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CONSTRUCTIVE REALISM

*Conversation between the art curator Branislav Dimitrijević
and the artist Branislav Nikolić*

9

BRANISLAV DIMITRIJEVIĆ: We are having this conversation on 13th October 2022 in Brana's studio. I would like to start from the end. You have just returned, as far as I understood, from the Canary Islands?

BRANISLAV NIKOLIĆ: Yes.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: As far as I could see in the photos, the piece you did there may be the biggest piece you have done so far.

NIKOLIĆ: No, it is the second biggest, after the piece in the Salon of the Contemporary Art Museum.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: Yes, after the *Roof*.

NIKOLIĆ: The first part of the exhibition *Down to Earth* in the Canary Islands was actually the exhibition *Overview Effect* in the Contemporary Art Museum that was created by Zoran Erić and Blanca de la Torre, a Spanish curator. The exhibition *Down to Earth* deals mostly with the problems of ecology and environment, and overpopulation, the same as the exhibition *Overview Effect*. I focused on the society, settlements and on how people live. In the Canaries, the problem was local, building of the hydroelectric power plant is planned there, in the style of our small hydroelectric plants that are built on the mountains, thereby destroying the environment and the ecosystem. There is a movement in the Canary Islands, consisting mostly of young people who are fighting against this, writing graffiti, petitions... I made my piece with an excellent Spanish artist from the Canary Islands, Acaymo Cuesta, who was involved in those protests. He was actually the one who suggested

this topic. I agreed, off course, because I like direct topics and topics that are developed in the area in which the exhibition takes place. We made a wooden dam that separates one big room, the biggest one in the Museum, into two parts. The sculpture practically splits the room and you can enter the room through one door, to see the front side of the work, and when you enter the room through the second door, you can see the back side, where there is a black and white photo showing a beautiful landscape of the national park that will be destroyed if the dam is built. From the back side you can see the whole structure of the work, built from pallets.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: So the piece was displayed in a Museum?

NIKOLIĆ: Yes, in the CAAM (Centro Atlantico de Arte Moderno), the Contemporary Art Museum in Las Palmas, the capital of the Canary Islands. It is a fantastic museum, by all world standards.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: What is, actually in this case, and in some earlier cases, the characteristic of your process is that your sculptures are actually created on the location itself and are the product of some kind of workshop process that takes place in the gallery space where the gallery becomes a workshop.



NIKOLIĆ: Yes, for me this is an ideal situation. I prefer to work on the spot on something that is actually connected to that space, and in particular if it has some social dimension, meaning that it is a piece that relates to all of us, or at least to a certain group of people. The topic that touches or provokes in a way other than aesthetic. Unfortunately, it does not happen always. Actually, I should not say – unfortunately – I like aesthetic pieces as well. I also make sculptures which are not related to social problems or other problems besides art.

10

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: And those dealing with social issues, they also have their own aesthetic.

NIKOLIĆ: Well, I never miss that point; I always try to understand that they also have their own aesthetics, even if it is the aesthetics of ugliness.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: Well, let's say that you are, in my opinion, really one of the few artists on this art scene who has developed his own language that you never give up on. The same process that creates most of your pieces has been present in your work for more than 15, maybe even 20 years, I do not know how many exactly. I saw some of your works at the beginning of 2000s for the first time, and even then I discovered exactly that – that you have your own vocabulary, the process that has become applicable or simply possible, in different situations, in different pieces, and that process consists of assembling wooden boards and slats. Let's clarify what this process actually means and how you have developed it. How do you assemble those wooden boards and slats? How are your most typical works, for which you are known, created?

NIKOLIĆ: How are they created? Well, they are created very simply, I like to demystify things, I am not an artist – mystifier. Here, for instance, in this last piece you can see the structure, you can see how we built it. That is all, technically very simple, the process itself is very simple. Even a semi-skilled carpenter could do it.

I put the planks and larger boards of different wood material in the front, on the face of the work, like a collage, and at the back, I join them with some construction holding it all together. Therefore, there is no mystification in the technical sense.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: And your piece in the Canary Islands has the same such construction at the back that is visible in the gallery space.

