

Exhibitions: Current

[Preview](#)[Archive](#)[Rückwand](#)**Aleksandra Domanovic – From yu to me****1 April–28 May 2012**

Monumentality and national identity - within and beyond borders - are important topics in Aleksandra Domanović's work, which often takes place on the internet as well as she broaches this issue in a reflexive manner. *From yu to me*, Domanović's title for her exhibition at Kunsthalle Basel, describes the breakup of former Yugoslavia. The deactivation of the international, countryspecific, and top-level domain .yu (the internet country abbreviation for the nation) in 2010 can be understood as the final, symbolic elimination of the state of Yugoslavia. Yet, as the existing national identity is banned from the internet, new identities emerge. The federated states become independent and receive their own presence within the virtual world. Montenegro is registered under the domain .me and hence has also virtually become a state of its own. To that end, Domanović repeatedly refers to this political dimension of the internet in the context of Yugoslavia's complicated late history.

Beyond her dealings in the virtual world, Domanović explores the more indirect effects of Yugoslavia's breakup by working with its cultural artefacts - namely, the public monuments that can be found in all parts of the former Yugoslavia. These historical remains play a prominent role in the collective memory of the inhabitants of new post-Yugoslav states. Accordingly, Domanović's practice is a consistently subjective one based on her childhood memories, as opposed to one steadily engaged in her region's current affairs.

Born in 1981 in Novi Sad, in the former Yugoslavia, Domanović studied in Ljubljana and Vienna, and then moved later to Berlin, where she continues to live and work today. Nevertheless, and most tellingly, a visit to her website aleksandradomanovic.com is much more worthwhile and informative than a visit to her studio in Berlin. Domanović makes use of digital media, which she quotes, transforms, and archives for her artistic work. She runs the mostly visual blog vwork.com with three colleagues, which is just one example of how the artist positions herself as mediator, and how she uses the digital archive of images as her very work material.

For her exhibition at Kunsthalle Basel, Domanović will show a series of new sculptures as well as further developed versions of previous works. Her *paper-stacks* (2009 and ongoing) are comprised of A4 and A3 sheets of paper piled into steles. By printing the sheets full-bleed on the margins only, an image is formed on the lateral sides of the stack through the accumulation of thousands of sheets

piled up. In the *paper-stacks*, the query of monumentality is as important as the visualisation of content sourced from the internet. Single specific files downloaded and printed from the internet form the steles of the respective groups. Their subjects, varying from images of football hooligans to the ruins of the former Hotel Marina Lučica situated on the Croatian coast, belong to the symbolic iconography of the new states that emerged after Yugoslavia was dissolved. A stack that presents an image of the Plitvice Lakes National Park, a registered UNESCO World Heritage, functions as a connection to the region in general, as well as part and parcel of the artist's personal memory. Domanović visited this park one year before the so-called Plitvice Lake Incident, the first confrontation of the Croatian War of Independence. Nevertheless, the park is part of a now disbanded collective memory, as it is one of the biggest tourist attractions in the former Yugoslavia.

With her video work *19:30*, Domanović refers to an experience that everyone shared in the former Yugoslavia. At 19:30, the national Yugoslavian television broadcasted the news nationwide. But the artist's *19:30* is a compilation of the news jingles from that former national news station and their transformations over the years. Domanović combines the jingles with their remixes, exclusively commissioned by her, and thus refers to a technoculture in which the music genre cannot be ascribed to one nation, but instead emerges from an itinerant youth culture that makes national borders obsolete. By these means Domanović emphasises how shared experiences can change and constitute an identity, especially by use of the internet as an archive and a platform of exchange. *19:30* can be shown as two-channel video in exhibitions; the artist also adapted sound remixes and parts of the video for Techno parties.

