



WORKING PAPER NO. 2

Politics between Art and Space: Sarajevo after 1995



Author:
Danijela Dugandžić



Philipps



Universität
Marburg



Abstract

This working paper examines the politics of art in public space in Sarajevo since the official end of the war in 1995. Through interviews with artists and curators and analyses of a number of artworks, the paper traces how art attempts to reclaim the public space by provoking political commentary and creating new forms of sociality. Key themes have been nationalism, the role of the international community during and after the war in Sarajevo, the return to forgotten emancipatory history and heritage, and post-war reconstruction. There has also been a significant production of feminist art dealing with women's history, contemporary statehood as well as with emancipation of women and issues of unpaid labour. In view of the fact that the complexity of everyday life in Sarajevo since the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995 has not changed significantly, the paper asks whether art can create commons and open up space for political commentary as acts of collective action. It argues that in a city in which important public cultural and art institutions remain closed, and the public space is daily narrowed by new "capital projects", it is important to think about art as an urban practice that uses public space as emancipation for those who are less visible or even invisible. The potentiality of art is not only to create places of commons – unusual, debatable and charged with questions and answers – but also to open up places for new knowledge. The artworks discussed in this paper help us to understand how art leads to political action, but also how political action evokes art.

Author

Danijela Dugandžić is a curator and acting directress of the Art Collective CRVENA in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina (didinela@gmail.com)

Cover photograph: *Rad ljubavi* (Labour of Love), Adela Jušić and Andreja Dugandžić, 2014.

Introduction

The public space is the space available to all. It forms the backbone of the identity of a city and represents the space for public discourse on political, economic or social issues. The ancient idea of public space as an arena for political liberty and participation, and as the foundation for democracy is today coming into increasing conflict with the fact that public spaces are shaped by capital, that then creates the means of perception and communication, creating thus more of a scenery than places of potential resistance. When presented in the public space, art primarily deals with representation. It can therefore create a framework for political action in the public space.

In Sarajevo, a number of artistic or cultural projects have been realized in the public space since the official end of the war in 1995. In a city in which important public cultural and art institutions remain closed, and the public space is daily narrowed by new “capital projects”, it seems important to think about art as an urban practice that uses public space as emancipation for those who are less visible or even invisible, for the oppressed and afflicted. Through interviews with several artists and curators directly involved in some of these projects, and analyses of a number of artworks, I examine the politics between and beyond art and space. I am interested in various questions: what happened in Sarajevo immediately after the official end of the war in respect to artistic and cultural production and which topics occupy artists working in public space; why they chose to work in public space rather than in the art spaces; what are the challenges and benefits of working in the public space; the role of political thinking and political ideas in specific projects realized in Sarajevo; the reactions to these art works; and whether art can create commons and open up space for political commentary or analysis as acts of collective action. I raise these questions with the clear idea that war is not over yet, that the line between war and post-war cannot be drawn clearly. Complexity of the everyday life in Sarajevo after the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995 and today did not change significantly, but it seems that the official end of the armed conflict and the production soon after opened certain “post-war” topics in public space that are related not only to the politics of memory, but also to feminism and the politics of the commons. What is certain is that now we live in a “war by other means.”

In conversations with artists and curators, broader issues were also discussed in relation to the space and resources available for art production and promotion, meeting places and places for exchange, and the art programmes and content offered by the institutions working in the field of culture and the arts. The complexity of these questions requires deeper analysis, beginning with the economic and continuing with the social and political. These considerations I leave aside, however, to deal primarily with the relationships that artists and curators have with city spaces, and to try to highlight both the layers of political stratification and the specificities of its expression in the public spaces with which art is confronted.

Art in the public space

The use of the public space for artistic interventions is a growing trend. Its main aim is to share art with anyone and everyone, literally placing it in the space of the public, rather than choosing the audience or target those already interested in the arts. Interventions in public spaces are also interesting for the fact that they are not usually long-term projects, or their duration is often not predetermined. In her essay *One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity*, the architecture theorist Miwon Kwon (1997) distinguishes between three phases of public art: a phase in which public art was seen as a form of outdoor sculpture that “enriched” urban areas; a phase in which art was seen as a public space that seeks to integrate art, architecture and the environment; and, lastly the phase of arts in the public interest (or public art of new genre/ New Genre Public Art), which is strongly concerned with social issues and works to increase political awareness in society.

Art intervenes in a “more or less coherent system of non-verbal symbols and signs” (Lefebvre, 1991: 39) of the representational space, which is established and marked with the symbols and signs of those who manage the collective experience and create the dominant image and narrative. In such a space it is difficult to present works whose content and message create places of discomfort, places of strife or places of conflict, and to escape established frameworks.

Art enters the public space in different forms – as an installation, sculpture or an urban intervention, or as street art, public art and so on. Art in the public interest, as Kwon (1997) suggests, produces an ever-changing space for the city – a space of change and emancipation that creates new meanings. In this sense, the task of art is to create a space of association in which to engage, that is, to position and respond to the needs of those who use the space, and to use art as a tool in the struggle for the public interest. At bottom, questions about what is and is not public art, how we understand art and the significance it has, seem to have more than one answer.

