VELIMIR ZERNOVSKI
/selected projects/




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ZERNOVSKI VELIMIR (b.1981, Skopje, Macedonia)

Through the media of drawings, videos, installations, object installations in public space, writing and publishing artist books he is exploring notions of identity, urbanity and popular culture.

He holds Master of art and BA degree at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University - Skopje. He is also MA candidate at the Department of Cultural Studies at “Euro-Balkan” Institute for Social Sciences and Humanities Research in Skopje. He realized solo exhibitions in: New York (2010, 2012), Paris (2011), Vienna (2009, 2011), Freiburg (2009), Skopje (2006, 2007, 2010, 2012, 2013); Belgrade (2014); he took part in group exhibitions in Slovenia, Kosovo, Austria, Germany, The Netherlands, Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey and USA. He curated and co-curated several projects and exhibitions and participated in many international projects and collaborations.

He was working as a curatorial assistant at press to exit project space-special project of the Swiss Cultural Program in Macedonia, worked as a researcher at University Euro-Balkan 2011-2013 and actively participated in the program of The Coalition “Sexual and Health Rights of Marginalized Communities” 2011-2015. From 2013 Zernovski is co-founder of IPAK Center- Research Center for Cultures, Politics and Identities in Belgrade, Serbia. From 2008 Zernovski is co-founder of FRIK Cultural Initiatives development Formation, horizontally based organization which is working on motivation of socially engaged art production and society democratization, beyond prejudices and stereotypes.

All Beauty Must Die!

2013



Billboard exhibition
in collaboration with Coalition SHRMC

From the text by Slavco Dimitrov

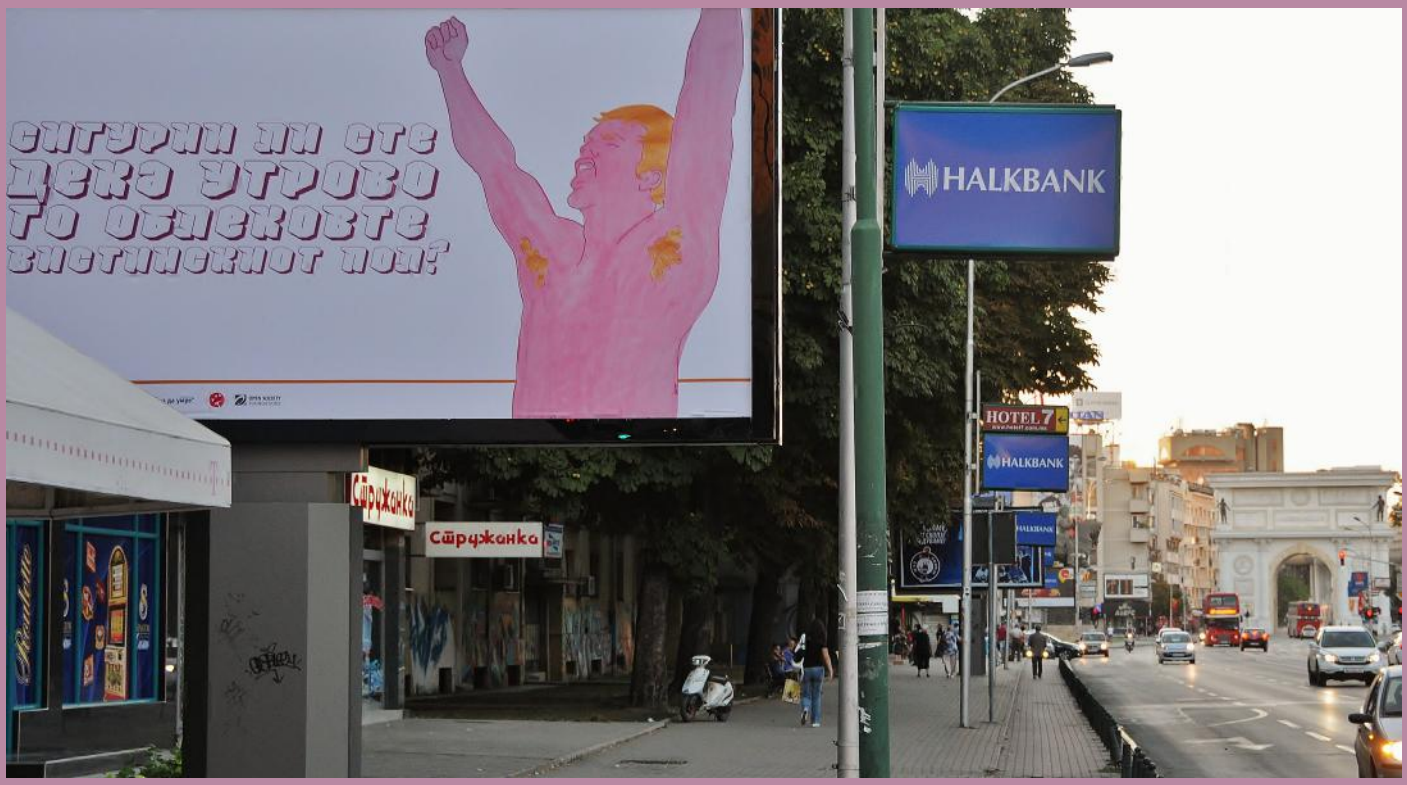
ALL BEAUTY MUST DIE!