NIKOLIĆ: Exactly, but it is not always possible for technical reasons. Sometimes it is, and I am glad that it can be seen, because the back is also authentic. In the front, I always try to make something aesthetic, and at the back, you hammer in those slats for construction purposes, and it turns out as it turns out, and sometimes the way it "turns out" is even more interesting. Often the most unusual combination happens just there, rather than on the face of the piece which you already know how to shape thanks to your education or experience. For me, both things, both sides of the work, are important.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: And actually, this aesthetics, primarily, comes from the relations of the colored surfaces, that is, the colors and texture of the wooden planks. Mostly those two things bring about that aesthetic dimension.

NIKOLIĆ: Yes, but I have to go back in the past to explain that story. My father was a painter, and growing up in Šabac in his studio, I realized that art could rescue me from maths for which I was not talented as well as from humanities for which I did not have a real interest. Many interesting people came to his studio. He studied history of art together with Ješa Denegri and Biljana Tomić, with Kosta Bogdanović, Irina Subotić. I came to know them as a boy, as well as many other important figures on our scene. I listened to their conversations and stories and saw what kind of life it was. I soon fell in love with it. In addition, my father also did carpentry, he was good at wood work. He practically had an entire carpenter's workshop. There, beside him, I learned how to work with wood. I often helped him, sometimes willingly, sometimes not. While my friends were playing football, I was holding some planks or sandpapered something, and for this I am still very grateful to him, because I would never have become a footballer. The desire was waking up in me to paint with these tools. Not to sculpt, but to paint. I remember that clearly. Off course, I didn't know how to make it happen at the time. I went through the Academy, enrolled in the painting course, driven by inertia because I came from that painting studio. I studied painting, but I always dallied with sculpture and when I went to the Netherlands to postgraduate studies, I let myself go. Then I made my first sculpture out of found wood. I found some planks on the street, made a sculpture of a chimney and the professors were thrilled. They said - that is it, man! Better than your paintings. My paintings were not bad, but there are so many good painters, especially in the Netherlands.

11

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: Those are two chimneys, actually two objects in the shape of factory chimneys.

NIKOLIĆ: Yes, factory chimneys have always fascinated me.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: They were made out of wood material you found on the street?

BRANA: Yes, yes. And they were those first works that encouraged me to build other sculptures in the same manner.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: That was the beginning of 2000.

NIKOLIĆ: I realized then and there, aha, that is how you can paint with material, hammer, nails and the saw. Those sculptures I regarded as paintings. They were really paintings from the outside, collages. And also, as you have said, both this material and the fact that I never painted over all those pieces, collages, are very important to me. They have preserved their original paint. The way the people painted their door frames, windows, doors, that is how they remained.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: That is exactly what I wanted to ask you, does it mean, that you, so to speak, do not intervene on the found materials?

NIKOLIĆ: No, I do not intervene at all. I just combine them in new compositions.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: So, the paint remains, everything on them, even damages on them remain?

NIKOLIĆ: That is what people did themselves, that is the life of the material, the same as, for instance, this round form. This series of pieces I call *City Mirrors*, because in them you can "see your own reflection", see some of your own discarded objects. Those are for example, the doors that someone had been opening for fifty years and now they are thrown away and replaced with the plastic ones. It is the mirror of this city for me. That is why I gave them this title.



12

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: We are having this conversation in your studio cramped with different materials you use, that is, the wood material, and we are looking at the piece *City Mirror* on the wall, which is precisely that - neither painting nor sculpture. It's neither, but it's both, and something, I would say, that evokes some modernist artists such as for example Ben Nicholson. Maybe, he is not a good first association, but there are those artists in the past who used such a similar method. In those pieces of yours, the key thing is actually to preserve the surface.

NIKOLIĆ: Right.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: There are no projections of the form into space, so it is difficult to call them sculpture; they are more like three-dimensional paintings.

NIKOLIĆ: Yes.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: Paintings-objects, objects-paintings, which is interesting, because after all you studied painting.



NIKOLIĆ: Yes, and in the end, I am glad that I have not studied sculpture, because then maybe I would go into some kind of cliché. This is how I approached sculpture, the third dimension, in a key of my own, freed from the learned sculptural process.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: You are not academy-trained sculptor.