Nate Thompson suggests that it is strange that our “civilization has reached the point where we have to use a phrase such as *public art*”, as it leads to questions about the way in which art became private, inaccessible or only available in controlled ways, and about how it has been involved in the public discourse (Govedić, 2012). However, he also suggests that we conceive of two separate definitions of public art: first, the art that leaves galleries and museums behind; and, second, the practices we use to re-evaluate, stage differently and politicize the public space. As Thompson says, “Maybe we could even say that public art is a way to create politics with the help of, or by using, the public spaces”. In the broadest sense, public art could be understood “as every elaborated tactic to create meaning. Every intellectual and emotional connection with other people” (cited in Govedić, 2012).¹

¹ Translation by author.

Entry into the public space

The reason for trying to draw a connection between art and politics lies in the idea that art in today's society is only entertainment for the rich and the weird. It is a commodity that is almost useless and almost certainly highly unattractive in the context of people meeting their basic needs. Under such circumstances, there is no place for those who see art as an essential need – those who believe that “art is not a mirror, but a hammer: it does not reflect, it shapes” (Trotsky, 1924: 22) or that “only through art can we emerge from ourselves and know what another person sees” (Proust cited in Descombes, 1992: 43). It is easy to characterize such people as zealots. In either case the question remains whether art is in the public interest or just an indulgence of the cared for and the privileged. One thing is certain: to work in a public space is to believe in the idea of public space. The aim of working in the public space is: “to maintain or to create physical places that will encourage all social groups to adopt them physically and symbolically, and be able to serve as a stage for performing identity and self-presentation, and as a place for learning in the face of the unknown and for forming opinions” (Glasz, 2013).²

Space is an issue that in many ways directly and even crucially concerns art. There is an obvious lack of “space for art”, or spaces for exhibition or performance, but what is often forgotten is the lack of spaces for the production of art. Hence the entry of art into the public space is in itself political, particularly because public space is there to resonate all the problematics of today's politics. Consequently, working in the public space means disrupting stability, opening up questions, criticizing and calling for criticism, and finally problematizing important political issues, as well as so much more.

To choose technically inadequate spaces, for which official licences and extreme patience with the city and municipal bureaucracies are needed, means choosing with the intention of sharing our work to make it accessible to all. When an artwork is placed in the public space it not only enables a wider reception and greater openness to public comment, but also educates the audience about what art is all about.

The consensus among everyone I spoke to was that working in the public space is, on so many different levels, different from working in a gallery. According to the artist Lala Raščić:

When you display work in the public space, the first thing that comes to your mind is the interaction with other people. You are leaving something on the street, yourself, as you leave a person there. I think utterly differently about work in a public space and work in a gallery. The gallery space is a controlled environment. Micro focus is for example on the object or a video, in which, and from some position of power, an artwork carries out its performance. Everything is in the interaction in the city, you calculate on it, and you also consider the unfavourable interaction and ever-changing environment. You count on these situations (Personal interview, 2015).

² Translation by the author.

“You should be ready for complete ignorance”, according to the artist Adela Jušić. However, what work in a public space gives you is a completely different relationship between the art and the audience. The audience “in this case does not belong to that small number of people who usually visit exhibitions”, and the real challenge of public work is “to start a conversation, find ways to attract attention and enable the passer-by to feel invited to participate in the exchange of views, in criticism, and so forth” (Personal interview, 2015).

Sometimes working in a public space can be costly, regardless of the artistic motives behind the selection of the specific street, building or square as a space to display work. Bojan Stojčić revealed a little about the motives behind art that directly uses the public space as a place and an object of artistic pursuit. He told how when he was a young graffiti artist he was continually paying fines for the graffiti he drew on walls: “I paid to write and draw around the city. I did it because I wanted to leave part of me there, so when I’m not there, I am there again. I had to be present” (Personal interview, 2015).

A significant step forward in the entry of art into public space was made by the Sarajevo Centre for Contemporary Art (SCCA). Immediately after the war (1992-1995), under the leadership of its director, Dunja Blažević, the SCCA presented some of the most important works in the public space of the city of Sarajevo. The centre organized three annual exhibitions: Meeting Point, at the summer garden, Čulhan, in 1997; Iza ogledala (Behind the Mirror), at different locations in the city in 1998; and Oprez, radovi! (Under Construction!), on the facade and in front of the National Gallery of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1999. It also realized and supported the production of numerous group and individual projects, exhibitions and actions. Later, SCCA also implemented a very interesting multidisciplinary project titled *De/construction of Monument, 2004 – 2007*, which was composed of series of panel discussions, lectures and seminars, artistic presentations, exhibitions and interventions in public space. This project involved particularly important examples of the post-Yugoslav counter-monument-works that rethought the forms, objects and stakes of public memory.³ As Dunja Blažević noted: “After years and years spent in the cellars, this was an instantaneous response to the need to go public, to do and say something important”. The main intention was to ask questions, to provoke and react to social or political situations, not to “decorate the public space” (Personal interview, 2015).

