

The Romanian Association for Contemporary Art presents:

**Andreja Kulunčić**

**You Betrayed the Party Just When You Should Have Helped It**

Collaborators: anthropologist Renata Jambrešić Kirin, psychotherapist Dubravka Stijačić,

Collaborator for the Romanian edition of the exhibition: historian Claudia-Florentina Dobre

Curators: Irena Bekić, Anca Mihuleţ

Coordination and management: Anca Poteraşu

Project manager: Camelia Ducaru

Production and logistics: Rafaela Bîrlădeanu

Translator: Iris Rusu

Graphic design: Andrei Şendrea

**The exhibition "You Betrayed the Party Just When You Should Have Helped It" is a part of the project (In)Visible Traces. Artistic Memories of the Cold War, initiated by Documenta in Zagreb and organized together with the Romanian Association for Contemporary Art, Bucharest; Blockfrei, Vienna and The Bautzner Straße Dresden Memorial, Dresden. The project aims to engage artists, researchers, educators, policymakers, and citizens in reflecting, preserving and discussing European cultural heritage, focusing on neglected Cold War-era historical sites.**

The Making of an Anti-monument

**Irena Bekić and Anca Mihuleţ**

The political camps on the islands of Goli Otok and Sveti Grgur were established in 1949, after, in 1948, the Yugoslav state policy opposed the policy of the Informbiro, which was supporting the Russian domination. Conceived for the purpose of "re-education", i.e. isolation and "neutralization" of political dissidents, the camp operated until 1956. During that period, over 13.000 men and 850 women were detained there.

With the art-research-activist project *You Betrayed the Party Just When You Should Have Helped It*, visual artist Andreja Kulunčić reacts to the fact that in the dominant historical narrative about the Goli Otok political camp, as well as in public speech surrounding the theme, the existence of the women's camp, as well as the specificities of the female experience of trauma are completely ignored. In collaboration with feminist anthropologist Renata Jambrešić Kirin and psychotherapist Dubravka Stijačić, the artist addresses this complex problem, strategically developing the project through several sections and directions.

Through artistic spatial interventions at the sites of Goli Otok and Sveti Grgur, exhibitions, a website, publications, and a series of workshops, reading groups and talks, the project deconstructs the deliberate amnesia concerning the history of women on Goli Otok to open a way through to memory. In doing so, it reaches for a subversive commemorative form – an anti-monument – which does not impose memory but seeks it in the constantly renewed permeation of disputed memories and the knowledge and feelings of the audience. The anti-monument thus opens the process of decentralizing collective memory and acts as the filter of acceptance of the

past. In this sense, it actively encourages discussions about how we remember, what we remember and the role of the past in the future.

The exhibition derived from the project focuses on the transformation of the female body subjected to oppression or trauma. Designed to generate a process that develops as the visitor experiences the exhibited works, it does not culminate in a reconstruction of the repression of women inmates, but rhizomatically spreads within the space and time of the exhibition.

The exhibition is conceived as a place of different flows. It becomes an island, an island ambience, a place of remembrance, an island simulacrum, a conduit for existence, a link between a past event and memory: a space for reflection and complementary thinking containing visual materials – drawings, photographs and objects – some of the outcomes of the artistic research; a site for the gestural interpretation of the daily tortures endured by the women on Goli Otok and Sveti Grgur in the form of a video installation; and a zone for participation, which includes making female figurines from clay. The figurines are made by the visitors of the exhibition, during a series of organized workshops or simply as a natural expression of their feelings after visiting the exhibition. It aims to deliver ways of activating memory, while participatory threads are constantly reconfiguring the mechanisms of understanding a marginal historical phenomenon.

Performances by three artists – contemporary dancer Zrinka Užbinec, instrumentalist Jasna Jovičević and vocalist Annette Giesriegl – through the medium of movement, voice and sound, in solo and joint performances in situ, recreate the torturous everyday life of convicts. In doing so, they do not imitate or illustrate suffering, but translate it into movement codes. The selected videos of the performances are placed in the exhibition space in an attempt to emphasize the connection between the stigmatized, hyperbolized body of prisoners and the locality.

Unlike the ambient video installation, the other materials inform us about the artist's research of the site, building a kind of archaeology of the island. Through the series of drawings – outlines of women reproducing gestures specific to the prisoners: screaming, carrying stones, fearing for or protecting their bodies – visitors to the exhibition are brought to the heart of the project. They are confronted with the abstractization of trauma or of bodily pressure, in a form that is tangible as much as it is oneiric.

