/artists have been chosen because of the belief that they capture the essence and represent most eloquently the story of post-Yugoslavia. The chosen relevant projects/artists have been discovered at the exhibitions in Belgrade, on TV, internet or in the newspapers.

There are numerous projects dealing with the previously mentioned subject. These are just some of them:

Aftermath. Changing Cultural Landscape

The project *Aftermath* represents the tendency of engaged post-Yugoslav contemporary photography through the work of forty artists from the region. *Aftermath* is collaborative project of seven partner organisations from former Yugoslav states (Beograd, Cetinje, Ljubljana, Priština, Sarjevo, Skopje, Zagreb); it is supported by European Cultural Foundation (BIFC), local authorities and Commune di Pordenone. The project brings together key protagonists in the field of engaged contemporary photography that have been active in the territory of the former Yugoslavia from 1991 to 2011. The project investigates the role of photography in monitoring, documenting and interpreting the social, economic, cultural and political changes that have occurred in the area over the last two decades. These changes have left an indelible mark on the state of mind of the inhabitants of these countries, causing great mental and physical consequences. Wars, the development of market economy, stratification of society, growing consumerism, new forms of aggressive marketing and different types of media control and manipulation, managed to completely change the social and cultural landscape of the entire region. Although each of the authors deals with different aspects of those changes, the sum of the works shows the need for a final confrontation with

the subjects from which the society has been running from, and for pointing out the current problems and their causes.

The project *Aftermath* provides an insight into contemporary photography in the former Yugoslavia region over two decades after its disintegration. It is focused on the artistic reflections of social changes that have marked the territory of former Yugoslavia, on photography that both reflects and comments on the tectonic movements in society and the immediate environment. In the search for common figures in what was once a closely connected cultural space, this subject makes a logical choice; indeed it was the change of social system that radically marked this territory. The new state of mind immediately triggered reactions in the field of art and photography.

The project originated from questions about images of place and time following disintegration of Yugoslavia, as seen through the lens of contemporary art photography. Those are the artists who created relevant visual documents of a particular time and place and who by their subjective approach “captured reality” at a more complex level of perception than is usually delivered by the instant photo medium. Considering that they are principally photo documents, the selected images should also convince as being relevant works of contemporary visual art, both in regard to their subject matter, as well as form.

This international project is the first regional research and curatorial platform established in order to identify and articulate principal tendencies within the field of contemporary photography in relation to its immediate environment. With the participation of partner organisation from throughout the former Yugoslavia, the project represents an extensive investigation of the effect of large-scale social shifts on the image of the physical and mental environment, and thereby, also on the expression of a number of artists who work in the field of fine art photography.

Aftermath represents a metaphor for the consequences of turbulent events and their mark on the physical environment and on social everyday life. Through their creative efforts, the participating artists address various effects of transition processes that unconditionally and brutally changed the life of the individual, be it the bloody wars in the 1990s and their indirect and direct consequences, radical economic changes that had a significant impact on the general climate, or directly related new social values.

Photographs are testimonies of change or deterioration and forgetting areas/places in which something was and still is happening; boldly comparison of then and now, social analysis of looks of the people and eloquent portraits.

In order to express a critical view of the current and past state of mind, the artists have, based on their own criteria, observed the everyday life and customized the observations to their individual expressions. Because of the specific time span, the project shows interesting confrontation of artistic reflections and expressions of different generations, some of which have experienced life during the period before the disintegration of the state, while others come from entire new social context. A 20-year period is short enough to preserve historical memory; thus, with most artists, the new situation is always somewhat juxtaposed with the memory of the recent past. The main starting point of the exhibited works is therefore the relation between the old and the new, the recording of the gradual changes within an individual place and time and the effect of ideologies on the broader social and physical environment. Photographs explore the events and situations with a certain distance. Their social sensitivity is visible while the stories from the margins present the consequences of a comprehensive social transition. *Aftermath* does not illustrate events, but testifies to the long-term consequences of these same events, and the artists draw attention to the relativity of social phenomena and historical facts.

The project is focused on artists critically addressing social processes in their local environment often resulting in extremely subjective emotional narratives. Their use of the photographic medium creates a massive deviation from the (once) predominant paradigm that photography always tells the truth. Indeed, the current representation of photography is one that both derives from and confirms the suppression of the social function of subjectivity. As a result, changing social conditions often prove to be the motor of production; they are used by numerous artists to express considerable scepticism towards the predominant historical, national and political discourses. It seems that the traumatic and turbulent recent history enhances the need by artists from former Yugoslavia to address these processes, but at the same time they are fully aware that the transition in these territories not only results in the collapse of socialism and emergence of nationalism, but also reflects a considerable dose of omnipresent global trends from the contemporary world-gentrification, stratification, increased control, propaganda and commodification at various levels of life.