There is a big secret about sport. Most people don't like it. Very few play the game.

Behind our seeming ecstasy in celebrating sport lies only contempt towards the sport game. This contempt is directed towards the inability to take hold of, own and posses the game, being a fluctuation and flow of sensations, movements, relations and potential. Sport fanaticism such as we know it exists merely in the function of counting points and forecasting, competitiveness, iconographic fetishism of names, and in the phantasmatic and abstract celebration of the victory attributed to an imaginary nation. In its raving aggression, sport fanaticism recognizes only a monotonous collective and isolated individuals stripped from sensation, intensity and relation.

In the political, cultural and social context where the movements and dynamic relations of the players on the sports grounds are frozen into national icons, where the collective and unstable transmission of the potential of change is welcomed and fetishized as the nation's victory trophy, and the specific-material interactions and re-configurations among the bodies on the sports grounds become a screen for phantasmatic projection and abstraction of the reality of the poor and lethargic citizens, Velimir Zernovski's project emerges as a critical strike against the foundations of the community. The strategic installation of the series of drawings on billboards in the city center, enveloping the core of the 'Skopje 2014' project testifies for the intention of such a critical effort.
"All beauty must die" presents a genuine cut that demystifies, ironizes, ponders upon and exposes towards a democratic transformation the enclosed foundations and violent assumptions of today, of our being together, of the community and the political...





...In this context, of no coincidence is the choice of Independence Day (8th September) as a time line to set up the billboards with Velimir Zernovski's drawings. Celebrating Independence Day presents an expression of collectively marking the institutive moment of the body politic, a glorified repetition of the founding, the moment of nation-building in which the people's will becomes one and acquires its autonomy as the one and the same abstracted in the state as sublimation of the multitute, and an image of the assumed One people's will. Setting up Zernovski's drawings, in the collective public space, on this day, presents an effort of criticism to re-examine the basic assumptions of nation-building and independence project. By installing the drawings, the performative marking of Independence Day questions the violent tactics of the assumed One and Same, the image of the People and the Nation, and it demystifies the violence that constitutes the nation-building, reflected in the exclusions and demarcations necessarily followed by the founding moment ...




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Our experience is provincial. This is the grave and insufferable truth that Velimir Zernovski's project strives to face us with. This confrontation becomes graver when the utterance is compared with the image of triumph and ecstatic kissing of the trophy. The conscious choice of the billboard location for this drawing gives more depth to the message Zernovski conveys. Namely, between the Old Railway Station (a symbol of the Skopje earthquake) and the newly destroyed park near Bristol Hotel, between the trapped time testifying of the human suffering and the incertitude of the human community, the contingency of the abstract and imaginary identifications, on the one hand, and the cut green area aiming towards profit and accumulation of capital, on the other hand.

The logic of heroism, triumph, fetishism of the collective specific-material process of the game, the collective national identification with the individual victory, the raving surrender to the competitive logic in which ones win, while the others lose, the self-pleasing crowning of masculinity, etc. – all these prerogatives in Zernovski's drawing present a reflection of the provincial experience and mind...





In this context, Zernovski's project borders with the scandalous, with the logic of the taboo. Try to remember when was the last time you saw, in this age of marketing, age in which the entire existential insecurity, instability and vulnerability is sublimated by the profiting dispositives into a desperate search for the ideals of the infinity life, youth, self-regeneration, continuity and bodily flawlessness, a billboard which faces us with illness, vulnerability and death. The drawing presenting a `healthy`, strong male body, in accordance with today's demands, as its counterpoint addresses us with the cult line from the film Weekend of the Dead: "You will all die, some later, some now!" ...

All beauty must die!
All beauty must die!
All beauty must die!
Another world is possible!