NIKOLIĆ: Yeah, right, I am not academy-trained sculptor!

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: Always when I have a conversation with artists and, generally speaking when I think about that, I try to recall when I saw someone's work for

the first time, because for me that is a very important moment. The first time I saw your artworks, was at the exhibition in the Dom omladine, the piece titled *Belgrade Columns*. When was that exhibition, in 2010, 2011? I remember well that exhibition in the Dom omladine, and the first thing that came to my mind, when I saw it, I knew very little about you then, what I am trying to say is that we did not know each other, and immediately it was clear to me that that artist had never graduated from the Belgrade Academy of Fine Arts. He could not have been someone who graduated from the Belgrade Academy of Fine Arts, because his procedure was completely opposite to their indoctrination, and then I found out that you first studied in Novi Sad and after that in the Netherlands. Let's talk a little about your studies.



NIKOLIĆ: I have always shunned the Academy. I could hardly wait to finish it. I was better artist before the Academy than after it.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: Have you even tried to enroll in the Belgrade Academy?

NIKOLIĆ: Yes.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: That is what I assumed, that they rejected you.

NIKOLIĆ: I enrolled in the Academy after the third attempt. Though, the first attempt was amateur like, I was really young then. The second one was while I was in the military service, I thought since I was there, why not give it a try, and after the third attempt I enrolled in the Novi Sad Academy. The most important professor was the professor of Drawing, Halil Tikveša, an excellent pedagogue. Now I can see that, because he looked for personal sensibility in every one of us and guided us in that direction. He would bring us monographs of artists similar to us. He did not demand that everybody draw the same way or in similar way he drew or in some other mannerism, as other professors demanded. Jovan Rakidžić was my professor of Painting.

13

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: Were you, as someone who studied Painting at the Academy, in contact with anybody from the Department of Sculpture?

NIKOLIĆ: Well, a little bit. We had a sculpture course in one semester and I was very good at it. We did portrait, then some small figures and, really, when I started sculpting in clay, even the drawing got much better. I understood the third dimension and what it is exactly that I have to draw on a paper. Even then, I was aware of the fact how important is sculpture for me was, but I still did not have possibility or knowledge to do it. However, in the Netherlands I let myself go.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: Before we move onto your stay in the Netherlands, what kind of paintings did you do as a student and will you put some of them in the catalogue or not?

NIKOLIĆ: Well, I do not know, I do not find them interesting anymore. They are not bad either. I always did simple things. I always paint one thing in the background, already there you can see some sculptural vocabulary. So, it is one thing in the background, where that relation between the object and the background is in the foregrounded.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: So, it is always an object, never a scene?

NIKOLIĆ: Yes, it is never a scene, it is not composition, it was the same even then. Those are not bad paintings. I am not ashamed of any of them. I still hold them dear, but I have outgrown them.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: Then you left for the Netherlands, in pursuit of something else.

NIKOLIĆ: Of course, even there I started with painting.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: That was an MFA programme?

NIKOLIĆ: Yes.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: How did you end up there?

NIKOLIĆ: I applied to many universities in Germany, the Netherlands and in England and France. I wanted to go somewhere. I had lived a couple of months in Paris and London before I enrolled in the Academy and almost on the daily basis I visited galleries and museums, was hanging out with artists and it was just natural to continue my studies, after undergraduate studies, somewhere in the West. I wanted to study and see how things were done there, to compare myself with my generation in a bigger arena which turned out to be very significant.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: Getting "fresh air" was beneficial to you, to meet different people, to get some completely different perspective.

14 NIKOLIĆ: Completely different perspective, actually, you get some kind of freedom that you lack here. I mean, it is normal that no one has freedom in their own village. One must go to a bigger town or bigger environment. There one can somehow feel free, there is no need to explain anything to anyone.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: And there you started doing sculpture, using the material that surrounds us.

NIKOLIĆ: I used to find different things and make sculptures out of them. Actually, I realized that I was only relaxed with cheap material. Only then can I do something good. It must be waste, so that I can make something good out of it.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: As an art historian, of course, I have this kind of deviation to find some kind of historical precedents, and the fact is that you have inherited a tradition that, in my opinion, begins with Vladimir Tatlyin, I mean this different approach to sculpture, with the fact that Tatlyin did not call it sculpture but construction, that's why I now use the word construction.