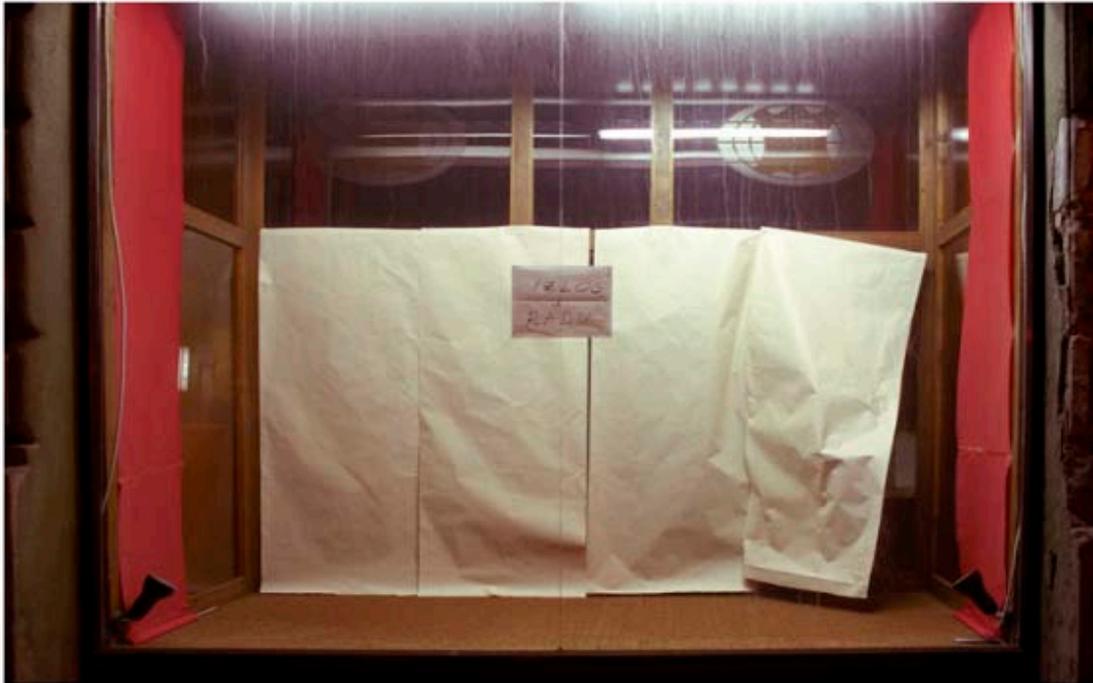


Goran Micevski, *Roofless House*, from the *Belgrade(r)* series, 2007-2012

Goran Micevski's photographs explore specific city areas that are changing and that are the result of above mentioned city transformations. The photographer records numerous phenomena, intervenes, cites and draws parallels. By directing and intervening at both locations as well as on the images, the artist emphasizes the absurdity of the events and situations that are on the verge of performance. His photographs of houses in suburban Belgrade reveal peculiarities emanating from a lack of taste and their transient character.

After the breakup of Yugoslavia, Belgrade, the former capital, became a localised Serbian metropolis and went through tremendous changes during past 20 years. Decay of urban infrastructure, demographic movements and war in 1999 resulted in obvious transformation of urban structures. Belgrade population has grown during the post federal period and, as the biggest city in the country, it has maintained a strong urban (sub) culture that reflects and uses the new situation to fuel its creativity. The *Belgrade(r)* series of photographs, made over the past five years, explores specific parts of the city marked by ideological and economical transition. These photographs could not have been made anywhere else but here, or, to be more precise, they could not have been made by anybody

but a person from there. However, there are no specific landmarks or distinctive urban sites featured: what connects all these works is a particular sense of the madness of life and madness of endurance of life in this place.



Paula Muhr, from the *On Show* series, 2002-2007

Paula Muhr in her series *On Show* records relicts of a bygone era, the windows of the old shops, kiosk fronts, and other similar objects, all those phenomena and objects that go beyond modern and progressive. They are remnants of an era that has already ended and as such are gradually disappearing in the process of being redesigned. Photographs depict the phenomenon of the disappearance of formerly prominent city spaces/places. It is a cold factual record of ruined and abandoned places that quietly live their deterioration. Deprived of their primary functional value due to their out-datedness and rather quaint aesthetics, these old shop windows become non-places³, metaphors of a society in rapid transition and objects of nostalgic investment. Economic changes were mostly evident on a visual level and they had an utterly negative impact on both social and cultural level. The process of transition which has affected the whole region offers an abundance of material and phenomena which

³ The phrase “non-place” was coined by a French anthropologist Marc Augé.
(<http://www.acsu.buffalo.edu/~jread2/Auge%20Non%20places.pdf>)

the artist records with her camera as a kind of visual archaeology. Comic or sometimes ironic, her photographs tell a forgotten story that deeply affects the identity and spirit of time.



Antonio Živkovič, *Reflection of a Memory*, 2001

Influenced by Berndt and Hilla Becher⁴, Antonio Živkovič began to develop photographic topographies in his native city Trbovlje and later expanded his interest to the broader question of industrial decay and its heritage. Symbolically, Trbovlje was one of the most important industrial and mining cities in former Yugoslavia with a strong tradition of proletarian movements. The city fell into decline radically after the aforementioned political and economical transformation. The author faced the story of economical and social decline. He is very nostalgic and somewhat gloomy and melancholic.

His topographies of industrial heritage could be applied to a number of places across the world. Somebody from Detroit could easily identify with these images and messages.

⁴ Bernd and Hilla Becher were German conceptual artists and photographers working collaboratively for nearly half a century documenting industrial German structures. (<https://artsy.net/artist/bernd-and-hilla-becher>)



Darije Petković, from the *Occupation in 26 Pictures* series, 2008

The photo series *Occupation in 26 pictures* by Darije Petković exhibits views of Croatian cities marked with the principal symbols of national identity and icons of global corporations. The visual metaphors allow him to question the purpose of patriotic struggle for truth. Cultural landscapes of Slovenia, Macedonia or Croatia have become identical; filled with testimonies to the new economic order and national symbols. Today, the images of the centers of Belgrade or Zagreb share the visual identity of any European metropolis.

