

MIG 21

Contemporary art as a twenty-first century migratory interdisciplinary grid

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Artists&Poor's

The migratory interdisciplinary grid MIG 21 is thematically linked to migrations, and the processes related to migrations. Migration as a movement inside space and time is vital to the existence of both humans and art. Transdisciplinarity of artistic approaches as the central concept of MIG 21 connects all media, forms, and contents of artistic expression and reflects the current condition of society, which is marked at the same time by the visionary work of participating artists. The works, ranging temporally from the nineteen-seventies to present day, are thematic, conceptual, and emotional responses of art to the current world events.

With some of the oldest works, a selection from the photography series *The People of Haloze* (1973–1988) by Slovenian photographer **Stojan Kerbler**; the formal break from reality is minimum. Kerbler is a master of analog photography; he portrays people living in the remote hills of north-eastern Slovenia near the Croatian border, in Haloze. The people of Haloze have always been perpetual economic migrants: in the search of a better life they would mostly head off to Germany, but also to large cities in any other country. The main protagonists in the selected photographs are children and elderly people, who stayed behind.

The exhibited photographs by **Ulrich Wüst** were created in 1989. Wüst became established in the mid-eighties as one of the most notable photographers of the former GDR. His works can be placed in a broader historical and international context, just like the migrations during the fall of the Berlin wall.

Herlinde Koelbl, a seasoned photographer, combines a journalistic documentary approach with high artistic standards. In *Refugees*, she conveys a photographic and video account of the current state of refugees entering from the Middle East and the Mediterranean. *Targets* was created as a result of over six years of travelling around the world, and visiting more than thirty countries: a visual documentation of the military targets used in the training of soldiers. What does the enemy look like? Does he have a face? Koelbl discloses the various images that are used to systematically practice aiming, shooting, hitting, and, ultimately, killing. Her works are always engaged and thoughtful confrontations with political and social issues.

A response to last year's events occurring with the opening of the "Balkan route" is captured in the work of Slovenian photographer **Srdjan Živulović**, who showcases one of this year's Pulitzer-winning photographs titled *Unfinished*

Story. As a member of the Reuters team, he documented Syrian refugees walking alongside a river embankment near Brežice.

Jan Macko is a sculptor and graduate of the Prague fine arts' academy. The artist does not exhibit often, because even though his works appear simple and un-spectacular, their creation and the technology behind them require a complex and time-consuming process. From organic latex he created the cycle *Skin*. The work *Man I* imitates human skin shaped like carpets, like trophy animal rugs we know from hunting lodges.

Zbigniew Libera is one of the most intriguing and provocative contemporary Polish artists. He gained international recognition with his pop art works *Correcting Devices*, which began to be created after the fall of the communist regime in Poland. Libera is also one of the pioneers of video art in Poland – the exhibition features his 20-minute video *How to train the girls* from 1987. He draws inspiration from everyday objects found in the present-day urban environment. The photograph titled *Bush's Dreams* belongs to a series of staged photographs which sparked a lot of controversy when published in the weekly magazine *Przekroj*.

Oleg Kulik completed his studies at the Kiev Art School, then moved to Moscow in 1988. He is a constant migrant, gaining fame with his performances in America, Europe, and at home. The exhibition features *Lolita vs. Alice*, a series of round-shaped (tondo) photographs, illustrating the signification of birth: the photographs depict the author and his niece, his gold fish and his dog, who appear to be floating, intertwined and fused into one. "There is only one God – the living man – the person sitting next to you. That is my religion. I believe that there is a sense to life," says Kulik. The fantasy diptych named *Crucifixion Day* and *Crucifixion Night* depicts a view from behind the steering wheel – during day time in the first, and during night time in the second image, only with different protagonists. In the daytime picture, two prostitutes are sitting in the car, observing the manly workers, whereas by night it is, of course, the other way around – the car is occupied by two businessmen choosing from among the prostitutes. The paintings address topics of prostitution and the bizarre commercialization of human work. The featured opus of Kulik's work also includes a video production, *Gobi Test (Winter)*, about the everyday life of the Mongolian people, who live in a traditional way, as nomads. Through the

artistic medium, Kulik comments on Russia and the West, politics and power, the humankind as a phenomenon in its own right, and our relationship to nature.