A guerrilla graffiti action by Serbian group /Kissing area/ inspired by ALL BEAUTI MUST DIE! 2013









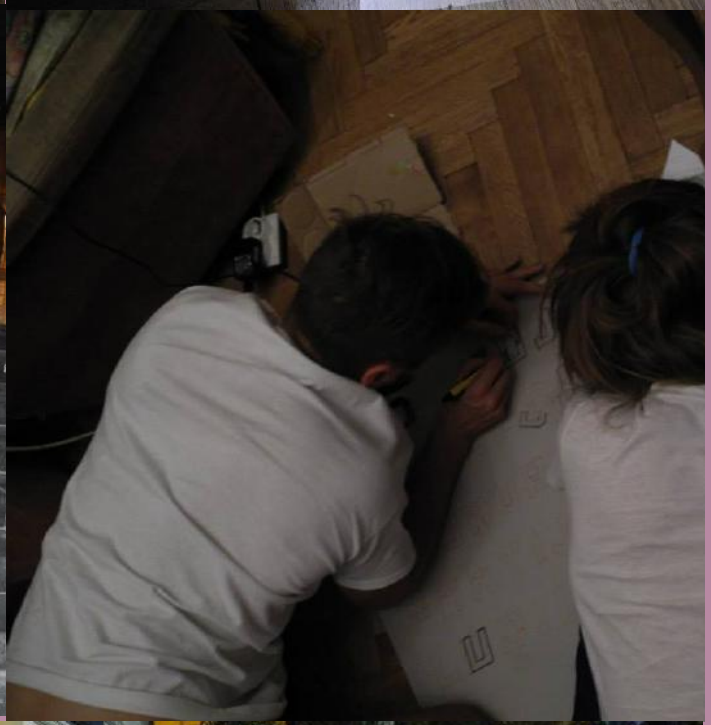


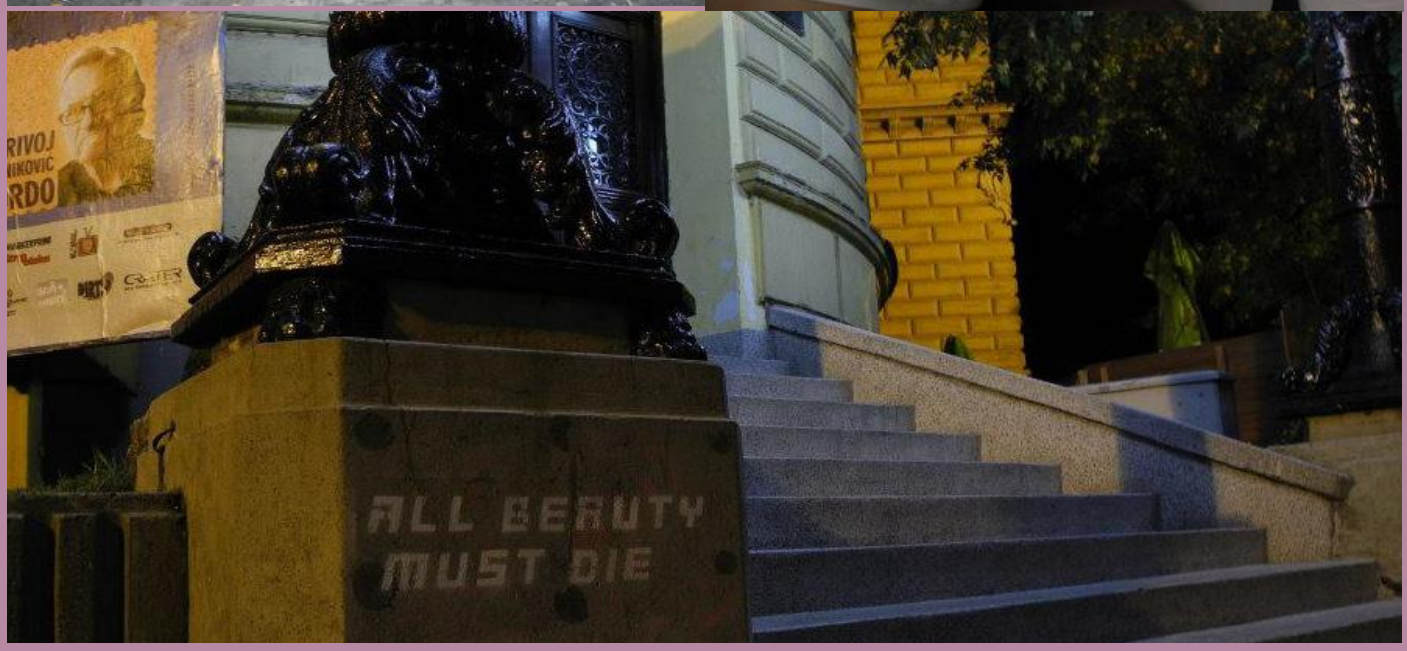







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DA LI STE SIGURNI DA STE DOBR JUTRA OBUKLI PRAVI FOLP




ALL BERUTY MUST DIE

Distitled: PIETA

Belgrade 2014



Video/HD/9 min.
Cultural Center REX, Belgrade, Serbia
organized and co-produced by IPAK.Centar