Darije is questioning and reflecting on the processes of disintegration of the domestic economy. It shows monumental images of present day Croatia as a representation of *Zeitgeist*. He closely examines, selects and documents crucial symbols of national identity, cultural heritage and economic power, and merges them into a consistent narrative. He shows facades of office buildings belonging to domestic or multi-national corporations with their aggressive advertising. As with any economic occupation, it is also utterly unpleasant that the social, economic and cultural production of the domestic economy simultaneously ceases to develop because there is no interest in investment. Petković is deliberately explicit in his visual research of economic changes by showing the most obvious examples of financial

takeover and immorality. Sharpness and directness make him an extremely sensitive observer who discovers these fine details in the images he captures.



Vojo Radonjić

Vojo Radonjić, born 1963, was a photographer, artist and educator in Podgorica. The series of photographs titled *Stari aerodrom (Old airport)* was taken in the suburbs of Podgorica.

A scene without a single human figure, with improvised habitats made of cardboard, is just a record of the human activity. Heaps of waste, discarded objects are simultaneously terrifying and poetic statement is presented with elegance and tranquility. The landscapes are a representation of the world we live in.



Lazar Pejović, from the *Untitled* series, 2010-2012

One of the most important contemporary photographers of Montenegro, Lazar Pejović (*Montenegrin Beauty, Metaphysical Landscapes*) shows a new view of transitional Montenegrin landscape. His photographs deal with relationship with the community that stumbles and goes down in the obsessive need for a quick and easy way to achieve consumerist dream in which all the basic social relations and values are disturbed. Under the auspices of economic progress all natural resources are ruthlessly destroyed and cultural heritage neglected.

In his series *Untitled* he documents deserted landscapes where the trace of human presence is revealed by waste of consumer society. The waste becomes an inseparable part of nature. His photographs offer the possibility of readings from different aspects: they criticize the social climate or the devastation of the environment or maybe rather present a new visual reality.



Duško Miljanić, from the *Transition* series, 2009

Duško Miljanić, born in Tivat, is an artist and a photographer. He lives and works in Podgorica. Gloomy, almost unreal, atmosphere of his photographs and the eerie emptiness of devastated areas that, although seemed to be located in the deep province, in reality coexist in the outskirts or even centres of capital cities and can be interpreted as a reflection of the overall state of the transitional social reality. They have become an almost legitimate part of urban landscape and are indirectly reflecting globalisation. They can easily be perceived as a form of litmus paper for post-socialist societies which is in a permanent state of transition.

It is the portrayal of the contemporary context of crisis and abandonment of non-places. The term ‘non-lieu’ (non-place) was coined by Marc Augé to describe specific kinds of spaces, mainly architectural and technological, designed to be passed through. These spaces, principally associated with transit and communication that have no significance to be regarded as “places” are the defining characteristics of the contemporary period he calls ‘supermodernity’, to describe a situation of excessive information and excessive space. (Augé, 1995)

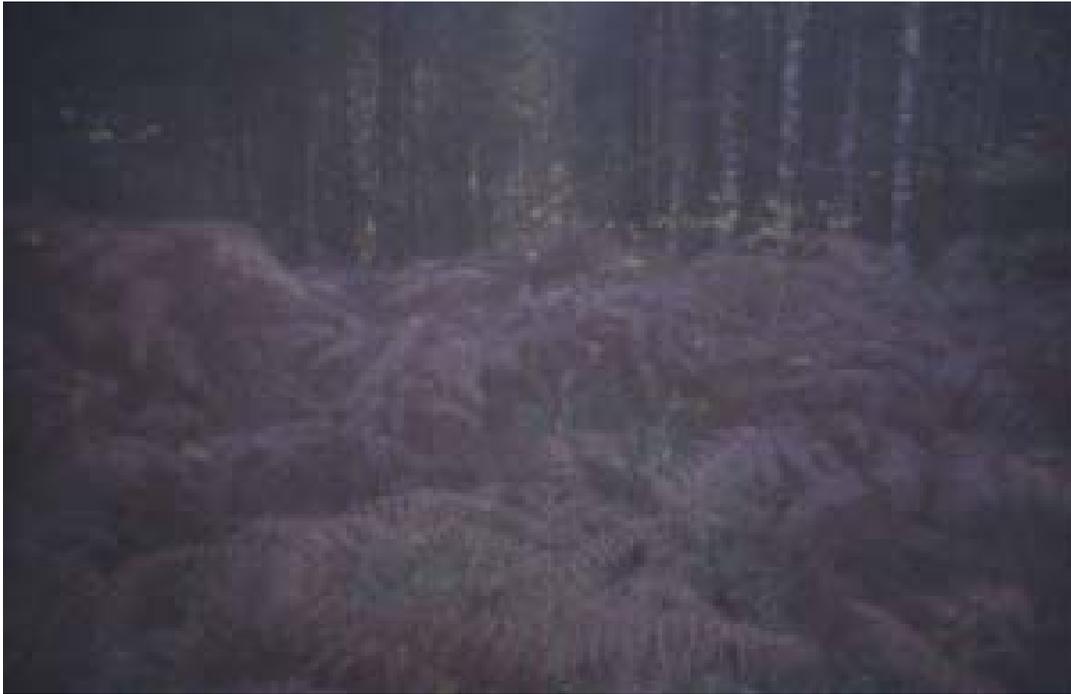
If a place can be defined as rational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as rational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place. Supermodernity produces non-places, meaning spaces which are not

anthropological places and which, unlike Baudelairean modernity, do not integrate the earlier places: instead these are listed, classified, promoted to the status of 'places of memory', and assigned to a circumscribed and specific position. (Augé, 1995:77-8) Non-places are like palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity and relations is ceaselessly rewritten.

There is a sense of timeless beauty to this abandoned gas station. Powerful black and white image seeks to provoke and challenge the viewer to look more carefully beneath the textured surfaces of the seemingly banal objects and interior space on display.

