

Research proposal
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- Pristine Project 2008 -

In February this year the Kontekst gallery in Belgrade opened the Exhibition "Exception" of works by young Kosovar Albanian artists. The exhibition came to my attention through a Belgrade-based artist friend who helped me to make contact with the gallery and curator. The exhibition represents a segment of the production of young artists from Pristine which emerged from specific social, cultural, economic and political contexts of the contemporary Kosovo.

During the opening of the exhibition an organized group of Serbian nationalists stopped the event by violent means and destroyed one artist's representation of a known albanian chief commander of the UCK in a Warhol-esque style. They wanted to disrupt the exhibition, not only because they objected to the work of art but also as a form of protest against Kosovo's striving for independence. The Serbian police had to intervene as they decided that they could not guarantee the safety of the curators and the public.

Later a web site was set up to document the exhibition and the reaction that it had provoked, a detailed online discussion followed. What impressed me and interested me about this discussion was the general consensus that it was not permissible to exhibit art made in Kosovo in Serbia, in other words, that based on this fact alone the audience had been offended. The question of why Kosovar art had been exhibited in Serbia at all came to be in the foreground of the discussion.

For me to reflect on this topic is not without risk, given the fact that as a German, I myself am an outsider to this region. I have neither experienced the war itself nor the circumstances under which people in that part of the world live their lives. I would nevertheless like to contextualize this exhibition in somewhat different terms.

The first question is, of course, whether the issues and content conveyed by the works of art within the original exhibition is limited in significance to the context of Belgrade, or whether the intellectual and political implications might have a relevance and a weight beyond this particular context. Should the same exhibition have been installed in a completely different city where might the discussion have led?

In addition, I hope that a public event would bring forward and offer a forum to the participants in the online forum, who up until this point have remained invisible (their contributions, thoughts and comments might be included in the public discussion, either through their literal presence or in the form of recorded interviews). Would such a meta documentation of the original exhibition lead us to a greater degree of truth or a better understanding of the issues that it addressed and provoked? To what extent can we - as outsiders unfamiliar to a particular social and political context - achieve a proximity to and understanding of issues foreign to our own experience? To what extent might such a return to the exhibition be a reflection on the source exhibition and to what extent would such a meta event conjure up an entirely new set of issues and questions that were not discussed in response to the original exhibition?

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