From the ntroducing text by Slavco Dimitrov

Distitled: The Haunting Spectres of Loss and Futurity

(Reflecting on Velimir Zernovski's Pieta)

I've been trying to write this text for months. It can take me at least few more, I am sure of it. Since it can be written otherwise, and it has to be written otherwise, from a different location, from another affective horizon, from another body in this body of mine, other unanticipated singular encounter of my body and the world. Yet a decision for writing has been made, from me, within me, while feeling as being beside me, outside what I can call properly 'me', thrown to an outside, with no direction, disoriented, in the very instant when my look meets the screen and the video folds me in, plugs my nervous system and moves my stomach, so viscerally, so unrecognisably.

And how can I explain this undecidability if not by the way this video has haunted me for some time now and summoned me obsessively to get to terms with its unreadable obviousness. It's shock, astonishing attractiveness and paralysing effect come from its juxtaposing at once one of the most recognisable artistic figurations of Christianity, Pieta, and its well-known subject of Christ's death and the sorrowful Virgin Mary holding/supporting his dead body, on the one hand, and its affective world of grief, sorrow, pain, suffering, compassion and mourning, all of which are set in an atmosphere of thick, moving and differentiating layers and lees refusing to be conceived through the ordered patterns of a narrative and syntax, through words and concepts, on the other hand. While inviting me, beyond my intention, by sticking its non/moving images on my skin, to recognise myself in the loss being mourned by the Virgin Mary, to sit down and look at those losses that have made my being possible, the video, simultaneously, addresses me with an injunction to transform my body, to open my viscera and welcome, with utter receptivity, the possibility of being otherwise, to receive what I already give: variety of multiple nuances of intensities, touches, sensations and affections. Even more disturbingly, at the very instant when it grasps my empathetic cerebral and corporeal apparatus (and let me confess, I am incurable Nietzschean atheist), it stupefies my sense-making projects and blocks my sensorial and motor intentionality and capacities, interrupts the habituated equilibrium of my bodily associations between stimulus and response, and drags me into a world where my body is faced with an unknown horizon of traversing and cross-cutting affects, at once, menacing, threatening, unpleasant, cathartic and promising.

There is a sense of haunting spectrality that this video brings to the fore. And it is not one, but many spectres lurking and resurfacing from the screen's flatness and platitude. These haunting specters shatter the solid ground of our habituated actuality and the normative operating procedures of day-to-day life movements and knock a force into our consciousness of the world as open-ended and unstable, impossible to be grounded in the meaning we ascribe to our bodies and the relations they might/they are capable and allowed to enter. Some of these spectres evoke the intertextual premises of Zernovski's video, the aesthetic tradition that has been formative for his artistic gesture and has set the aesthetic regime of the video, in-

cluding, on the first place, Michelangelo's Pieta (1498-1500), Bill Viola's slow-motion video recordings that dismantle the perceptual habits of the human eye, Felix Torres-Gonzales minimalist queer interventions coloured with melancholia and mourning, Darek Jarman's queer appropriations of Christian iconography (in The Garden, for example) etc, all of which are appropriated and dislocated by the stylistic singularity of Zernovski and his ethical and political orientations. Other spectres haunt our contemporary political horizon and make us face the grieving experiences and losses to be mourned, and all their derivative backward and negative feelings that disrupt the neoliberal biopolitical demands for productivity, flexibility, market investments and perpetual self-overcoming as the means for adjusting ourselves to the happiness machine of capitalism. In a similar vein, the spectre of loss, sorrow, suffering, vulnerability, precariousness and melancholia haunts our fantasmatic drive for autonomy, self-sufficiency and individualised atomistic subjectivity. At the same time this spectre of loss is grafted onto its unavowed other, the spectre of queer losses and dispossessions, the unwritten history of unevenly distributed tears (Barthes) that uproots the heteronormative frames of recognisability and intelligibility, as much as it exposes the 'shaming' distitled emotional failures persistently denied by the normalising 'It gets better' mainstream activist politics. The blurry, moody and modal differentiations the video creates also haunt the core Western and masculinist vision of subjectivity, by continuously reminding us that behind the indefinite work of mourning erupt the spectral traces of otherness beyond any recognition, constitutive yet erosive for our independent proudly shouting 'I'. Finally, the spectres of sorrow and grief are spectralized to an unprecedented degree, multiplied in such a way that even the spectral and disquieting affects are displaced into an ever changing horizon of movement, affections, transformation, plasticity and the future to come of promising and not yet sensed possibilities...