The artist duo Almir Kurt and Samir Plasto share this view and told how their intention was not to create beautiful art, but to raise some questions and some politics: “Our focus was also on the preservation of memory, revitalization of our anti-fascist history and monuments” (Personal interview, 2015). The question that occupied them was constructing statehood, independent of history. As Blažević points out, we find “a useful

³ For more information, see www.scca.ba and <http://scca.ba/scca-projects/deconstruction-of-monument/>

distinction between art in the public space, which we are now talking about, and the public art commissioned by big companies, which place shiny sculptures by major artists as decoration in front of their institutions or corporations” (Personal interview, 2015). She also emphasizes that:

My decision to work in a public space was a political decision; it was made in relation to time and context, and the people I was working with. It seemed to me that we had to go out with all these issues and start again to create a public space in which art is accessible to everyone. The authors of the works were also not afraid of the urban space, or the problems associated with space and sociality at that time, but were concerned with the need to affirm the sociability of the artistic act, rather than with the predetermined social functions of art, per se. Correspondingly, we made this exit into the city to publicly criticize new types of post-war, re-established art, and the politics and practices of exhibiting art (ibid).

For a particular period, setting artworks in a new context, along with the transition from a place of art to a living place that constantly changes, offered the possibility of reaching an audience that had never entered a gallery space to meet with art and artists.

People became accustomed to going to Čulhan⁴ to see the artworks. People from the neighbourhood came often to find out what new was going on. What we in the SCCA insisted on was a dialogue with museums and galleries on their policies, because the spaces for production and representation were poor (ibid).

The SCCA enabled systematic and continual investment of funds that would otherwise have been unavailable for the production of bolder or politically provocative artistic actions. “Some of these artworks are today well known around the world” and they managed “not only to move forward an entire generation of new artists, but also to pose important public questions crucial for the city population and to offer new tactics for thinking about art” (ibid).

In this way, as Blažević already states in the 1997 Meeting Point exhibition text, the artists looked beyond the ruling conventions of art and used new ways in new contexts because the art-historical context was no longer sufficient – the system of reference had changed. As a result, the field for action widened and correspondingly opened up new fields of meaning that require a different reading and understanding of these works (Blažević, 1997).

⁴ Once a hamam and later a café and summer garden in Sarajevo old town.

What kind of art is it?

The political dimension of art in the public space, as a space of politics, will consist of questions, a disturbance of stability, reactions and comments once it becomes a public matter. It will speak to various publics and produce different meanings but also provoke certain reactions. We can see this in a practice of one of the pioneers of this period, Nebojša Šerić Shoba. His work, *Ispod svih tih zastava* (see Photo 1), placed translucent nylon flags on the flagpoles along the Obala Kulina Bana in Sarajevo. On the opening day of the exhibition, however, on the orders of the Prime Minister of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mustafa Mujazinović, the flags were removed. Censorship of this work, which was a radical response to an artwork dealing with national symbols and, as Shoba argues, “with their transparency”, showed not only that there is a force that can remove art that it defines as or considers radical from the public space, but also that it can make these decisions summarily and without consultation on the public interest’ (Personal interview, 2015).⁵ This act remains today a reminder of the repressive system that limits freedom of action and reinstitutes standards that must be subject to criticism and reaction.



Photo 1. *Ispod svih tih zastava* (Under All These Flags), Nebojša Šerić Shoba, 1999.

Shoba believes that it was necessary “to throw these things into people’s faces and impose certain topics” (ibid). A number of his street performances were just such an attempt to directly impose certain topics. There was a musical performance on a guitar without strings performed with soundless singing, *No lyrics, No Music, No country...Nothing* (1996); his performance of cleaning in front of embassies, *Cleaning the Garbage in Front of the EU Embassies after Visa Applicants* (1999); and his famous sculpture of Ikar, *Monument to the International Community by the Grateful Citizens of Sarajevo* (2007). Ikar is a can of meat that Sarajevans received via humanitarian aid during the siege of

⁵ For more on Shoba, see <http://www.shobaart.com/>

1992–1995. It was the worst possible meat and is remembered by the people of Sarajevo with disgust, who often claim that even cats and dogs refused to eat it. The monument in the form of a huge can was positioned on the plateau behind the Historical Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina after the authorities refused to place it opposite the Presidency Building and hence blunted the artist's edge. As Shoba noted, the monument, "was supposed to be a reminder to politicians that this Ikar 'is our fate'. In some ways we are still getting it. This should never happen to us again, to have to live off other people's humanitarian aid" (ibid).

Also important is the work by Kurt & Plasto, *Odlukom komisije: svak na svoje* (see Photo 2). By toying with the motif of Annex Seven to the Dayton Peace Accord⁶ ("Everyone to One's Own") this work comments on the process of erasing and forgetting our heritage (Dani, 2011).⁷ The artwork was concerned with the busts of famous writers that had been removed from Oslobođenje Square at the beginning of the war and stored in the basement of Dom Pisaca (the House of Writers) for seven years. To draw public attention to this issue and start discussing the possibility of returning them to their original positions, Kurt & Plasto placed busts of themselves on the empty pedestals in the park. Eight busts were illegally placed there on the evening of 24 November 2001. One was pulled down during the night and, after someone reported the matter, a policeman spent the entire night guarding the remaining busts in the snow and cold.