The thematic focus is socially engaged thinking, specifically in relation to ecology and marginalized social groups. The consequences of transitional processes in the Balkans are still visible in the social climate and cultural landscape of Montenegro. Transition has been present for so long in the area that it has almost become commonplace. The explicitly titled series *Transition* is a part of wider collection that deals with processes of transformation within the Montenegrin society, a society that strives towards the capitalist system but still carries the burden of the past.

Socially engaged themes from the field of ecology, problems of socially marginalized groups in Montenegro and changes in the cultural landscape are the focus of artistic work of Duško Miljanić. Most of his works, although dealing with specific topics, can be read in the context of the process of transition that are still very present in the social climate and landscape of Montenegro. The series named *Transition* is part of a larger collection of works that from different angles refers to the transitional fractures that are somehow still resonating Balkans. The consequences of transitional processes in the Balkans are still visible in the social climate and cultural landscape of Montenegro. The series deals with processes of transformation within the modern society, a society that strives towards the capitalist system but still carries the burden of past system, and in some cases is not completely ready to carry out the process of change.



Bojan Salaj-*Interiors III*, 2008

In his body of work Bojan Salaj deals with various topics of specific Slovenian local context. With the *Interiors II* and *Interiors III* series of photographs, although he uses universal tools of landscape and interior photography, he records some of the most significant symbolic places in Slovenian national history and mythology.



Bojan Mrđenović, from *The Future* series, 2008-2012

The Future is the title of his series; the future as a testament to the present. There is a language play or irony inscribed. In the series buildings appear realistically, as a fact, as a document.

Bojan Mrđenović's *The future* series of photographs show abandoned, completely derelict facilities of the trading company of the same name. Those facilities were turned into ruins by the war and transition. Modest but functional facilities build during socialism, are now being readjusted or torn down in order to create an attractive property for elite tourism. His artistic visions are source of revival of forgotten memories. The title is not ironic but rather an absolute and inevitable reality that the author documents honestly and steadfastly, with a fantastically captured atmosphere, leaving the viewer facing the ruins of war or the demise of capitalism of an economically devastated country. Spaces on his photographs have social meaning and are created and shaped by social and political changes. Sometimes these changes mean decay and disappearance. It is a decision to react and capture them as they are now because these spaces are disappearing, they are being transformed.

It seems that photograph with its capturing and fixation in a fraction of time, may just complete the duration, tore off from time, bringing it to an end. Thus, a photograph becomes a place of birth of an extended life.

Buildings stand as a relic of a past system. Buildings are here protagonists of the story of the disintegration of a social system.

“On a small local example, these photographs represent a metaphor of all the transitions in which as a society we find ourselves currently. We have throughout history endured many changes of systems which have violently suppressed each other. The results of the constant turbulence is that we eventually remain weak, disoriented, marginalized.” (Bojan Mrđenović)



Bojan Mrđenović, from the *Welcome* series, 2007

Another interesting series of the same author titled *Welcome* deals with the consequences of the demographic transition in Slavonia. Abandoned houses are representatives of a quiet change, people leaving the villages and moving to cities. The series shows fragility of the human handmade objects and devastating force of nature after the abandonment of the villages.

Subject of demographic transition becomes more and more immanent as the time goes by. The consequences of rural depopulation and migration to the cities are becoming more visible. People are leaving due to existential reasons, trying to earn a living.

There is a need for designing strategic policies for the villages with the improvement of the living conditions and raising the standards of infrastructure.

Both series are marked by the author's fascination with the destructive power of the course of time, abandoned architecture and the changes brought by the political and economic processes.



Amer Kapetanović, from the *Twice Christmas* series, 2009

The subject of change of cultural landscape in Bosnia and Herzegovina after 1991 inevitably carries the burden of trauma. Landscapes of siege and urbicide, devastation and mass graves have been recorded by some of the photographers thus introducing a specific chapter in the history of art photography in the region. They found a way to cope with the daily horrors, to create distance or to take control of what they saw, but also to preserve traumatic time by creating a type of photographic monuments. This landscape then gave way to the landscape of anarchic transition that has brought historical amnesia, political apathy and cultural disorientation.

In addition to the criticism of the local absence of value system, and deletion of memory, engagement of photography also consists of recording of daily existence of vulnerable members of society and examining the asymmetry that villas-fortresses of the new rich bring to the cultural landscape.

After the war and consequent economical collapse, the social situation in certain parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina has still been very difficult. A number of people are still entirely dependent on humanitarian support. This photograph reflects the consequences of war and following transition. It documents poverty and social distress by coming closer to marginal social groups. Amer's photographs show individuals and families of low social status who are entirely or partly taken care of by local Red Cross activist. The Swiss Red Cross has been organizing humanitarian aid action called *Twice Christmas* where they collect donations in Switzerland and transport it to those who are in need.



Nenad Malešević, 13 January 2006, from the Age of Renewal series, 2006-2011

Nenad Malešević's photographs document and comment on the political and social situation of Republika Srpska and Bosnia and Herzegovina that are troubled with infamous pasts and uncertain future. They are a reaction to the remnants of war and manifestation of decadence within the transitional society that are evident in the living environment. His photographs show the unregulated distribution of wealth and social segregation. There is a gap between the poor majority and newly formed rich and these photographs provoke critical engagement.



Borut Krajnc, from the *Emptiness* series, 2004-2008

Borut Krajnc's body of work reflects the commercialization of the cultural urban and rural environment. In his *Emptiness* series he documents the unusual moments of empty billboards, city lights and other advertising spaces in public spaces and tries to capture rare solitude and silence in between the aggressive advertisement campaigns. Photographs capture capitalism, which turns advertisements into spectacles, at the moment when it lacks a picture.