The Russian collective **AES+F** consists of four artists, the acronym is formed by combining the initials of the family names of architects **Tatiana Arzamasova** and **Lev Evzovich**, designer **Evgeny Svyatsky**, and photographer **Vladimir Fridkes**, who joined the originally formed trio some years later. Their work is marked by the use of a sophisticated, poetic dialog throughout all media, an exploration of history and cultural phenomena, whereby their visual narratives delve into the values, flaws, and the conflictive nature of present-day culture on a global level. *Inverso Mundus – The World Upside Down* is a top-level video production portraying a futurist story of a civilization, in which the world is turned inside out like a glove. *Islamic Project*, images is a series of photographs of famous places and buildings, like the Notre Dame in Paris, only with typically Islamic dome-shaped steeples. The most well-known is *New Liberty*, re-producing Lady Liberty wearing a burqa. The project traces back to the nineties, when Islam was not really an issue yet.

The artshow includes renowned artists from the once-united former Yugoslav republics, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, and Macedonia.

Jovan Joca Jovanović, belongs to a group of directors, who started the so-called Black Wave ("Crni talas") in Yugoslavian cinematography. The film *KOLT 15 GAP (Kupujem Ot-padke Ližem Tanjire 15 Godina Aktivno Pasivno / Will buy rubbish or lick plates, 15 years experience, active – passive)* from 1971 features the late **Stanoje Čebić**, the incarnation of the socialist worker myth, an activist, and an artist finally, who was a genuine economic migrant, having worked in more than 150 factories in the ex-Yugoslavia, Germany, Switzerland, and Belgium.

Serbian-born conceptual artist **Raša Todosijević** has won acclaim through his socially critical works, and is a role model to younger generations. The exhibition features a series of photographs titled *Danke (Thank You)*, symbolically arranged in the shape of a swastika, and accompanied by the sign "In spite of the economic crisis and conflicting world situation there is one thing everyone agrees with: artists need lots of money!"

Artists from Bosnia-Herzegovina are representatives of the younger generation **Adela Jušić** and **Andreja Dugandžić**, who both lived in Sarajevo all through the Balkan war period. Their work *Illegal* is an embroidery with a message, highlighting the importance, power and support demonstrated by women during wartime.

Jusuf Hadžifejzović (born in Serbia, studied in Belgrade, lives and works in Sarajevo and Antwerpen) has been one of the most provocative middle-generation artists from the eighties onward. In his famous performance *The Fear of Drinking Water* Hadžifejzović plays darts by throwing them at a photograph of the members of his family, titled *Family, Neighbors and Friends*, which was taken in 1994.

The works of renowned post-conceptual artist **Mladen Stilinović** are presented posthumously, among them the suggestive silk-inscribed *I Hear There's Talk of Death...* On dis-

play are photographs of Srebrenica, a reminder of the genocidal slaughter and homage to the victims of the Balkan war at the end of the past century. His experimental films and videos created between 1971 and 2006 are also part of the exhibit.

The intermedia installation *Phase Shift* by contemporary artist **Ivan Marušić Klif** (Croatia) renders the different dimensions of the movements of light, which occur with a time shift, and Klif translates these deviations to video using a computer simulation.

Sculptor and professor **Žarko Bašeski** (Macedonia) is contemporary both in the materials he uses, as well as in the topics he covers: four hyper-realistic sculptures are showcased, made from materials like polyester, silicone, and natural hair. The sculptures in *Facing* symbolize the spasm of contemporary society and the fear of decaying values, they contract like fetuses in self-defense against the outer world. The other two figures are *Ezekiel*, a prophet symbolizing the return from exile, and *David*, not as a shepherd, but as a modern young man with a computer mouse instead of a stone in one hand, and proudly holding up Goliath's eye in the other.

Artists **Mirsad Begić**, **Jakov Brdar**, and **Zora Stančič** were born in Bosnia-Herzegovina and came to study at the Academy of Fine Arts in Ljubljana. Today all three are among the most prominent Slovenian contemporary artists.

The Great Gatekeeper by **Mirsad Begić** is an ambient sculptural installation symbolizing the gateway to hell – his "gatekeeper at the door of death" is a response to the Balkan war, the incorporated skulls and spears piercing through them convey an atmosphere of humanity's twilight.

Jakov Brdar's monumental work *Time is an Optical Illusion* in bronze is, in a sense, the heart of the exhibition, as it portrays the inner migration of a man/artist going through an emotional re-birth.

Zora Stančič displays headscarves charged with powerful symbolism. These pieces belong to the personal legacy of her mother, who liked to keep things to be used in "better times". Stančič is a master of graphics, the scarves are printed with images reduced to the strictest formality, of which only the silhouette remains recognizable. In a time when headscarves are both a fashion accessory and a religious element, such a statement is more than straightforward.

Julijana Božič showcases two illustrations. The works were (re)created to illustrate a modern-day interpretation of Dante's *Inferno* written by philosopher Petja Janžekovič. Accompanying the fifth circle, these tailpieces are adapted to modern times. They depict *Hypocrites* and *Wrath*, the synthesized essence of which is skillfully transformed by the artist into a comprehensive and meaningful visual message.