The central focus of Velimir Zernovski's video is set on the act of mourning over a dead body. The historical figuration of this act that grounds this project is Michelangelo's representation of Virgin Mary, sculpted in marble, holding the body of her dead son, Christ, whose sacrifice is a gift that would save humanity and that shows the line that leads to salvation and redemption. Michelangelo's representation of the sorrowful mother frames Zernovski's representational frames, most evident in the lack of salient pathos and exaggerated emotionality on the face of the mourning man (Michelangolo's representation of Mary's serenity and contemplative look and face), the alleged reduction of movement almost to a zero-degree and the subtleness of the affective dynamics enveloping the scene and characters (the curves and waving of Michelangelo's Mary drapery, the live-like body of the dead Christ shaped with perfection with the sculpting material, Mary's effortless and light holding of the body, the calmness and contemplative blessedness of the scene etc.). Besides the technical and aesthetic devices that align the two works, the most prominent feature of Michelangelo's Pieta that anchors Zernovski's project is the representation of the scene of mourning the loss, referring back to the pain, suffering and injuries inflicted on Christ's body. To the extent to which this figuration testifies to one of Christianity's greatest contributions to the Western civilisation, which is to say capacity to address pain, loss and suffering with a 'you' and look them in the face, that is enduring with the human condition of vulnerability and fragility as the universal shareable trait of humans and condition of care and solidarity, Zernovski's work appropriates it and sets it as an object for his interest and work. However, he departs from Michelangelo's work to the extent to which it is anchored in the Christian tradition whereby

human exposure, vulnerability, suffering and loss in the final instance are sublated and made intelligible via the theo-teleo-logical ethical framework of salvation and redemption, being the reflection of the unavoidable gap and fissure that separates human mortal existence from the unattainable heights of heaven and desire, as much as the bridge that reconciles human beings with the monotheistic God, the Father, hence incorporated into a the metaphysical project that provides firm grounds for ethical decisions and authentic and devoted life. Zernovski's project builds an ethical and political universe whereby mourning and loss refer to no metaphysical instance and explanation.
Grief and mourning in his work expose nothing but our mutual co-dependency and bodily vulnerability. It is a shared world with no grounding and founding principle, neither immanent, nor transcendent substance or Truth that enfolds itself in our world-building projects and being-in-common, or provides sufficient out-worldly reason and relief for/to our lives, suffering and loss included. The devastation and the feeling of being lost one experiences in instances of loss and grief exposes nothing but our relational dependency as the most appropriate dis-appropriating condition of our embodied and finite humanity. The experience of loss and the affective situation of grief and mourning discloses the never to be fully understood ways in which I am being dispossessed of myself by being dispossessed from the other, irretrievably lost. Loss brings me to a place where I can no longer follow the flow of my life, a flow made possible by the relation/s that has/have been lost, by the ways I am bond up with others. In losing you I lose myself, I become undone, exactly on the condition that the very possibility of me saying 'I' is already conditioned by the tie, in the intersections, the crossings that relate us and make us possible in the first place. ...

