

Belgrade: Exhibition 'EXCEPTION' forced to close before opening

The Exhibition EXCEPTION, Contemporary art scene from Prishtina (Kosova) that has been scheduled to open on the February 7th 2008 in Belgrade at KONTEKST Gallery (to be on display until February 15th 2008) was forced to close just before the opening.

The Serbian police that had to intervene just before the opening estimated that it can not guarantee safety to the artists, curators and the public, after an organized group of Serbian nationalist forces attacked the gallery space and even destroyed the work Face to face by Dren Maljici.

The curators Vida Knezevic, Kristian Lukic, Ivana Marjanovic and Gordana Nikolic have asked publicly on February 8th 2008 the Ministry of culture of Serbia and the city of Belgrade to react firmly against such nationalist forces in order to protect the artists and the exhibition in the future. The curators insist on the right to present the project in Belgrade in the near future.

The exhibition was presented previously at the Museum of Contemporary Art Vojvodina, Novi Sad (22.01 – 05.02.2008)

The exhibition is a joint effort of two organization Kontekst, Belgrade and Napon, Novi Sad.

Kosovo Baby Doll

The work of Alketa Xhafa Mripa reflects the position and role of a woman in the modern society which is drowning itself in consumerism, something the Kosovo society is running towards, too. According to Alketa, women are becoming anonymous objects of desire and utilisation, and are epitomised in this attractive erotic doll, Baby Doll, that acquires energy from an outer source, like house appliances do...

...Essentially, just as any Baby Doll, this woman represents Alketa's vision of male, hypocritical projection of what an 'ideal' Kosovo woman today should look like: she should be attractive and supple, but in a manner that she has no personality; she should pretend that she is honest and a virgin and wear on herself the fig leaf of the national awareness.

Shkëlzen Maliqi (from the Exhibition catalogue, PDF)

Alketa Xhafa Mripa was born in 1980 in Pec. She finished her BA Honorary degree studies at St Martin's college, London in 2003 and has continued her studies at the Tate Museum of Modern History of Art. In 2005 she was awarded BAs at the 'Artsdepot in London', and the same year her work was exhibited in Paris in the 'Museum of Chaville'.

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Japan

Japan or The Flag of Virginity is just my way to break one of many taboos that exist in primitive societies, and those that still consider virginity as something sacred,ethical and as a symbol of female dignified within a society, a female who is a role model and a representative of morality and family pride...

...The honour given to the flag (to the Virginity Flag) is only the irony against this blind belief in this flag that does not always represent purity, ethics and pride. The title "Japan" is used as a symbol or a metaphor of what can be seen in the video, and it has not been my intention to insult the Japanese people nor their flag.

Fitore Isufi-Koja (from the Exhibition catalogue, PDF)

Fitore Isufi-Koja born on 12 September 1982 in Gnjilan, Kosovo; Education: 2000-2004 she studied painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prishtina and currently she is a postgraduate student. Disciplines: painting, video installations and performances Important Collective exhibitions: 2002 "Identity"; Philippe Auguste, Vernon, France; 2005 "Relations"; Porticus Museum, Frankfurt, Germany; Residencies: 2006 International Studio and Curatorial Program (ISCP), New York

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The Flag

“You are all I have to tell me who I am” she said, holding on to her flag as if it was all she was left with. A heroic action taken for a purpose of self liberation, The Flag represents one’s search of identity, gender and its place in the society. The dialogue between the naked woman and the Albanian flag; their secret meeting in the middle of the night for the purpose of singing the national anthem represent the uncanny that raises the awareness of the human body in relationship to time and space and the struggle of one’s self-expression in finding one’s own Identity.

Nurhan Qehaja (from the Exhibition catalogue, PDF)

Nurhan Qehaja was born 10 April 1981 in Prishtina, Kosovo. Completed her Bachelor of Visual Arts and MA in Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand; Currently working in Prishtina, Nurhan has collaborated in four shows with New Zealand young artists including two individual performances and one individual photography exhibition in Auckland, New Zealand. Prizes: Parsons Book Award for best photography student 2002

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Our Death, Others’ Dinner

The saying “Our death, Others’ Dinner” (Deka jonë, dreka e huaj) sounds just like a phrase, but it is much more than that. For centuries, when someone dies in an Albanian family, the relatives of the deceased family bring food they prepared at their homes to help deal with pain caused by the loss and share the grief of the bereaved. In this case the saying “Our death, others’ dinner” is used as a metaphor, and it shows the artist as one who makes the dinner to alleviate the misfortune of the other.

As a conclusion, regarding the question “Should the victim be victimized for the second time if it is used as a concept for an artistic creation?” a video of the group “Jericho” and their song “When is the Song Going to Stop” is used. This video is dedicated to war victims missing since 1998 in Kosovo, and another video which initiates a usual debate amongst the victims, where you can see their reactions and the attitude they have towards the Jericho’s song.

Flaka Haliti (from the Exhibition catalogue, PDF)

Flaka Haliti was born in 1982 in Prishtina. Studied at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Prishtina University. Participated in different art exhibition projects, both individually and collective, locally and abroad Porticus, Frankfurt; REX & B92, Belgrade; Sparwasser, Berlin; Exodus Onstage Festival; Station, Prishtina; NoD Gallery, Prague Since 2007, Haliti has been teaching *Æsthetics of Space* at Prishtina University, Architecture Department.

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EXCEPTION - Contemporary art scene from Prishtina

The exhibition represents a segment of the production of young artists from Prishtina which emerged during specific social, cultural, economic and political contexts of the contemporary Kosovo. The exhibition is about questioning dominant cultural hegemonies, national and gender identities in the field of visual art which are defined by Balkan particularities, doctrines of limited sovereignty, conflicts of global security alliances, nationalisms, conditions and consequences of Euro-Atlantic integrations and strengthening of neo-liberal capitalism.

ARTISTS: Artan Balaj / Jakup Ferri / Driton Hajredini / Flaka Haliti / Fitore Isufi Koja / Dren Maliqi / Alban Muja / Vigan Nimani / Nurhan Qehaja / Alketa Xhafa / Lulzim Zeqiri

CURATORS: Vida Knezevic (Belgrade), Kristian Lukic (Novi Sad), Ivana Marjanovic (Vienna/Belgrade), Gordana Nikolic (Novi Sad)

SUPPORT and inquiry:

KONTEKST galerija

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