Capitalism disappears, just for a moment. Billboards represent the ultimate metaphor for present times and they have become an integral part of our urban landscape. He comments on the banality of the present time defined by the relentless usage of the public and private space for commercial purposes. Those are evident traces of ideological and social shifts, transition from the old to the new social and political order, the expansion of the free market, the ruthless struggle for dominance and other general consequences of globalisation. Billboards that are seldom empty reveal absurd contradiction of today's capitalistic world.

What are the common features of these selected artists, whose social environments and life experiences are so different-and yet similar? Indeed, the cultural milieu of former Yugoslavia is somewhat different from the rest of the Eastern Europe, an area which has the experience of communism as its only common cultural identity. The former Yugoslavia possesses specific common cultural characteristics based on extremely contemporary genres and styles, such as pop music, film, and photography, whilst their creators employ similar models to their colleagues internationally, just adapting them to their own place and time.

The attitude of artists to the transition process is never completely indifferent; their views are self-reflective and critical, although their works do not offer ultimate value judgements. They are attentive external observers and commentators on a world that is irrepressibly changing, whilst bringing into their work an expression of ambivalence and scepticism towards the generally adopted discourse. As a result, their engagement is manifested in particular in the stimulation of individual cerebral activities.

Srebrenica



Tarik Samarah, from *Srebrenica* series, 2002

Tarik Samarah, a very talented photographer, from Sarajevo has for the past 10 years been involved in artistic and documentary photography. He has been working on the project “Srebrenica – Genocide at the Heart of Europe” for the past five years. In his *Srebrenica* series he documents the aftermath of Srebrenica massacre by visiting places that are still imbued with traumatic experiences of the past. What Tarik did was to open one historical trauma for representation and communication. While some images show complete absence of the event, empty spaces and occasional belongings from the victims or the survivors, the other explicitly document the present day reality, settlements of the refugees, grief of the survivors and excavations of mass graves.

The photograph is a detail of a refugee camp set up for survivors of the Srebrenica massacre. It was taken in 2002. It was first published as a part of Samarah’s *Srebrenica*, a monograph of 70 images documenting the aftermath of Europe’s worst single massacre since

the Second World War. It is partial backdrop to the exhumation, identification and reburial of Bosnian Muslims all killed in 1995.

His billboard campaign exhibited images on large commercial billboards across Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Balkan region, as a way of raising awareness about events. Tarik believes that exhibiting photographs in public spaces provides ordinary citizens with documentary evidence of difficult truths, denouncing evil and asking the world to acknowledge events that happened, hoping that similar atrocities would be prevented in the future.

Tarik documented the slow and painful path towards reconciliation with one of the most tragic phases in history. In Samarah's collection the connection between the war and the image often cannot be made without the aid of an explanatory text. Photographs do not take sides. The only truth is seeing war as it is. It says one thing: war is bad and we should not forget that. His photographs are powerful and haunting. They act upon us, pulling us into their spaces, making us feel them.

Images of Secrets



Novca Stanković, *I too love Bor*, 2003

By combining pictures of several scenes, the author depicts Bor as a town of old people, environmental pollution and high mortality rate.

This photograph was a part of the *Open secret* project that was carried out in 2003 by REX Cultural Centre in collaboration with resource centers in Niš, Novi Pazar, Leskovac and Bor. The project insisted on socially committed art centering on social, political and economic issues. The artistic and documentary works focused and were inspired by the phenomenon of open secret and social circumstances in which this phenomenon develops its mechanisms. The motive for carrying out this project was the Draft Law on Free Access to Information drawn up in 2002. The main aim was to explore the structure, meaning and importance of social and psychological implications of the phenomenon of open secret by announcing the competition, holding workshops, creating works of art and putting on exhibitions. Every participant of the project was to answer the question if works of art should provide a mere decoration for the existing social relations or be their analytical mirror. Photography was considered as instrument of activism and social change. The project was a possibility for a creative, artistic contemplation or intervention. The authors created works of art related to the assigned topic. They had to think creatively about apparently unsolvable problems present in their communities. The project provided an artistic analysis of social and political conditions existing in the communities mentioned above.

If contemporary art should reflect social reality, no matter how traumatic that reality happens to be, then the open secret concerning the unscrupulous sacrifice of tens of thousands of people during the nineties on the territory of the former Yugoslavia, can be considered to be a result of the state of mind present in the society or a social construct which has its own particular laws and mechanisms of action that are still a secret for us. Such a construct continues to exist and partly feed on artistic (in)activity and cultural policy.

Infertile Grounds



Sandra Vitaljić, from the *Infertile Grounds* series, 2009

The photographs from the *Infertile Grounds* series by Sandra Vitaljić are marked by trauma, historical events and human experience. This is one of the most controversial projects dealing with the traumatic part of Croatian history. Photographs depict ordinary landscapes without any visible traces of the horrific things that happened there. The locations in the photographs are not just beautiful landscapes but sites that have gained strong symbolism due to their historical context and the fact that they have contributed to the formation of Croatia's national identity. Woods, fields and rivers are part of folk tales and myths, but have also become part of rhetoric legitimizing political systems and ideologies. The meaning of many events and sites have changed due to altered circumstances, regardless of the fact that the place, even with human intervention, has remained the same, bare and similar to other places where nothing important has ever happened. Some places are well known and everyone in Croatia, or in the region, will bring a whole range of general knowledge and media interpretations to their reading of the photographs. Other sites have only recently been discovered, although the executions took place after the Second World War. Under communism, these events were not talked about, and they were not investigated until the 1990s. Research is still being obstructed and no one has ever been held responsible for these

crimes. Although the bodies are not visible in the photographs, they are present in the pictures and in our everyday lives. The actual number of victims on all sides has always been manipulated and used for political purposes. The events of WWII were repeated in the recent bloody war in ex-Yugoslavia during the 1990s. Old victims were revived in political speeches calling people to arms. During this war, all sides committed crimes and each country is having difficulties coming to terms with this fact.