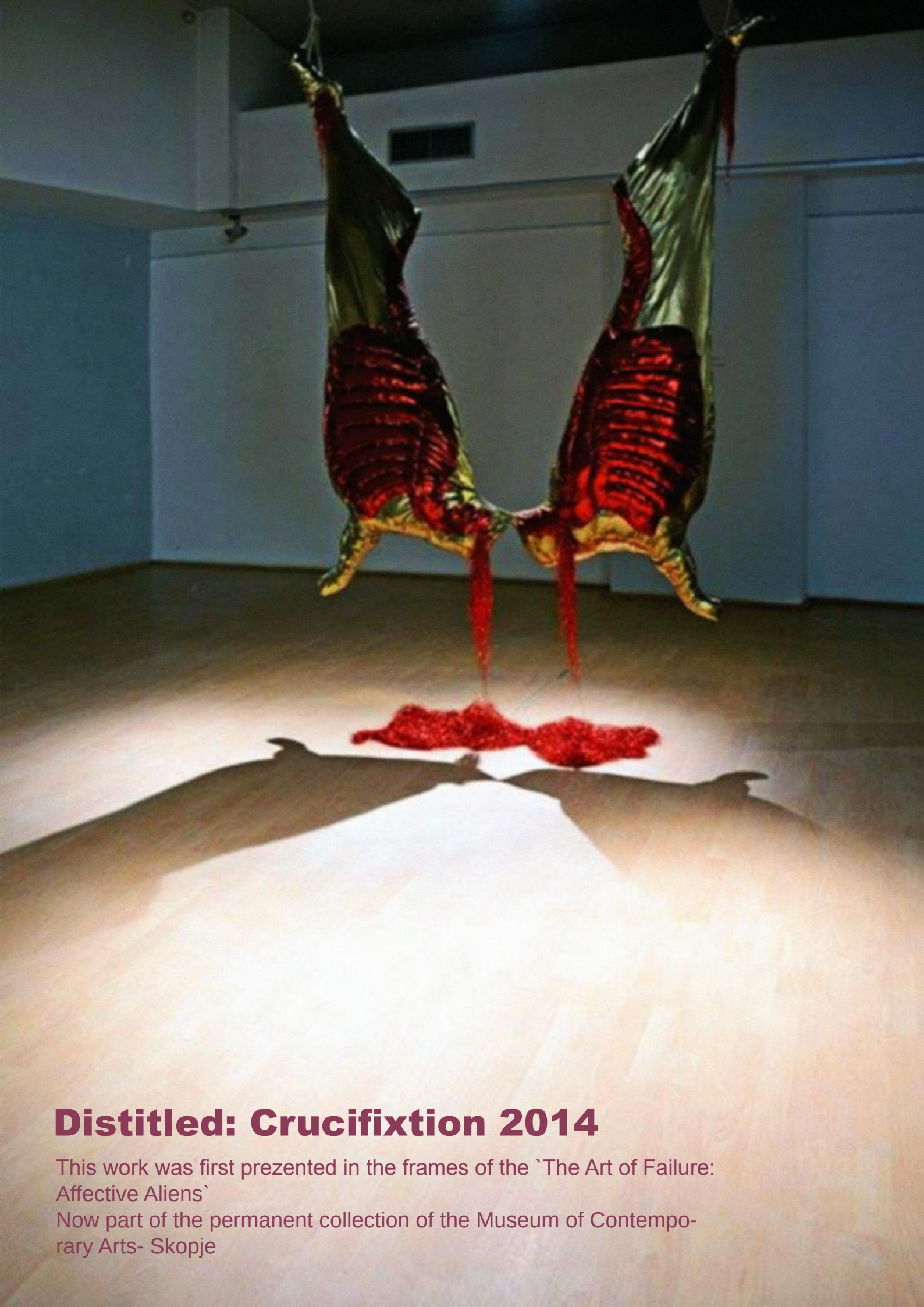
"...A spectre is haunting our present. It is the spectre of loss. The spectre of monstrous and joyous transformations, of new life-forms. Open your receptors! Let it haunt you!..."

Slavcho Dimitrov









Distitled: Crucifixtion 2014

This work was first prezented in the frames of the `The Art of Failure: Affective Aliens`
Now part of the permanent collection of the Museum of Contemporary Arts- Skopje

Artist statement

“Following up on the series of projects “Distitled,” in this project I continue examining the affects and relations of melancholy, loss, mourning and failure in general as a political and social position in a broader spectre.
An object (a display of a skinned dead animal) made from cotton/silicon filling/polyester/plastic is placed in the middle of the installation. A single ray of light falls on the object focussed above the installation, falling from the gallery’s ceiling. A Rembrandt - like atmosphere of a long forgotten basement, dark and cold. Still, the light penetrates to the object which will not allow us forget the trauma haunting us. The broken toy acquires a dimension of Bacon’s crucifixion, the image appearing in front of the spectator testifies of a massacre, a crucified decomposing body, a body that will never again be the body we once recognized as a shelter. A body that continues to maintain its place in our archive as a point to which we inevitably return, a point that continues to define all out future fears, shame, relations and loves.
By selecting these specific materials I evoke a childish playfulness, a memory of comfort and carelessness, experienced somewhere, in a space and time difficult to locate from today’s perspective; a contrast that displaces the comfort of the child’s memory in a context testifying of the catastrophic, irretrievable state of a memory









“Distitled” Twinkle, twinkle...
2014



This work was originally presented on a `zajednicka snaga` exhibition in the KC Grad Gallery in Belgrade

Artist statement

“It's true I always wanted love to be / Hurtful / And it's true I always wanted love to be / Filled with pain / And bruises…”
(Antony Hegarty)

is an installation of a Mickey Mouse - like figure, made of pink velvet that can always be set differently depending on the context and the exhibition space. It represents a symbol of a history built upon experiences of permanent failure, shame and loss. History that suggests no future. Extremely pessimistic scene that plays with the image of death in a very childish manner. Suggesting desire for new readings, new struggles, new beginnings that would refuse the reproduction of the present as we know it.