NIKOLIĆ: I like that very much!

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: It is something that is not created by usual procedures of academic sculpture, such as sculpting, chiseling, adding and subtracting, that is, modelling, it is rather something created by procedures which at least until then, that is, the beginning of twentieth century, were considered utterly unartistic, such as, bolting, gluing, soldering, welding, that is, by artisanal procedures. What do you think about how you perceive sculpture and your work? Maybe you have already answered that question when you said that your artistic life started in your father's workshop?

NIKOLIĆ: Yes, I was not even aware of that, I think that I only became aware of that after your observations. You understood the essence of my work and called the procedure – construction and not sculpture. I am constantly running away from classical painting and sculpture. Sometimes, whether I want it or not, I come back to them, but I try to avoid it and when you noticed that I had never been a student of the Belgrade Academy, it meant a lot to me. So I'm not a cliché. It is important to me to have found my own expression.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: Yes, that is the first thing that came to my mind.

NIKOLIĆ: Freedom is very important to me and that is why I would never want to become master in anything, to be a master artist. I have always tried to stay away from that. Sometimes, I even went into some form of amateurism and maybe precisely for that reason I choose those banal materials.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: You are, in some kind of philosophical determination actually an artist materialist? You understand that the world is made of matter, of objects, and not of some grandiose idealistic art assumptions.

NIKOLIĆ: Well, ok, I have never been a conceptual artist, I have to agree with that, and often I worked without a preconceived concept thought out in advance. I believe that through work and through material you can get to grand ideas. Maybe it is a harder way? It is definitely harder in this era of writing projects. First you must have a great idea as a concept, then to think this through and foresee everything and put it all on paper, and only then you can start realizing it. And the question is what is the outcome going to be and what kind of work you will get in the end. That is less important, it is important to fulfill the goals of the project. And I do it the other way around. I often wonder what my starting point is. Sometimes it is just a trifle that instigates me to do something and then I realize that I have bitten into something much bigger than that accidental sketch, as was the case with the *Secondary Architecture*. I wanted to build a small house in the gallery, because that is an archetypal architectural form, and I mainly deal with architecture in my work, and I was not able to foresee how important work it would be in the end. From visual, the work became a social project.

15

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: Since this is your really important work, tell us something about it. We are talking about the piece titled *Secondary Architecture* which you created together with Boban Mladenović whom you met in a Roma settlement where you stumbled upon a very important discovery – that what you do in the domain of art, is actually very similar to the procedure of construction of shanties in which Roma people live in their settlements. That work was erected for the first time in the gallery Magacin in Belgrade and later on in Čačak for the 27th Nadežda Petrović Memorial. It would be interesting to hear how this cooperation between Boban and you came about.

NIKOLIĆ: As I have said, I mostly deal with architectural forms in sculpture and for a long time I had been thinking about how to build a house as a sculpture, but in way that it was not banal, that it did not turn out to be just a house made of some old material, some esthetic form in the gallery, but to actually have a wider meaning. And then I heard a conversation that my uncle had with a Roma in the village while we were picking cherries. My uncle says: "What on earth are you doing here? You are picking cherries here and you have a house in the centre of Belgrade." I was looking at this Roma guy and he did not strike me as someone who had a house in the centre of Belgrade, being all dirty and scruffy. I asked my uncle

later, where was this place where he had a house? “Under the Gazela bridge”, he said “and not only does he have a house, he is the main architect there, he built houses to everyone there”. And then I realized it – people already lived in such houses that I wanted to make, why should I make it, let’s find that guy Zoran and he would build me a house or teach me how he did it, and I would record that procedure. In the end, I was not able to find him, but I met Boban who was a great guy and even a better mason. He was a very interesting guy, a Pasolinian type of a guy, black curly hair, strong facial features and also a strong, but cheerful character. His stories were interesting, his life, it was a true movie material. Really, a movie-like life, as was the life of most of the people in his community. He did not find it odd when I asked him to build me a house in a Gallery, or that I told him that we had to find material, or that I would give him my fee for that. He said, ok, no problems. It was all normal to him. I had to explain it to many people what it was that I was doing and why, but to him everything in the world was normal. Ok, a house in the gallery, all right, wherever you want, just say it. It was not just about the money, he found it interesting. As much as it was interesting to me to hang out with him, it was interesting to him to hang out with me. So, we started working. We collected some material from containers and somehow during that week, I saw the world with different eyes. I saw how people perceived me in those shabby clothes while I was rummaging through containers and putting stuff in a wheelbarrow. How they actually did not look at me, how they ignored me. I realized what kind of life those people had. I felt that kind of life for a short time. Later on, I visited Boban’s house in his settlement and saw how it looked from the inside.