The photographs show places that will never be marked by a memorial, thus making the photo the only reminder. The title of the *Infertile Grounds* series refers to our inability to face the ghosts of the past and move on. Instead, we are stuck in the same vicious circle of mutual hatred and accusations.

Her series show the modern-day landscape and bears no trace of the events that took place during the civil war. Her photographs are photographs of landscapes in which something terrible had happened. She is creating still and silent images of sites that evoke documentary, historical memory as the only response to the indifference of nature. The indifference of nature helps to hide the crime, and consequently to deny responsibility. She does not interpret or deconstruct places of memory, she re-constructs them from oblivion. After her photographs, these places become places of memory. New places of memory have not been recorded, but hidden. Photographs are not only bitter reminder, but clear political action. They build a monument that does not exist. Ground is hidden, no monument on it, deliberately and forcefully forgotten just as places of killing Serbs, Jews, Roma, Muslims, Croats i.e. any ethnic group. Historical range covers historically attested, known, by testimonies confirmed often even judicially processed locations. Awareness of the existence of the places has been cynically erased, as an example of what must not be remembered. Does a wretched tree in the rocks or uneven grass, or remains of a wall mean anything? Of course not: they only mark the entrance of responsibility research, which is the only way not only to survive in the future but the only measure of editing the present.

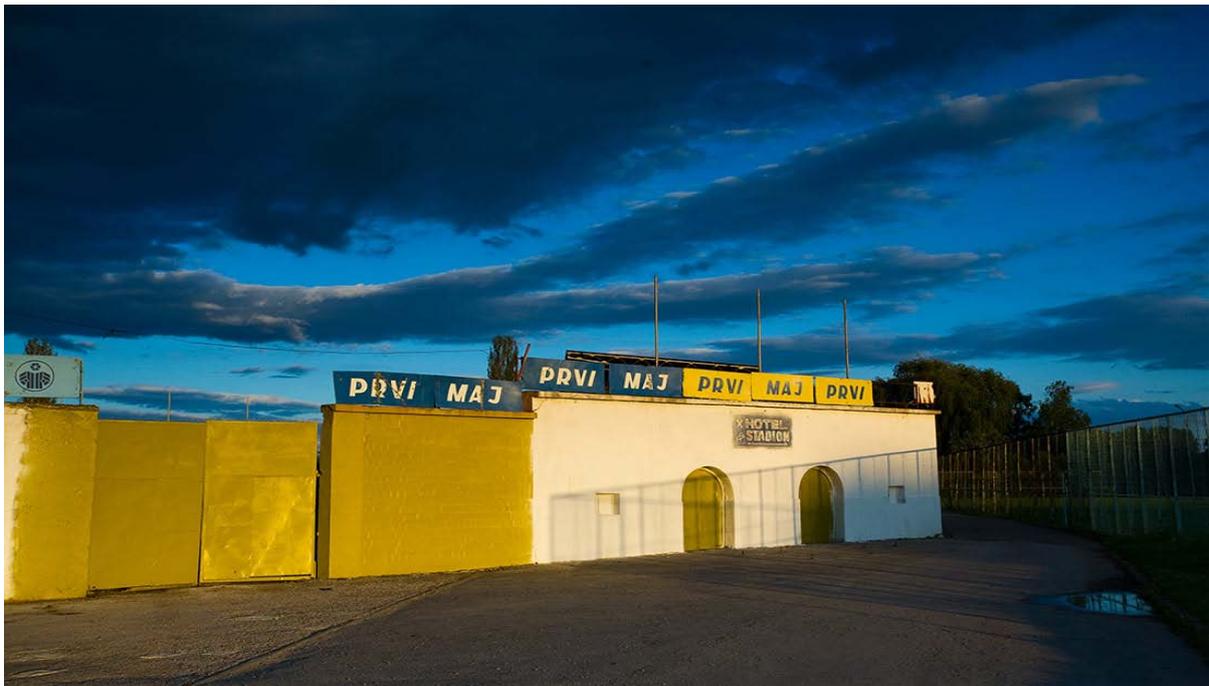
Sandra's landscapes cannot be immediately and clearly understood without contextualization and interpretation. Images documenting symbolic places of national trauma and collective oblivion can not immediately reveal their metaphorical complexity to the viewer without the prior knowledge of the local context and history. The *Infertile Grounds* series reveal things that are not in the photographs and thus open up sensitive issues drawn from recent local history by using the genre of landscape photography.