Collective experiences also play an important role in Domanović's video work *Turbo Sculpture* (2012). The term "Turbo Sculpture" designates figurative sculptures that can be currently found everywhere in the former Yugoslavia. Unlike war memorials, these public monuments do not refer to a common history of a specific site or occurrence; they are based, instead, on modern popular culture that knows no *genius loci*. Instead of war heroes, who would have been immortalized by classical monuments, local authorities now decide to eternalize Hollywood stars and heroes of the Western world in bronze and other materials. Bruce Lee, Johnny Depp, Rocky Balboa, and other film characters or public personae (here the real and the fictive figure blur) provide new points of identification for the community. The verbal reference of *Turbo Sculpture* to the term Turbofolk, the regional pop music, suggests that those sculptures remain neutral in the turmoil of political disputes. In the end, Turbofolk became a regional pop music that was not only composed of music from the performers' own regions; it also captured folk music from other countries, including in the Middle East and the Mediterranean area. In the early 1960s, classless and stateless societies were seen as utopias embodied by the Non-Aligned Movement. Many countries from the Middle East and Africa, like Morocco, Syria, or Pakistan, joined this movement in order to emphasise their neutrality during the Cold War. With the idea to create a work that relates the history of the former Yugoslavia with the culture and tradition of Morocco, Domanović recently created a series of sculptures coated with Tadelakt, a finishing material typical of the North African country. Reminiscent, as they are, of the language of abstract forms employed in monumental sculptures in Central and South Europe, the appearance of Domanović's works is complicated by the use of material and technology rooted in a local vernacular tradition. This tension, then, addresses both the exoticization of local craftsmanship and the alienating function of high art's seemingly universal modernist idiom. A case in point is a series of works Domanović developed around Ivan Sabolić's monument of three raised fists at the Bubanj Memorial Park in Niš, Serbia. For her work, the artist translated the three fists into reliefs and a freestanding, open-air sculpture for the Marrakech Biennale. At Kunsthalle Basel, Domanović presents the reliefs with red Tadelakt finishing hung on the wall next to a new work, which itself takes on Bogdan Bogdanović's 1960s monument *Partisanen-Nekropole* in Prilep, Macedonia. Treated with Tadelakt, the sculpture obtains an artificial patina, evoking the historical monument that inspired it.

The sculptures on view at Kunsthalle Basel are accompanied by one large print: it features a computer-

generated rendering of the “regendered” profile of the former president of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito. The masculine personification of nation-building is represented here with subtly female facial features. In Yugoslavia, every school classroom once displayed a portrait of Tito on a wall in front of the pupils. Domanović captured the resemblance of one of her former female schoolteachers to the former president and created a portrait merging both. By using artificially generated brass as a surface of the profile, the picture becomes even more elevated and refers to the steady presence of the monumental character “Tito” in the common mind. And it is this repeated admixture of collective and personal experiences that persist and reappear long after the break-up of Yugoslavia that is the very heart of Domanović’s practice.

Aleksandra Domanović (born in 1981, Novi Sad, former Yugoslavia) lives and works in Berlin, DE. Domanović studied at the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Ljubljana and at the University of Applied Arts Vienna. In 2009 she participated at the Rhizome Commissions Program at the New Museum in New York as well as in 2011 at the residency program of Western Front in Vancouver and Künstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin.

Solo exhibitions (selection): Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin (2012); 19:30, Galerija 001, Ljubljana (2011), 山寨 (Shanzai) TURBO (with Oliver Laric), Western Front, Vancouver (2011); *Shanzai Turbo*, Western Front, Vancouver (2010). **Group exhibitions (selection):** Marrakech Biennale 4th Edition, *Surrender*, Morocco (2012), *In Practice*, SculptureCenter, New York (2012); *Banal Inferno*, CCA Glasgow (2011), *Collect the WWWorld. The Artist as Archivist in the Internet Age*, curated by Domenico Quaranta, Spazio Contempo-ranea, Brescia (2011), *10 x 10: Please Close Your Eyes*, The European Culture Congress, Wrocław (2011), *Imagine being here now*, The 6th Momentum Biennial 2011, Moss, Norway (2011), *based in Berlin*, n.b.k., Berlin (2011); *Free*, New Museum, New York (2010), *From Abstract to Activism*, Eternal Tour, Jerusalem (2010), *Surfing Club*, Plug.in, Basel (2010); *Padiglione Internet*, collateral event of the 53rd Venice Biennale, S.A.L.E, Venice (2009), *The Real Thing*, MU, Eindhoven, The Netherlands (2009); *Tomorrow is Humorless*, Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam (2008), *ideomedija*, The Museum of Vojvodina, Novi Sad (2008); *Ursula Blickle Videopreis 2007*, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna (2007), *The Birds Eye View*, The Barbican, London (2007).

Colophon KUNSTHALLE BASEL, STEINENBERG 7, CH-4051 BASEL · T: +41 61 206 99 00 · F: +41 61 206 99 19 · [E-mail](#)
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