Photo 2. *Odlukom komisije: svak na svoje* ("By the Commission's Decision: Everyone to One's Own"), Kurt & Plasto, 2001.

Finally, a few days later and without the permission of the authorities, the original busts were returned to their places. The artists do not know whether the City Assembly ever took an official decision to return them. With the support of journalists, intellectuals, the SCCA and others, the busts of writers Ivo Andrić, Branko Ćopić, Meša Selimović, Mak Dizdar, Rodoljub Čolaković, Isak Samokovlija, Skender Kulenović were returned, but not the bust of the more controversial Veselin Masleša.⁸ In a letter to the Minister of Culture, Gradimir Gojer, the shareholders of the Svjetlost Company, asked to relocate the bust of Masleša in order to replace it with a bust of Abdullah Jasenković (the late director of the Svjetlost company). After a series of actions in 2011, however, the bust of Masleša was also reinstated (Radio Sarajevo, 2011).

⁶ Dayton Peace Agreement, Annex 7: Agreement on Refugees and Displaced Persons, 1995

⁷ Translation by the author.

⁸ All the busts were of famous Yugoslav revolutionary writers and anti-fascists.

Other works by Kurt & Plasto also tend to critique political realities. The work *500 metara je pola kilometra* (see Photo 3), for example, developed within the framework of the second annual exhibition of the SCCA, was placed on the bed of the river Miljacka at a distance of around 500 metres between the Skenderija and Čobanija bridges. Here the artists sought to provoke the authorities with a sarcastic commentary on the progress of reconstruction and on rebuilding Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Photo 3. *500 metara je pola kilometra* (500 Metres is Half a Kilometre), Kurt & Plasto, 1998.

Similarly, in the installation *Žene i djeca prvo* (see Photo 4), by placing lifeboats on the facade of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Art Gallery, which at the time was covered by scaffolding, the artists depicted the uncertain future of an institution sailing through turbulent waters.



Photo 4. *Žene i djeca prvo* (Women and Children First), Kurt & Plasto, 1999.

A number of other artists also placed their works in public spaces. The installations *Women at Work: Under Construction* (1999), by Maja Bajević⁹ and *Ekspres Preporučeno* (Special delivery, 2000) by Zlatan Filipović, for example, dealt with the restoration and reopening of the The National Gallery of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo. In his work Filipović first “wrapped up” the gallery building and then “opened it like a present”

⁹ For more on Bajević, see <http://majabajevic.com/works/women-at-work-under-construction/>

at the opening.¹⁰ Similarly, Braco Dimitrijević placed one of his most famous works, *Under this Stone there is a Monument to the Victims of War and Cold War* (2005), in front of the Historical Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is a block of stone measuring 150x150x300 cm, on which the phrase ‘under this stone is a monument to victims of the war and the Cold War’ is engraved in four languages, on all four sides. The monument is placed immediately in front of the Historical Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Today it looks as if it has been standing there for a long time, turning it into a sign or a signpost to another monument. In this way it loses its monumentality and stands as a reminder and a fundamental questioning of the meaning and significance of monuments in general.

In August 2000, on the sixth anniversary of the Markale massacre, Alma Suljević sold soil from the minefields in Sarajevo’s famous open market.¹¹ The work 4ENTITY (see Photo 5) was produced independently by Suljević herself and she donated the money collected from the “sale” of the soil to demining activities. She stated that she would first demine the land, then bring it with her, sell it and return to the minefields to reinvest the money in demining, thereby creating a cycle or an ontological circle: “The soil is a symbol in itself. Maybe I wanted to remind the people that we’ve all come from soil, it’s an eternity we are facing and the short life we all live. Perhaps we should spend it differently, maybe we should all live better lives...”.



Photo 5. 4ENTITY, Alma Suljević, 2000.

¹⁰ For more on Filipović, see www.zfilipovic.com

¹¹ The Markale massacres targeted civilians during the Siege of Sarajevo. The market place is located in the historic core of Sarajevo. In the first massacre, on 5 February 1994, 68 people were killed and 144 more were wounded. In the second on 28 August 1995 five mortar shells killed 43 people and wounded 75 others. The second attack was the reason given for the NATO airstrikes on Bosnian Serb forces that eventually led to the Dayton Peace Accords and the end of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

For one of her first works, *Knjiga utisaka* (see Photo 6), Lala Raščić placed empty notebooks in public spaces around Sarajevo, Zagreb and Ljubljana:

In each city I left ten empty notebooks with the inscription *Knjiga utisaka* (Book of impressions). The books were placed in various urban public places, such as markets, squares, streets, bars, public toilets, clubs and phone booths. The books were designed to be a place, a space where anyone could leave, write or draw their impression of anything. I was interested in the introduction of an unspecified stimulant in a public space usually overcrowded with consumer content. I wanted to introduce the ordinary passer-by to the art project without marking this action as an artistic act. The content in the books is actually the real content of the project (Raščić, 1998/2015).