ZAJEDNIČKA SNAGA

A guerrilla graffiti action by Serbian group /Kissing area/ inspired by Distitled: Twinkle, twinkle 2014













ALICE WHAT ELSE IS OUT THERE?

Exhibition - Museum of Contemporary Arts, Skopje / MC Gallery New York
2009 / 2010



Alice, what else is out there?

22.12.2010 - 05.02.2011

Curator: Mira Gacina

Although treating a subject with a referential paradigm – I and the Other (Others) that imposes modern aesthetics of the sublime – Velimir Žernovski refuses to step into the narration of the "lost" harmony, already in the title shifting the focus of interest away from the sublime "Other" and towards the down-to-earth "Else" and "Out", choosing to explore the margins of "non-human". With his latest work "Alice, what Else is Out There?" – through multimedia, subtle narration and intimate exploration – the author continues to re-consider the complex mutual relationship of the Self and the Other. His approach reveals Foucault's civilisational imperatives: the indignity of speaking for others; the man's Other must become the Same as himself.

What preoccupies Žernovski is the phenomenon of the multiplication of identity, not only that of the Other but also of I, the decentring of the social subject, the re-figuring of the I and the Other dichotomy which grows into a conflict or - if you wish - a dialogue, this time in the context of the global versus the global. He is concerned with the conflict between the dynamic and the changing I, on the one hand, and what Spivak calls "the hopelessly static" Other that is still locked in the frames of the groups of the so-called Great Three (race, class, gender). The author uses this conflict as an exhibition tool. By reflexive representation, deconstruction of his perceptions of his own identity and those of the others, the author explores the process of ghettoisation, his own Utopian systems and social identifications, particularly in relation to the local political, cultural and psycho-social circumstances.

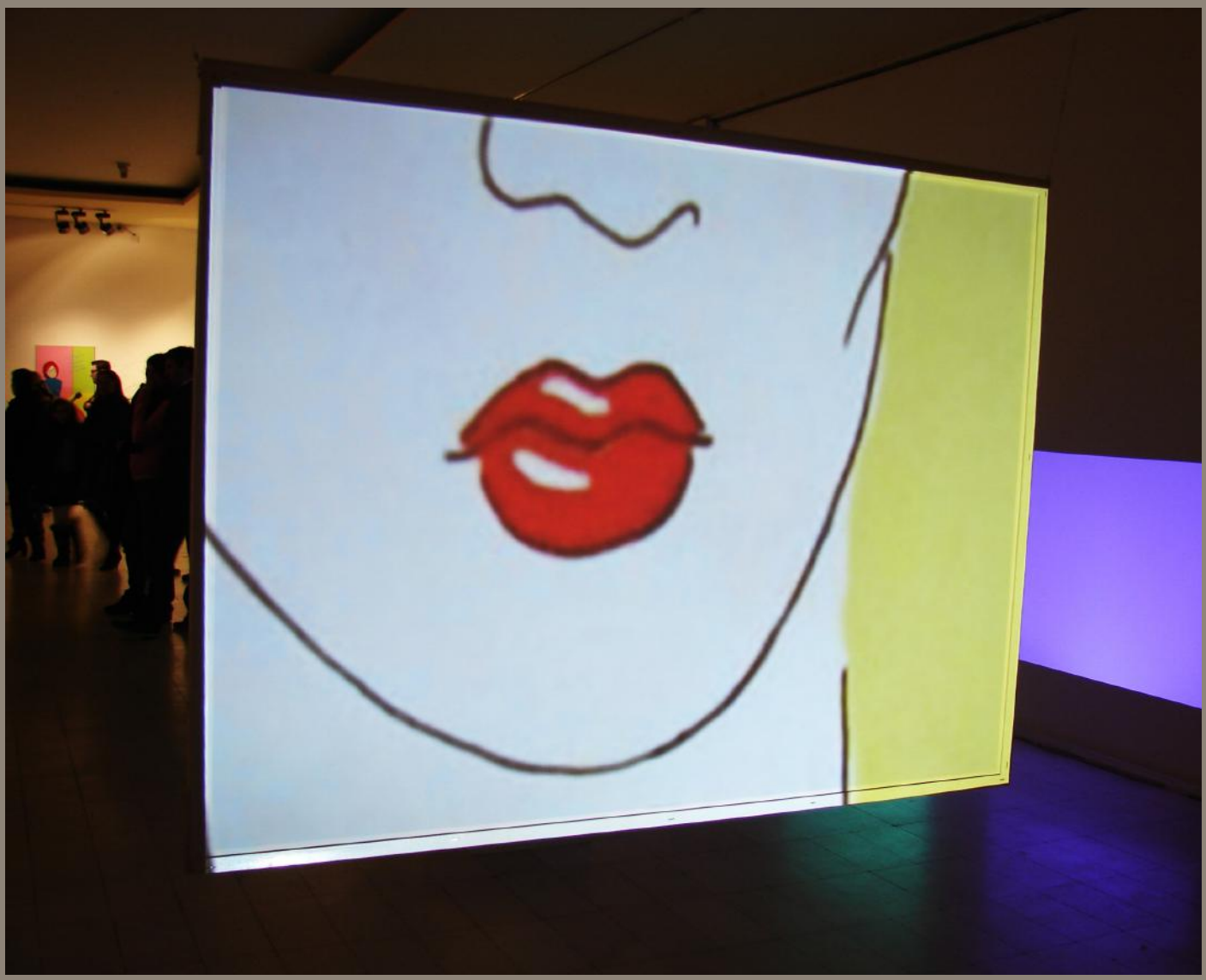
Žernovski decides to produce a figurative and visual structure fitted with elements of various density and energy charge in order to dynamise the narrative process. The use of the pop art palette, silver glaze, colours applied, in flat layers are references that successfully outline the author's fundamental preoccupation: the individual and artistic integrity in the global world. His visual aspect clearly integrates the Warholean style of understatement, which calms down and depresses, contrasted with an emotionally dense verbal narration.