16

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: What was your experience of all those settlements and in particular of those houses? What is the quality of those houses, are they actually the places to live in or not?

NIKOLIĆ: You know what, on the one hand it is really bad from our point of view, us who are living in more solid houses and apartments, but on the other hand, I was surprised that there was always cheerful, there was always some music, jokes. In a way, you could even envy them. They are absolutely not slaves to material things. But it has its price. It is a hard life, from day to day, in uncertainty as to what is going to happen tomorrow. However, it is cozy in the houses, like in a tent made of blankets that we used to make between two armchairs when we were kids. Everything is covered, snuggled under some rags, blankets, pillows. Inside is comfortable and pleasant and the prevailing feeling is the one of closeness. Houses are relatively small, probably in order to heat them more easily. And when the family gets bigger, they simply bring down one wall and make another room. It is a modular structure that can be expanded indefinitely. It was a strange but very meaningful experience for me.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: Your work was created at the right moment, when the eviction of those Roma settlements began, so it actually drew attention to that type of injustice.

NIKOLIĆ: It was really noticed, which makes me happy, because I believe that this topic has been ignored in our society. The work won several important awards, the audience award at the Nadežda Petrović Memorial and award within the category

of experiment at the 37th Architecture Salon. It does not happen very often that the work is current in aesthetic and social sense.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: Also, it is, so to speak, habitable. The conceptual side of your work is exactly what you have just suggested, those objects of yours, your constructions, could be elements of architecture. So, it means, that you always choose forms that have their own architectural utility – pillars, windows... You made a pedestal, a stage that was actually in use in a way. Then there is the roof that was in the Contemporary Arts Museum, so to speak, a deconstructed house from the floor to the ceiling. However, only that work *Secondary Architecture* is both the artistic object and something that could potentially serve its purpose.

NIKOLIĆ: Yes, it turned out that way, without any conscious intention. My original idea was aimed at the outside form, to the form of the house as a sculpture. However, it turned out to be a sculpture that could be used as utility object, as you have so rightfully noticed. Practically, it is a ready-made. The idea was to transfer Boban's house to the gallery. That was actually my concept, not to do anything, but to hire Boban to transfer his house and that is it. That is why it is potentially useful and other works are probably not.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: Yes, it is actually interesting because it can be interpreted as ready-made. To avoid talking about just one type of your work which has this common aesthetic, common procedure, there are works that also deal with architecture, but more in the function of models, some scaled down versions. I try to separate those two types of your works. So, one type is something that is actually a real size; the columns are real columns when it comes to their size and they could be used. This is a real window, and that was a real stage; that roof is the real roof in real size and proportions. On the other hand, you have works that are models, so to speak, factories, churches.

17

NIKOLIĆ: Oh, well, that is another topic. I often quote Kosta Bogdanović who once said, speaking about my work – Nikolić likes to sacralize the profane and to profane the sacral. It was his definition of my work. And that is true. I like to bring down to earth something that is sacral, and to elevate something that is banal, such as those planks on the ground that I like to elevate and give an aesthetic form.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: I wanted to start with your work titled the *Factory*, because that is one of the earliest pieces of that kind. That work you made on the premises of the factory Trudbenik, it is the work from 2015, and it is in a way the work that has characteristics of both types of your work, it is simultaneously a real construction in your style, and on the other hand it is a small model, it is both things, and

I have the impression that everything started maybe with the *Factory*.