The project was presented in Sarajevo as part of *Behind the Mirror* in 1998. Books were placed in different locations to enable a diversity of reactions – from complete indifference to participation or non-participation. The aim was to allow “art to be present and available to everyone, and that there should be an interaction with individuals through these micro collectors of impressions. The performativity of this work, which I later continued in my other works, was an interaction that I could not control”. Only one book has been preserved – one of impressions from Sarajevo. Raščić has said that she has no interest in gallery spaces today because “The gallery space is too neutral”. She prefers multi-purpose halls and spaces that are not used by galleries: “I want my work to resonate, which is why I have always loved performing in spaces such as Zvono gallery”.¹²



Photo 6. *Knjiga utisaka* (Book of Impressions), Lala Raščić, 1998.

¹² For more on the Zvono Gallery, see <https://www.facebook.com/galerijazvono>.

Bojan Stojčić often chooses public space as a place for his works, which are usually *in situ* artworks directly connected to a chosen location: “I do not want to bring the finished work there, but rather to respond to the politics of a certain time and space. I am part of this space; it forms the landscape of my existence and constructs my life. This ruin is my life. It reacts to me and I react to it” (Personal interview, 2015).

In his works the public space includes media space too. *Tražim osobu* (see Photo 7) is an anonymous advertisement in which a guy is looking for a person to talk with about art. Although the work was originally created in the street and was pasted on a phone booth, it has had a continuing life through the media space. All the layers of this work, its different meanings and messages, were evident from the different reactions of the public: “After the media perceived it as ‘an ad that saddened the region’ and shared it and published it everywhere I could not affect how the work would be understood... The reception for this work was exceptional, and my main intention, to communicate with the public, was satisfied through long conversations, laughter or exchanges”.

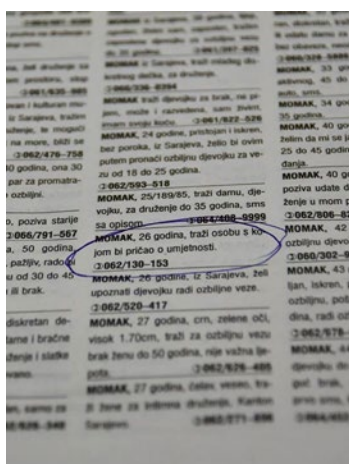


Photo 7. *Tražim osobu* (I’m Looking for a Person), Bojan Stojčić, 2015. The text reads in translation: Male, 26 years old, seeks a person to talk with about art, tel: 062/130-153.

Working in a public space – a space that is neither a museum nor a gallery – inevitably raises questions about the institutions we are accustomed to visiting in search of art. The role of these institutions, as Stojčić notes, is to “educate, record and classify, so art can become a historical fact”. At the same time, however, when talking about art, he states that “the moment it enters the museum, it is dead”. Conversely, “what is happening on the street, it’s alive, it’s human. Everything is alive on the street; it reproduces itself and allows various readings” (ibid).

Some works deal directly with specific spaces, such as the art project by Adela Jušić and Lana Čmajčanin. *SubDocumentary* (see Photo 8) examines the status and questions the use of the Skenderija shopping centre,¹³ and raises questions about public space and

¹³ For more about the work see <https://adelajusic.wordpress.com/works/subdocumentary/> and

collective memory, as well as the role of art in a society in transition (Meran, 2011).¹⁴ Skenderija is one of the few shopping centres in the city still in public ownership. It has also long been the location and home of the remarkable collection of the *Charlama depo»* gallery run by Jusuf Hadžifejzović.¹⁵ For a short period, a large number of small shops in Skenderija were transformed into art studios.

Through conversations with owners and shopkeepers, employees and artists who had temporary studios there, we had an opportunity to see the personal, but also collective utopias based on beliefs and dreams. Possibilities for the revitalization of this space, such an important place for rest and sociality in socialist times, were investigated and discussed and further raised issues of transition, personal life situations, past, present and future. This multi-channel video installation with an archive is perhaps the only living monument to the past and future of this place (Meran, 2011).



Photo 8. *SubDocumentary*, Adela Jušić and Lana Čmajčanin, 2011.

Another work from recent history “provoked” the authorities and led to its exhibition being cancelled, at least in the original intended location. The exhibition “Challenges and Achievements” was set up inside the Bosnia and Herzegovina Parliament. The curator, Sabina Ćudić, chose works that, among other things, problematized the decisions made by parliament. A work by Lana Čmajčanin, *Bosna i Hercegovina: krojenje i šivanje* (see Photo 9)¹⁶ was, along with the works of Šejla Kamerić,¹⁷ Sandra Dukić,¹⁸ Borjana Mrđa¹⁹ and Adela Jušić,²⁰ supposed to be part of the exhibition in the atrium of the parliament building.²¹ However, given that it satirized the “Dayton division” of Bosnia and Herzegovina, played with the constituent elements of statehood (third entity, counties) and offered the possibility of a DIY “retailoring” of the state based on the viewers’ own personal needs, it was decided that the work could not be displayed, as Lana Čmajčanin put it, within the walls of the state apparatus.