The artistic expression of **Tina Dobrajc** is distinctly narrative and leans against the modern image of a woman charged with a powerful sexual character, but who is at the same time traditionally restrained and unavailable. The painting *She(ep)* is a re-interpretation of classic (traditional, even folklore) themes accompanied by a personal commentary, whereby the artist forms a proper subjective stance towards the expressed topic.

The art show MIG 21 also features a work by Maribor-born artist **Jože Šubic**, a trained painter, whose works in recent times, however, are increasingly sculptural. *Blowing Twins I. and II.* are two female heads, ceramic sculptures wearing protective gas masks, and using their brass instruments to convey the banality of the message that does not want to be recognized.

Sculptor **Metod Frljic**, a professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Ljubljana, is well known for his plastic art portraits. His spatial installation *Multi Culti (Pope Francis is Coming in Piece)* is a full-scale figure of Pope Francis standing in the middle of a field of bombs stuck into the floor, wearing a burqa and carrying a cross, a symbol of Christianity, which, however, contains Islamic patterns, thus intertwining the religious causes of wars and their "defenders".

Frljic's former student **Jure Fingušt**, a graduate of the Ljubljana academy, is currently pursuing further studies at the University of Arts and Industrial Design in Linz. He is skillful in connecting knowledge of engineering, technology, computer sciences, and sculpting. The exhibition features his work *Eye of the Migrant*, which uses an interactive sensor to "turn on vision" as we try to observe it.

In the title, as well as through the processes / photographs, which were used in the creation of the painting, the work *Beckett's Forehead* by **Ksenija Čerče** establishes a relation to the story of Samuel Beckett, who emigrated from Ireland in 1937 and never returned. He lived in exile in Paris. Rather than in the sense of a narrative on the topic of migrations, this painting fits into the concept of the exhibition through the painting means and their transformations into the fine arts' language.

Jože Slaček's contribution is a storytelling platform, a project involving migrants currently living in Maribor. The main goal of the project is to keep a record of, and present in various ways the stories of immigrants in Maribor, and the folk tales from their homelands.

Maribor-based artist **Ana Pečar** identifies stories through records of nature. Her basic theme is water, running and constantly moving; water and its quality as an information carrier between the sky and the earth, and its role in all ritual systems (religious and pre-religious).

Matej Čepin from Celje, Slovenia, created the mystical *Voyage*, a painting depicting his friends flying on Persian rugs, enjoying a carefree view.

The name of the project group **RIGASRS** is an acronym for the Research Institute of Geo-Artistic Statistics of the Republic of Slovenia, joining together renowned Slovenian artists and collaborators of the institute **Alenka Pirman**, **Vuk Čosić** and **Irena Woelle**, who in 1997 publicly presented the Slovenian Mediterranean Meter (SMM) as a new unit of measurement, marking the distance of 46,6 kilometers, i.e. the entire length of the Slovenian coastline.

In his opening night performance *Grill Scrounging*, songwriter and performer **Marko Breclj** skillfully and wittingly traverses between various meanings of words and perceptions. "Žicanje (Scrounging)" means displaying reels of the infamous razor-wire fence, cutting off pieces of that wire to the generous, exhibiting Palmedars (calendars with palm

trees) and marching-song Caucasian spiritual songs, as well as New Tunes, while non-violently attracting the attention of the present company.

Slovenian painter **Marko Jakše** exhibits one of his monumental works, the unfinished *Toxic Bride*. Jakše focuses on the motifs and the symbolism, which he conveys by using the most universal visual means. He has reached a level of sophistication typical of old masters, and surpassed it: his style cannot be defined as belonging to any particular historical period (genre), and, although drawing on archetypes, his works piercingly refer to the here-and-now, appearing as entirely contemporary and subversive.

Artists **Aleksij Kobal** and **Uroš Weinberger** create an entirely new, contemporary approach to traditional painting. Kobal's paintings *United States*, *Incubators*, and *Windmills* are a depiction of a bizarre future that awaits us if we give in to the forces controlling the political sphere. Weinberger's painting from the series *Seven Sisters* warns about the animalistic monopoly of the oil corporation giants, which are associated with violence of capitalism, shallow commercialization, and exploitation of goods and human resources.

Two French-based collectives are part of the exhibition, the works of both enter into the research and political domains. The collective **antiAtlas of Borders** is presented with the story *Heroic Makers vs. Heroic Land*. The author of the work, Isabelle Arvers, creates video films, supported by video-game technology, to deal with relations between art, video games, the internet, and new forms of images – avatars connected to networks and digital technologies.