Over the past twenty years memory studies have been used to explore the relationship between memory and trauma. Kenneth Foote, a cultural geographer, has examined how physical space is impacted by tragic and violent events. He states that there are four possible ways that societies alter landscapes that are sites of violence and/or tragedy: sanctification, designation, rectification and obliteration. Sites of violent tragedy are sanctified when society transforms a previously profane site to sacred status. A sanctified site is a public place that is reserved for the memory of a specific person or group of people; there is typically a durable marker that has been officially ordained during some form of dedication ceremony. These locations are geographically separated and are maintained for long periods of time. Sites of designation are marked as special sites, but do not have a connotation of consecrated space. These sites are unveiled, rather than dedicated. Foote states that designated sites typically are sites that may over time become consecrated, essentially these are 'memorials in progress'. Sites representing minority causes or 'once in a lifetime' freak events may also become designated sites. Sites may also be rectified; these repaired sites remove evidence of the violence/tragedy and are returned to their previous public use. Obliteration, usually reserved for violent tragedies that induce community shame, removes the sites from public use; the buildings and landmarks associated with the site are eliminated and there is no official mention or marker identifying the site. (Foot, 1993)

Tragic and violent events are sometimes wished to be forgotten, not to be admitted as a part of identity. Maybe because then it is easier to move on. Is it an act of Nietzschean 'active forgetfulness'? In the second of his *Untimely Meditations*, Nietzsche suggests that a cow lives without boredom or pain, because it does not remember. Because it has no past, the cow is happy. It lives unmindful of the past. He uses this example to point to the liberating power of what he terms 'active forgetting', a wilful abandonment of the past. Nietzsche calls for an abandonment of the past because, as he says, it returns as a ghost and disturbs the peace of a later moment. He explains that forgetfulness is the active process of repression, which allows us to be free of unwanted, over-produced consciousness, and that without it 'there could be no happiness, no cheerfulness, no hope, no pride, and no present.' He follows to say that we have since developed the opposing faculty of memory, a continual active desire or will that something should not be forgotten. Forgetting is essential to action of any kind, just as not only light but darkness too is essential for the life of everything organic. It is possible to live almost without memory and to live happily moreover, as the animal

demonstrates; but it is altogether impossible to live at all without forgetting. (Nietzsche, 1983: 62)

Manufactured landscapes



Bogdan Radenković, *Manufactured landscapes*

Manufactured landscapes represent a passive observation of industrialized landscape. It is an attempt to assess the post-communist architecture and try to assess the integration of complete new form of aesthetic that is arisen from mankind's tendency to split up with traditional models based on ideas to replicate nature or to treat architecture as its extension. Ex-Yugoslav countries are probably the richest example of this trend since the communist architects were granted a vast freedom to experiment and modify already extreme Eastern bloc style, and that resulted in severe, brutal exaggerations – tons of concrete, skimmed simplicity and bizarre futuristic monuments and buildings. While at first sight this human-nature bond appears incoherent and unlinkable, deeper review may reveal a kind of aesthetic symbiosis-a contemporary.

The genre of topographic recording of abandoned spaces created by changed economics and collapsing industry was developed in the 1960's in the USA and Germany by

Stephen Shore and Bernd and Hilla Becher. Bernd and Hilla started exhibiting their photographs together and since then have been influencing the global contemporary art scene with their powerful work on lonely and ordinary industrial structures. Their constant goal was to document the architectural forms of industry mostly in Europe but also in the United States. It is the emphasis of form that is most crucial in their work. In addition to form, the emphasis is also on the memory or preservation. They wanted to preserve the memory of the structures by photographing them.

There is an underlying sense of melancholy and loss that emanates from these photographs. We are looking at a lost world. A photograph is a requiem for that world. Even that which was one considered as purely functional and ugly can attain beauty when seen through the eyes of the photographer.

Kamerades

Kamerades is a photo collective from Serbia documenting change through critical events and issues in the region. Kamerades is established by six documentary photographers from Serbia. The members share common mission documenting reality and expanding awareness about social issues in the Balkans. Their work is based on a traditional storytelling with respect to the highest visual, ethical and narrative standards. The photographers of Kamerades use photography as a visual language for communicating an undistorted image of reality through in-depth reportage. Each member has his own style and area of interest, while they are all linked by love and passion for truth, people and photography.



Marko Risović, *Legionnaire*

“Duško was a regular boy, excellent student and intellectual. Few years ago, his urge for adventure, and sense of lack of perspective in developing Serbian society, led him to French Foreign Legion. He spent several years there, serving as professional soldier. When he came back home, he tried to reconnect with society, to tie broken strings and live like normal citizen. His labile personality and fuzzy situation in Serbia, inability to find regular job, and his military history, made it very hard for him.” (Marko Risović)

Serbia had one of the highest rates of brain drain during 90s. Young people forced by instability, lack of jobs, bad educational system and political turmoil, massively left the country to search for better possibilities. They were doing different jobs abroad, from cooks and support workers to computer experts and engineers. Some of them now want to come back to home country, but they are still confronted with numerous problems. Duško is an extreme example. His inner struggle is very strong. Every day of his life is full of choices he has to make in order to survive.

In the last 20 years Belgrade has experienced two parallel but completely opposite processes. On one hand, several hundreds of thousands young people left the city, while on

the other hand far more people arrived from various war zones. The city has experienced demographic and urban transformation.



Marko Risović, *East of Eden*

“If the road takes you south of the fertile Vojvodina and Serbian capital Belgrade, you’ll find yourself in places that once were the center of industrial development and prosperity of Yugoslavia at the time. Today, these sites offer very little to its residents, especially young people, those who are destined to stay, or have no other solution but to try to live where they were born. They have inherited destroyed infrastructure, poor living conditions and education, little or no opportunity for employment and advancement. Factories that once fed the entire population now look like the ruins of the past.” (Marko Risović)

High unemployment and many economic problems Serbia is facing with are very explicitly reflecting on the lives of young people. The absence of a perspective often leads to depression, alcoholism and other negative issues. There are also positive examples, those who are trying to fight for a better life, but mainly looking for their chance far away from the places of origin. Those young who remain, live in the foggy world, somewhere between

dreams and reality, being subjects to the influences of various interest groups. While politicians are cheerfully trying to convince us that Serbia's European path is provided, and how it means a better life, it is difficult to believe that such abstract promises weave a thread of hope for those whose everyday life is full of challenges and problems that are piling up.