<http://www.lanacmajcanin.com/collaborative-works/item/57-subdocumentary>

¹⁴ See further the exhibition text by Eva Meran for *Be realistic: demand the impossible!*, curated by Lejla Hodžić, Karin Lernbeiß, Margarethe Makovec, Eva Meran, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Rotor, Graz, 2012

¹⁵ For more about Charlama see <<https://cekacharlama.wordpress.com/>>.

¹⁶ For more on Lana Čmajčanin, see <http://www.lanacmajcanin.com/>

¹⁷ For more on Šejla Kamerić, see <http://sejlakameric.com/>

¹⁸ For more on Sandra Dukić, see http://www.scca.ba/zvono/2007/sandra_dukic.php?lang=bh

¹⁹ For more on Borjana Mrđa, see <http://borjanamrdja.info/>

²⁰ For more on Adela Jušić, see <https://adelajusic.wordpress.com/>

²¹ For more on the exhibition, see <http://arsbih.gov.ba/1734/>

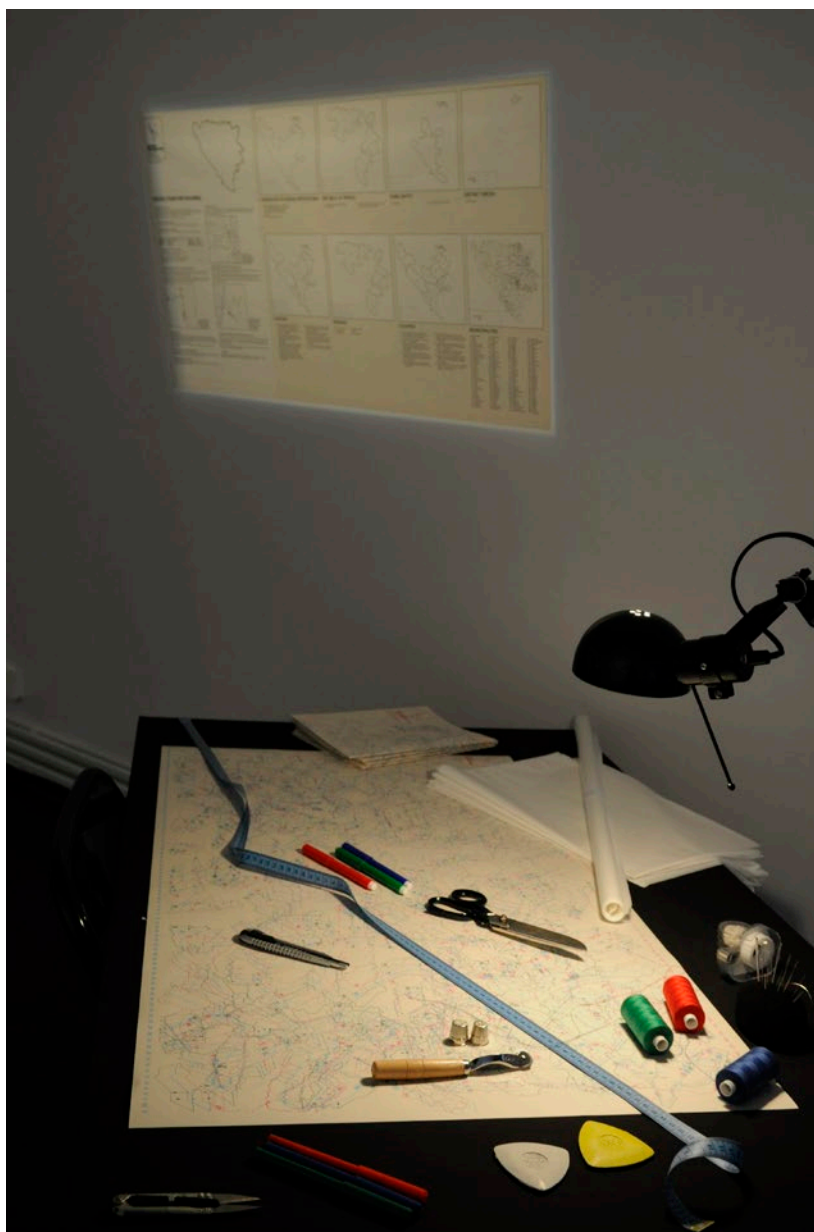


Photo 9. *Bosna i Hercegovina: krojenje i šivanje* (Bosnia and Herzegovina: Tailoring and Sewing), Lana Čmajčanin, 2014.