Likewise, departing from the image of the silent bodies that were once engaged in moving the stones on sharp slopes with tender hands, the artist, in close collaboration with the daughters, grandchildren and nieces of some of the convicts, has marked the female transgenerational presence on these islands, as well as the transmission of trauma. Through the artistic interventions of carving the testimonies of convicts on Goli Otok and Sveti Grgur, transferred to stone in the handwriting of their descendants, Andreja Kulunčić has established a process in which space gained its definition and the natural landscape has become the mental configuration that each visitor will recreate.

Andreja Kulunčić will organize a series of participatory actions entitled *850 Women for 850 Women*, taking as its point of departure a temporary intervention on Goli Otok, in which the clay figurines the artist made grow or merge with the hard surface of the rocks where traces of the camp inmates' work are still visible. Each figurine is dedicated to one of the women held on Goli Otok. Modeling in clay, the participants take part in the transfer of memory from a traumatic past that should not be repeated and simultaneously, in the creation of a mobile monument consisting of 850 ceramic sculptures that will be exhibited in future exhibitions.

As part of the project, the artist was the first, 64 years after the dissolution of the camp, who installed an information board at the Goli Otok and Sveti Grgur women's prison sites. By doing so, Andreja Kulunčić takes on the role of decision-maker, re-establishing the necessary order of things, awareness, respect, and last, empathy. Through the display of a representative photograph of the

plate on the gallery's wall, the author re-establishes the identity of the place, showing that it is an established turning point and that the histories of Goli Otok and Sveti Grgur can no longer be ignored.

**Andreja Kulunčić** is a visual artist, lives in Zagreb. She teaches at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb, Department of New Media. Her art practice is based on exploration of new models of sociability and communication situations, an interest for socially engaged themes, engagement with different audiences, and collaboration on collective projects. She sets up her own interdisciplinary networks, seeing artistic work as a research, process of cooperation and self-organization. Her work has been presented at major international exhibitions, such as Documenta 11 (Kassel); Manifesta 4 (Frankfurt/Main); 8. Istanbul Biennial; Liverpool Biennial 04; 10. Triennale-India (New Delhi). At collective shows in museums, including Whitney Museum of American Art (New York); PS1 (New York); Museo Universitario Arte Contemporáneo – MUAC (Mexico City); Palais de Tokyo (Paris); Museum of Modern Art in Saint-Etienne, etc. At solo shows, including: Museo Universitario Arte Contemporáneo – MUAC (Mexico City); Jorge B. Vargas Museum (Manila); Modern Gallery (Podgorica); Museo Madre (Napoli); Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Rijeka. Website: [www.andreja.info](http://www.andreja.info)

**Irena Bekić** graduated from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb with a degree in art history and comparative literature. Since 1995, she has been employed at the Zagreb City Libraries as the head and curator of the "Prozori" Gallery, and since 2022 as the director of the Art Pavilion in Zagreb. Her interests include artistic and curatorial practices, tracing their research and social transformation potential. She publishes art criticism, forewords for exhibitions and professional texts, curates exhibitions, and is the author or co-author of many artistic, artistic research, and educational projects. Irena Bekić is the founder of the IPAK Association – Research Projects and Author Concepts, and a member of ULUPUH (Croatian Association of Artists of Applied Arts) and the Croatian Section of AICA.

**Anca Mihuleț** is an art historian and independent curator. The projects proposed by Anca are motivated by specific historic and social coordinates, by the institutional frameworks where they take place, but also by her artistic and curatorial collaborations that unfold over the course of several years. In 2016, Mihuleț was awarded one of the "Igor Zabel Grants" and in 2019 she received the Bega Art Prize. She was one of the curators of the Singapore Biennale 2019, a context in which she researched cases of artistic displacement and naturalization caused by conflicts, together with modes in which transmediality can influence our perception onto the future. She is now part of the curatorial team that prepares the inaugural exhibition of the Taichung Art Museum in Taiwan.

**Documenta – Centre for Dealing with the Past**, founded in 2004 in Zagreb by four human rights organizations, researches war events, human rights violations, and war crimes, collects data, and monitors trials to improve judicial standards. Initially focused on the 1990s war in Croatia, its work expanded to address the entire 20th century, including World War II, Yugoslav socialism, and the 1990s conflicts in the whole region. Its mission is to shift discussions from factual disputes to meaningful interpretations, fostering reconciliation and addressing modern issues related to its core themes.