NIKOLIĆ: Well, maybe it all started there, from what I found. Those were some boxes that workers used, some barrels from the factory, a rubber that served as conveyor belt for the roof tiles... Everything I could find on the perimeter of the factory, I collected and assembled the object on the spot that symbolized that run down factory in whose perimeter everything happened.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: For me it is interesting that there is always

some kind of social dimension, even though it is never explicit or out there, you try to keep it out of the foreground in your work.

NIKOLIĆ: In that sense, when I say I am not conceptual, off course I am, although it is not my priority. Nevertheless, I touch upon those common problems which are related to architecture, urban planning, housing, labour rights etc. Injustice of that sort affects me and I try to speak about it in my works, but that activism is never in the foreground. I want to make pieces in which both sides are equally represented, the aesthetics and the message.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: Circumstances bring them to the foreground. Let us now talk about the work titled *If the Hat Fits the Suit*. Tell me something about it.

NIKOLIĆ: That work I did when I was on artist residency in the Contemporary Arts Centre in Tirana. There I was fascinated by the Enver Hoxha Mausoleum. I do not know – have you ever been to Tirana and have you seen it? It is a giant concrete pyramid. At the top of it there is a star that spreads its arms towards the earth. It is a megalomaniac building and they do not know what to do with it, they cannot bring it down, nor put it to some purpose.



DIMITRIJEVIĆ: When were you in Tirana, which year was that?

NIKOLIĆ: Five or six years ago.

18

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: I was there 19 years ago and they were wandering what to do with it even then.

NIKOLIĆ: You can easily climb to the top of the mausoleum. When I saw it for the first time, it was all covered with graffiti. The kids were riding bicycles at crazy speed down its sides; they were diving down from the top of it. It is an interesting, powerful object from the era of orthodox communism. I tried to make a sculpture related to this building. Actually, I turned it upside down so that the star fell to the bottom, and around it, in the interior of the form, there remained those colorful sides. In that way, the construction that is normally inside the sculpture, ended up outside, in space. You look at the sculpture from the inside, and not from the outside. The star is down, communism has fallen. And that gives it some kind of symbolism. This is a significant sculpture to me in terms of construction, at which you look in the reverse view, from inside out and from the top to the bottom.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: Good, I mentioned those works that you call stages, which exist in several versions, because they demystify in some way the art object, they look like something that could be used and that has been used.

NIKOLIĆ: Yes, the first one was made in Finland, it is one of the first pieces I have made out of recycled wood. It was made as a part of the exhibition of public sculpture in the town of Lahti, which is, like all Finish towns rather sterile.



Then I tried to bring back some of that discarded material to one of their squares, so I made a stage that could have been used potentially for singing, acting, skateboard jumps, in order to offer the town a space that could be interactive.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: To introduce into the space something that has a form.

NIKOLIĆ: Yes, form and colour. It is a minimalist sculpture that can be used. As a matter of fact, this interactivity with the sculpture is very important to me.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: It is some kind of soft irony in relation to the role of the sculpture, where this would be a pedestal and the sculpture would be something on top of it.

NIKOLIĆ: Could be! I have never thought about that, but probably it is.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: It is a tradition, like in Andre, of horizontal sculpture. You have some works which are particularly specific. This work is titled *Four Waters*, it is a roof on the base that does not actually exist, it is like a film negative. Those rain gutters; we see that the entire sculpture is made of gutters.

NIKOLIĆ: Yes, it is made of gutters, and it is entirely nonfunctional, because there is no roof. The roof is the one that guides the rain into the gutters, and the gutters without the roof do not conduct the rain, so it all refers to the house that is not there. The title *Four Waters* is supposed to sound poetic. We should imagine that water runs north, east, west and south. That positions the sculpture at the centre of the world.



DIMITRIJEVIĆ: Where is that sculpture now?

19

NIKOLIĆ: It is in the village of Jalovik and it is dismantled.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: Do you apply for public competitions for sculptures and monuments?

NIKOLIĆ: Not really, I do not have this habit. I don't follow public competitions, so I usually find out too late about them.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: That sculpture is excellent for some public space, it is witty and everybody would be able to understand it.