Members of the collective **Bureau d'Études** display their infographics *World Government*, a monumental cartographic display of the contemporary political, social and economic systems, which is at the same time an atlas of global control.

Cartography is also the domain of Mexican **Ale de la Puente**. Her work *Nuclear Cartographies* is an audio-video installation used to convey the micro-economics of particle movements, which create a field within each of them, and continue to change not only their direction, but also their appearance, in a process of constant interaction.

US-based transdisciplinary artist **Heather Dewey-Hagborg** uses the artistic medium in her work *Stranger Visions*, to explore DNA through forensic phenotyping. With the help of state-of-the-art forensic procedures she acquires data, and based on analyses, she determines the gender, eye and hair color, and race, and creates 3D portrait sculptures.

Slovenian artist **Aphra Tesla** is engaged in an interdisciplinary project collaboration with Blaž Koritnik, who holds a PhD in neurophysiology, to explore the specific characteristics of brainwaves in relation to the theory of philosophy and the manipulation of sound. The artistic project *APH, Space-Noise Anatomy*, re-questions the border between the audible, the visible, and the cerebral.

The national intermedia scene is represented by artists Nika Oblak and Primož Novak, Matjaž Lenhart, Monika Pocrnjič, Matjaž Požlep, Robertina Šebjanič and Špela Petrič. Their works are characterized by the employment of various technologies and scientific concepts, which they perceive inside their artistic practice.

Špela Petrič and Robertina Šebjanič are bio-artists. The work of **Špela Petrič**, *Phytoteratology*, features incubators containing phytopolulans – human hormone-informed plant embryos, thus exploring the possibility of authentic interaction between humans and plants facilitated by organic molecules as trans-species carriers of information.

In her work *Aquatocene / Subaquatic Quest for Serenity*, **Robertina Šebjanič** encourages a reflection about the human impact on the underwater habitat and investigates the phenomenon of underwater noise pollution. Using hydrophones the artist calls the attention to the underwater noise caused by ships, and sonar and sound cannons, which create huge disturbances in the underwater animal world.

Matjaž Požlep is an architect visualizing *Interpretations* as a process of purifying symbols. Signs (symbols, logos) can become brands, thereby representing our addiction to meaning. Požlep wishes to highlight the importance of the process of interpretation, and stresses the significance of having a choice.

The artistic duo **Nika Oblak & Primož Novak** present their kinetic video installation *Border Mover*. It is not the person that moves, but the border, and it does so with the help of a person. In an innovative way, the artists visualize the absurd connection between man and technology, alerting us about the bizarreness of artificially defined borders and barriers.

Computer programmer **Matjaž Lenhart** uses his “sustainable” installation to combine Arduino, open source programs, and 3D printing, which enables the visitor to create his own instrument.

Monika Pocrnjič employs DIY instruments in her works, they are presented as part of her *Survival Kit for Multiculturalism*. With her site-specific installation *Wish you Weren't Here* she manipulates the real space by means of the virtual one.

New media technologies and the application of contemporary scientific practices of the new millennium are exploited by Australian artist **Adam Donovan**, a physicist by education, who created *Psychophysics Machines*, five robotic sculptures that generate sound and manipulate the human sense of hearing. A one-of-a-kind transformative experience occurs exclusively here-and-now, and is therefore unique and unrepeatable each time it happens.

The Canadian-Polish duo, **Jane Tingley** and **Michal Seta**, have created a visual glass tree, a sound-and-light installation titled *Re-Collect*, which symbolizes a divine tree, from which the heavenly manna drops in the form of an audio-visual effect. The visitor experiences this effect as the installation reconstructs sound into light using a memory-based sonic recording, thus creating an intimate interaction between the viewer and the artwork.

So Kanno and **Takahiro Yamaguchi** (Japan) have constructed the installation *Semi-Senseless Drawing Modules*. They have designed an interactive drawing machine, programmed to respond to the surrounding changes in loudness, temperature, and humidity, and also reacting to the number of people passing by. In addition, the speed of the vertical and horizontal movements changes in real time. The individual pens of the drawing modules interact with each

other and the surroundings, generating enormous abstract one-of-a-kind drawings.

The immersive art installation by Hungarian-born British-based artist **Brigitta Zics**, titled *Eye Resonator*, explores themes of collective motion, migration patterns, the logic of network functioning, and the changing interactive nature of communication.

The art show features 120 selected artworks: traditionally visual works, as well as contemporary intermedia installations, which examine the theme of movement, or migrations, in the widest sense of the word – through the interpretations of works by 66 artists from 16 countries.