This work was later produced and exhibited in Sarajevo as part of the collective exhibition 'My House is Your House Too'.²² A small number of other works addressing the status and role of women, women's bodies and women's work also formed part of this exhibition. These were placed in the public space while also using the Historical Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a surface on which to intervene. An artwork stencilled on the wall by Emina Kujundžić, *Svila i kadifa* (see Photo 10), produced for this exhibition,

²² The exhibition was curated by the author and produced by the Association for Culture and Art (CRVENA) in association with the Sarajevo Open Centre. The exhibiting artists were Adela Jušić and Andreja Dugandžić, Emina Kujundžić, and Lana Čmajčanin and Sandra Dukić. There was also a screening of the film *Krešo Golik*, see <http://www.radiosarajevo.ba/mobile/novost/167186> and <http://www.crvena.ba/izlozba-moja-kuca-je-i-tvoja-kuca/>

displayed nine women from Emina's past whose dress indicated how they had walked the roads of liberation, emancipation and rebellion in the past 100 years.²³



Photo 10. *Svila i kadifa* (Silk and Velvet), Emina Kujundžić, 2014.

Also part of the exhibition, the collaborative work *Rad ljubavi* by Adela Jušić and Andreja Dugandžić (see Photo 11),²⁴ was hung on the outer wall of the Historical Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This black and white print, measuring around 45 square metres, was a surface on which the artists intervened with sprays and acrylic colours in a sort of street performance prior to the exhibition. The work deals in a didactic way with the denaturalization of household work, and is inspired by the works of Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Selma James, Silvia Federici and the movement “wages for housework”. According to Jušić and Dugandžić, the three days it took to set up the work were “very interesting...because we were faced with a variety of reactions”:

“Of course we counted in advance on this communication with the passers-by, and we were ready for talks, debates, criticism and support. We ran into a lot of support and people's willingness to talk. Women coming home from work would stop to look at the work and start conversations with us from which we learned that most of them really miss someone to come forward with what they already know, feel, think or suffer' (Personal interview, 2015)

²³ For more on Emina Kujundžić, see <https://emina.ba>

²⁴ For more on Andreja Dugandžić, see <https://andrejadugandzic.wordpress.com/>



Photo 11. *Rad ljubavi* (Labour of Love), Adela Jušić and Andreja Dugandžić, 2014.

A story of the role of cultural institutions may best be ended with a public intervention. In her work *Pazi muzej* (see Photo 12), Nardina Zubanović draws parallels between the time the city was destroyed with weapons, and the current period when it is being destroyed by other means. The title means ‘Watch out museum’; a reminder of the wartime signs “watch out sniper”. Zubanović states that the work is “my personal protest against the current situation in which the citizens, cultural institutions such as the National and Historical Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as artists find themselves”. The work is also a statement that “culturocide” and the destruction of society did not end with the war but still lurk like phantoms over the future of culture.



Photo 12. *Pazi muzej* (Watch out museum), Nardina Zubanović, 2015.

Towards the place of commons and conclusion

It is clear that the post-war period (after 1995) was extremely productive, at least when it comes to art in the public space. Among the reasons for this are the state of general enthusiasm with which the war's end was greeted and the possibility of the free use of the city's spaces, as well as the new atmosphere in the city after the war. The artists I have spoken to were occupied with various political issues, ranging from nationalism, the role of the international community during and after the war in Sarajevo, the return to forgotten emancipatory history and heritage, and post-war reconstruction. Many of them were concerned with the culture and art institutions and discussed their uncertain future. At the same time they started reclaiming the public space with works that provoked political commentary and created new forms of sociality, but also used media and the internet to open towards even wider publics. There was also a significant production of feminist art dealing with women's history, contemporary statehood as well as with emancipation of women and issues of unpaid labour.

For many of them, using public space was a political decision and a reaction to the fact that the public space is being occupied with content that does not provoke political thinking or sociality, but rather serves as a space for product placement or space for a new monument to war or violence. The challenge to work in such a public space is huge and requires different tactics and ways of work. Technically, public space also lacks privileges of the art spaces in respect to production, setting up and exhibiting, security of the artwork and so forth. In spite of that, artists consciously made the shift from art spaces and galleries to public space while at the same time calling for participation of the ordinary passer-by and claiming that art belongs to everyone and everyone is entitled to partake and comment. As expected, they provoked engagement on one side and censorship on the other.

A significant impulse for the artworks produced in the period soon after 1995 came from the SCCA, particularly its annual exhibitions mentioned earlier and projects such as *Deconstruction of Monuments*. Later, as investment in art production declined, the number of interventions in the public space fell and this form of art production unfortunately became more sporadic. Nevertheless, artists gathered around CRVENA, Association for Culture and Art, continued to work and produce in the public space from 2010 onwards, but also struggle with lack of resources for such productions.

Like a red thread, the idea of the potentiality of art is not only to create places of commons – unusual, debatable and charged with questions and answers – but also to open up places for new knowledge developed through all the conversations with artists and curators, as well as through the artworks depicted above. Furthermore, these artworks help us to understand how art leads to political action, but also how political action evokes art.