NIKOLIĆ: Its version in copper was part of Timisoara Biennial *Art Encounters*. And after the exhibition it stood in front of the Biennial building for a long time, in front of their offices, but I think that later it was removed or taken somewhere, I do not know.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: What I find democratic and great about your works is the fact that in some way they are very simple in their meaning and that everybody can understand them; they do not contain any riddle; actually they can be experienced as something fun, witty, they can evoke in everyone that kind of pleasure arising from discovery, like "Wait a minute, what is this, look those gutters...?" That moment has nothing to do with the idea about some kind of art. Well, now, another material that appeared in your works in the last years is soap.

NIKOLIĆ: Yes.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: You use soap literally as a building material, now, the sculptures on these photographs that we are looking at and that will be in the catalogue, are lacking dimension of smell, as those are your fragrant sculptures. How did you come up with the idea of using soap?

NIKOLIĆ: I found an old recipe for soap that my grandmother who lived in the village used every day and I had been thinking for a long time what I could do with it. In the end, I decided to make the simplest possible piece out of that material. I cast the soap in the shape of bricks and out of them I built a piece that I called *Clean Wall*. That poetic title definitely makes a great part of the work. The bricks represent themselves, nothing else. With this simple form, I wanted to put the material in the foreground and the fragrance too. It all represents the clean wall, which is completely meaningless. After that, I made *Clean Chimney* which is a harmonious, tense, sculptural form, but somehow, the wall is for me a simpler piece. With it I said about the material all I wanted to say.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: The chimney is actually a clean, white chimney, fragrant chimney, which brings us back to the very beginning, your first piece.

NIKOLIĆ: Those are the topics that constantly fascinate me. I am thrilled every time I see a powerful chimney of an old factory.



20

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: Well, then it is completely clear why you chose the factory and the church.

NIKOLIĆ: Yes, for me they are all religions.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: There are some works of yours in a spilled form. As far as I can remember, there was some resin on the floor, some blue puddle without a precise form, more like a droplet, more like a painterly moment.

NIKOLIĆ: I like amorphous shapes such as fire, then droplets, paint leaking. I am excited by those changeable forms which can be caught only in a split second and be sculptural and very interesting from painterly perspective, but practically elusive to human eye.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: I have never seen this work.

NIKOLIĆ: That piece was exhibited only in China. It was an exhibition of nine Serbian artists in Shanghai. It was returned after half a year and has never been exhibited here, there was no occasion for that. It is called *Your Room*. It is apparently very simple but technically extremely demanding piece to make. It seems to be made of concrete, because the wood has been painted in this concrete-like grey colour, but when you come closer, you can see that it is a hand-made object made of wood. Around the room, there are pieces that are carved out from the basic form, are scattered as if a bomb had exploded or something else had happened. These pieces can be returned to their place,



each piece can be inserted into its place, like Lego bricks. The work is like a giant toy which you already received disassembled and you can assemble it again. The work is both tragic and funny at the same time.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: One of the wittiest applications of your procedure is in *The Confessional* which you did in Rijeka and which in a gallery space gets the usual form of the confessionals in catholic churches. It was made in your recognizable style and like a crazier version. I have just now seen in your catalogue two portable toilets which are assembled in the same way, thus making this provocation very clear.

NIKOLIĆ: That other piece *TOI-TOI Confessional* was actually never realized. For now, it only exists in the form of photoshop sketch but I hope someday it will be realized. I have notebooks full of sketches with works that have never been realized, some of them are practically impossible for realization. But that does not matter, I enjoy mostly, envisaging precisely such projects.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: This confessional was done in the Modern Arts Gallery in Rijeka?

NIKOLIĆ: Yes, in Rijeka. I was waiting for some suitable catholic country to realize it in. Since Croatia is on the same level of awareness as we are here, *Confessional* provoked clerics and some people, which was a sign that the piece was successful, because I think that we should all move from being stuck, from being numb, from some ossified idea about what faith is...

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: ... and what is unfaith.