In Žernovski's works videos, photographs, images, objects, drawings, on the one hand, and text and visual poetry on the other, give rise to independent messages that flow in parallel without disturbing each other, and eventually intertwine in the comprehensive yet still open entirety that communicates with his previous works through quotations, forewarning that futureness might somehow be superstructured.

As was the case with his earlier work The Walk (Museum of Contemporary Art, 2009 Young Artists' Biennial, for which he was awarded), the author consistently seeks inspiration in the manner of pop art, investigating the newly formed urban environment

permeated with conflict, tension, violence, bustle and depression, the environment he recognises as his own yet alienated, and in mass media culture. Gus Van Sant's film The Elephant is skilfully coded in the work in order to reinforce the poetic structure.

Intimate memory, fragmented throughout the installation's elements of various quality, eases the communication of the process of disintegration and re-creation of personal identity confronted with the uniform force of the global. Through repeated silver, mirror-like themes and fragmented memories, he produces a duality of I and the Other, as Groys says "….In time the child we were becomes an Other, a stranger, to whom we believe we have access inside". The playful child-like spirit of that which Caillois termed kredati surfs from one object to another, we see its silhouette for a fleeting moment on the surface of one of the embroidered memory units.
The author suggests that identity, even gender identity, is a social construction. The choice of one's appearance, the mask, is motivated rather by the fear of rejection or by the need to frighten the Other and this mimicry is less used in its freest of forms, as a game of exploration, affection or self-affection. The emancipation of the different, in the name of the individual ant the similar (and in contrast to the indifferent), the incorporation of the "rainbow" into the global project before it becomes closed within a new social equilibrium of a totalising unity is the Utopian civilisational challenge with which the author motivates our generation.





Егзорцист

Ехо од соништа зад слабиот вресок ,
камен разделен на два
и по некој треперлив поглед во далечината.

Оваа силна и неодолива дланка
продира длабоко во темната шума
убивајќи го секој сомнеж
на својот пат.

Масакр каков што никогаш не си видел
смртоносен ѕвер
убиец без срце.

Химна #1

Силен и прекрасен е твојот ветар
како незапирлива сила
ги растргнува моите коски и месо
вверски јадејќи се' што ќе најде
секој атом и сиот тој мирис.

Горчлива и разорна е светлината твоја
безмислосна и болна
ја чувствувам во утробата,
одвнатре јадејќи ме
оставајќи ја само оваа насмевка.

Безброј песни само за тебе
и многу солзи само за мене ,
пустини лебдат над овој преполн бар
цигарни тони очај.

Тој пијалок, ах тој прекрасен пијалок,
кој никогаш нема да се продава.

кому да кажам за тие високи потпетици
и фустанот кои никогаш не ги носиш
плавата рапса и црвеникот кармин
кои ја правеа твојата насмевка толку женствена,
заводлива и херојски тажна.

Не, никој нема да ја разбере оваа бајка
се додека молчам да раскажувам јас
но, како би молчел да зборувам и дали мојот глас ќе биде јасен
кога од мене ќе ќе исчезне дури и најситниот дел
и без збор ќе останам јас