Before departure



Srđan Kovačević, from the *Before departure* series

The photographer documented life of his friends before they would leave the country. He believed they belonged to the “lost generation”, just as some intellectuals were called after The Second World War.

Hundreds of thousands of young people aged between 25 and 35 have left Balkan countries over the past couple of decades in search of a better life abroad. In the last few

years the number of those who want to leave is increasing. The main reason for educated people leaving is not necessarily unemployment but rather trying to find a decent job and wanting to organize their lives somewhere else. In the Balkans, they obviously cannot do that.

SEE New Perspectives: from Balkan Photographers

In 2010, World Press Photo and Robert Bosch Stiftung launched the joint project “SEE New Perspectives”: Master Class for Professional Photographers from Southeastern Europe”. The aim of the master class was to advance talented photographers in their professional development and to strengthen their narrative skills. After completing the program, photographers began working on photo essays depicting current issues of the countries from the region. The project also challenged the photographers’ perceptions of their native countries and their region by encouraging them to explore new perspectives on life in the region beyond borders and prevailing stereotypes.

The exhibition presents works of fifteen photographers from the Southeast Europe. The final photo essays are stories of life in the Balkans in 2010 and 2011. The topics range from migrant workers commuting between France and Romania through marriage brokers in rural Serbia to the international ambitions of a young wrestling champion in Bulgaria.

As people from the region, the photographers have worked inside a number of subcultures to provide new insights and to stimulate fresh thinking about a region where stereotypes are all too familiar. Photo essays show the new reality, of both local communities and the region as a whole, with the hope that they will inspire new perspectives on Southeast Europe.



East of Eden: A Story of Young Serbs

Their heritage is ruined factories and failing infrastructure. Their prospects are limited because most of their parents can't afford to educate them beyond high school.

Marko Risović

Grew up in time of crisis and wars, view of these photographers about the world we live in is unique and a bit different. They do not close their eyes to the current process of globalization and disintegration of personality, and their work constantly points to the need of finding new forms of representation and communication. At a time when art is suffocating under the weight of globalization and excessive commercialization, it is encouraging that the youngest photographers retain a critical attitude and trying to work in a system that goes beyond the narrow local boundaries. Perception and articulation of the world that surround us in the works of these photographers points to a process of continuous review of the position of art within a social system full of flaws and inconsistencies. With various processes of deconstruction and de-contextualization, artists re-codify and re-read all of the representatives of such a system. They problematize certain visual and sociological phenomena and creating, on the basis of them, works which are sometimes designed as a direct provocation of a new social system.

Conclusion

We live in a shadow of the past which, in various forms, continues to impact on the present and haunts us. It is important for the tragic events not to be repeated. In that sense, some of the photographs can arouse the feeling of fear of repeating all of the things that have happened. Traumatic experiences of suffering and shame are only with great difficulty being allowed into memory because they cannot be integrated into the positive image that an individual or a group has about itself. Nevertheless, if we do not come to accept all the memories and all the parts of our realms of reality, we cannot move forward disburdened and truthful. The aim of getting over the past is in overcoming painful memories for the sake of common and free future and a new life.

“Photography helps people to see.” (Bernice Abbott)

In this process, photographers are of great significance. They create testimonies in form of photographs. Photography as an artistic and subjective act seeks to objectivity. Artist’s contribution is in making us see something we haven’t seen with our own eyes or we didn’t want to see. By acting as the conscience of time photographs inspire creating more humane and better world. As one of the areas of discourse, photographs encourage questioning the sense of things. They point to the problematic and sensitive parts of society. They indicate the problems and invite us to contemplate or react. Although the artists live and work in a relatively small cultural milieu, we cannot define their general approach as entirely localized as these issues can embrace very universal point of view and have global relevance. Together they represent the local or specific and at the same time global or universal phenomena.

The works of the artists show the need for a final confrontation with the subjects the society has been running from, and for pointing out the current problems and their causes. They are not forgetting the events or ignoring the reality, they are rather proposing a cultural and historical criticism that can examine and problematize the ways that something has been taken for granted. It involves the examination of the rhetoric and representational forms of politicized memory-work around a wide range of issues. The articulation of the issues through photographic means is something that can help understand the present.

The photographs are quiet, unassuming and concentrated on specific issues. It is not about the autonomous dimension of photography but as a symptom of political and cultural processes in society. Images are not likeable or pleasant or attractive at first glance but they delve into the issues they are engaged with. Being an attempt to make sense of the world and to reconcile with the past, they can contribute to a better future.

Although each of the author deals with different aspects of the changes over the past two decades, the sum of these works can be interpreted as the need for a final confrontation with the subjects our society is trying to avoid, and to highlight the current problems and their causes.

The attitude of artists to the transition process is never completely indifferent; their views are self-reflective and critical, although their works do not offer ultimate value judgement. They are attentive external observers and commentators on a world that is irrepressibly changing.

Memory culture as a segment of cultural identity is very important. We have to know our own past in order to build a better future together. Overcoming the past is an ongoing process and a constant reminder. It should not lead to the settlement of the crimes and forgiveness, but is a process of learning how to live with the memory of crimes (for example, the genocide in Srebrenica) as a part of our history and collective (national) identity. Certain events from the past evoke feelings of strengthening the national solidarity, and the feeling of violation of national identity, even among individuals who were not directly involved. There needs to be closer examination of how representations of the past have been produced, consumed and have effects and how the past is being used for the formation of cultural memory. However, collective memory and cultural memory do not show only the past, but they shape the present by designing existence of individuals and groups and providing them with the ability to understand the meaning of the world and the vision of the future.

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Biography

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