Under the “flag” of the public interest, art in the public space will understandably take place under the watchful eye of those who, by law, have priority in the design of that public space. As some of the interviewees underlined, manipulation is possible in this regard partly because there is no official counterpart to provide resistance to retrograde policies. However, I must add here that such resistance exists in all the above cases, and also in other significant works not included in this article. The nature of public space, its temporality and spatiality, add special value to all these works not only because they cause cognitive reactions, but also because they constantly question both representation and meaning. In this way, through art in the public space the politic becomes performative and, within a given time and context, usurps the place where policies on public matters are made. Finally, art enters into this dialogue with the politic or politics, thereby transcending itself and its future, which according to Lefebvre “is not artistic, but urban” (1991: xx).²⁵

References

- Bajević, M. <http://majabajevic.com/works/women-at-work-under-construction/>
- Blažević, D. 2003. *Meeting point*, available at http://www.c3.hu/ican.artnet.org/ican/text6d8b.html?id_text=58
- Burić, A. 2001. ‘Andrić nikad nije ovako izgledao’ Dani br.234, 30.11.2001, available at <https://www.bhdani.ba/portal/arhiva-67-281/234/opservatorij.shtml>
- Charlama, J. <https://cekacharlama.wordpress.com/>
- Čmajčanin L. <http://www.lanacmajcanin.com/>
- CRVENA. www.crvena.ba
- Dukić, S. http://www.scca.ba/zvono/2007/sandra_dukic.php?lang=bhDani. 30 November, 2001.
- Descombes, V. 1992. *Proust: philosophy of the novel*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Dugandžić, A. <https://andrejadugandzic.wordpress.com/>
- Filipović, Z. <http://www.zfilipovic.com/>
- Galerija Zvono. <https://www.facebook.com/galerijazvono>
- Glasz, G. 2013. ‘Baština, mi i svijet 22.lipnja 2013’ (intervju). Snješka Knežević za HRT radio, Available at <http://radio.hrt.hr/clanak/bastina-mi-i-svijet-22lipnja-2013/19738/>
- Govedić, N. 20 December, 2012. ‘Stvaranje politike pomoću javnog prostora’, razgovor sa Natom Thompsonom. Zarez, broj 348. Available at <http://zarez.hr/clanci/stvaranje-politike-pomocu-javnog-prostora>.
- Jušić, A. <https://adelajusic.wordpress.com/>
- Kamerić, Š. <http://sejlakameric.com/>
- Kujundžić, E. <https://emina.ba>
- Kwon, M. 1997. *One Place after Another: Notes on Site Specificity*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

²⁵ The art of living in the city as a work of art. In other words, the future of art is not artistic, but urban.

- Lefebvre, H. 1991. *The Production of Space*. Blackwell Publishing, Oxford.
- Meran, E. 2011. *Spaceship Yugoslavia: The Suspension of Time*, Exhibition catalogue, Berlin: Argbooks.
- Mrđa, B. <http://borjanamrdja.info/>
- Personal interview. 19 August 2015. Bojan Stojčić, Sarajevo
- Personal interview. 20 August, 2015. Adela Jušić, Sarajevo
- Personal interview. 20 August, 2015. Andreja Dugandžić, Sarajevo
- Personal interview. 21 August, 2015. Lana Čmajčanin, Sarajevo
- Personal interview. 22 August, 2015. Samir Plasto, Sarajevo
- Personal interview. 24 August, 2015. Zlatan Filipović, Sarajevo
- Personal interview. 12 September, 2015. Lala Raščić, Sarajevo
- Personal interview. 13 September 2015. Alma Suljević, Sarajevo
- Personal interview. 15 September 2015. Nebojša Shoba Šerić, online
- Personal interview. 5 October, 2015. Dunja Blažević, online
- Radio Sarajevo. 2011. 'Vratio se Veselin Masleša'. Available at <https://www.radiosarajevo.ba/metromahala/kultura/vratio-se-veselin-maslesa/55737>
- Raščić, L. 1998. Artist statement *Knjiga Utisaka*, courtesy of the artist.
- Raščić, L. www.lalarascic.com
- Rotor. http://www.rotor.mur.at/con_seidrealistisch_eng.html?a
- SCCA. www.scca.ba
- Shoba, N. Š. <http://www.shobaart.com/>
- Stojčić, B. www.bojanstojcic.com
- Spaceship Yugoslavia/The suspension of time. 2011. Berlin: Argbooks.
- Trotsky, L. 1924. *Literature and Revolution*. New York: International Publishers (English translation).

About the Working Papers Series

The Working Paper Series is an in-house refereed online publication in the field of peace and memory studies, published by the Research Cluster on Peace, Memory and Cultural Heritage. It offers an opportunity for members and other researchers to publish their work continuously in various stages of development. The authors hold copyright to the papers. Papers published in this series may be cited as follows: Author. Month, Year. Title. *Peace and Memory Working Paper no. X*.

Series Editor: Johanna Mannergren Selimovic

Correspondence to: johanna.mannergren@ui.se

Visit the project's website: www.peaceandmemory.net

In Series

1. Björkdahl, Annika, Susanne Buckley-Zistel, Stefanie Kappler, Johanna Mannergren Selimovic and Timothy Williams: *Memory Politics, Cultural Heritage and Peace. Introducing an analytical framework to study mnemonic formations*
2. Danijela Dugandžić: *Politics between Art and Space: Sarajevo, after 1995*