NIKOLIĆ: What's more, I got this idea from the catholic priest in Graz when we had an exhibition in the gallery Haus der Architektur. Milica Tomić opened this exhibition as she was one of the participants, and asked each one of us to say something about our work. I talked about *Secondary Architecture*, which was in the process



of making back then and one of the visitors approached me, obviously a priest with his collar and black cassock... He said: "This is phenomenal! I like your work very much. Would you make a confessional out of such material for our cathedral?" I was dumbfounded. I said: "Yes, of course, when can we start?" He said that they had a budget for contemporary art within the church. They had budget for production and made some crazy pieces in cathedrals in Graz! Later on, I saw their website and different installations and murals inside some chapels, which were insane and from the point of view of our church probably anti-christian. He made a connection between my method of building out of found material with the wave of refugees flooding Europe at that time, with nomadism, and with the

idea that God is the same for all, so even for those unfortunate people. So, he gave me a ready idea for the piece. Unfortunately, this piece had never been realized in Graz, since that priest became bishop in the meanwhile. Surely, that work would have been interpreted in Graz differently, in the cathedral. It would have been in real use; it would have served as confessional. We will never know what reaction it might have provoked.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: Here I see something which is more or less site specific, but it is a gallery, isn't it?

NIKOLIĆ: It's a gallery, but only in the window. The gallery Edition Populaire in Antwerp in Belgium. So, the objects are not displayed deep inside the gallery, but only in two windows located in two neighboring streets. In the bigger window is the beginning of the installation and in the smaller one is the rest of it. The house ends in the other gallery, that is, in the other street. It starts as a painting with several elements and small projections into space, and continues with three-dimensional object in the smaller window. Next to the house there is also their specific triangle-shaped sign with the inscription *TE HUUR* which means that the house is on sale. That is also the name of the installation.



DIMITRIJEVIĆ: That speaks again about your desire to create new pieces on exact locations. You always take into account a local story related to the town, architecture, everyday life.

NIKOLIĆ: I try, I often do that and it is really nice that people are able to recognize elements of their local architecture, their problems seen through the eyes of an outsider. I did this piece in Belgium with a Mexican colleague, Jesse Siegel. Until now I have had several collaborations with some amazing artists who are very dear and important to me, such is this last one on the Canary Islands.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: Right, and those collaborations are with people from some other regions, from different horizons. Do you also like collaborations with someone you are close to, with someone from your circle?

22

NIKOLIĆ: Why not, but we have not found the common topic. People find each other based on some common idea or similar view on certain problem. It has nothing to do with where they come from. What is important is precisely the fact that that common idea can bring to me and that other artist something new, something that we would not have reached, had we treated that same problem individually. That is the essence and the purpose of the collaboration, to get out of our usual way of thinking and accept compromises which will in turn broaden our horizons.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: There is one motif that appears in few of your pieces as a direct quote of the famous Brancusi modernist sculpture *Endless Column*. And that Brancusi's *Endless Column* is actually an example of a mystified sculpture. I had a chance to go there, and really, only then can you see why it is above all endless. When you stand underneath, there is no end to it, and that is why it is an example of object-optical mystification in modern art. Your columns, on the other hand, go in the direction of demystification and irony. You made an endless column out of some crates, then you had a piece *Chocking* on the exhibition *Srpske lepe umetnosti 2*, in the gallery *Ostavinska* which is made out of wooden chocks and which is also some kind of demystification of the column – wooden chocks that support something so that it does not fall, here support themselves and become a column that supports the ceiling. But, tell me something about the endless column erected in Čačak which is made of toilet bowls.

NIKOLIĆ: That sculpture with toilet bowls directly quotes Brancusi. Since I find great inspiration in music, then I see the realization of some idea as a cover version of what was once a hit song. It is the version in my own style. Brancusi believed that the civilization was taking giant steps forward, that the humanity was aiming for the sky. And he was right. Such was the enthusiasm of people. People

started discerning that there were no limits to the progress. I think that this is what his sculpture is about. It is the best example of the climate of that time. And that is why it is a timeless masterpiece. Today, the situation is completely different. We are in a different place in which somehow those toilet bowls show where we are and where we will be if we continue behaving like this, unlike Brancusi's column which strives for something sublime, really mystical.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: Let's not forget, it caused some kind of controversy in Čačak.

NIKOLIĆ: Yes, it caused some kind of controversy because people thought that I was addressing the local community, that I believed that Čačak went down the toilet and so on. They took it too personally. That column could have been erected anywhere in the world – in London, Paris, Beijing, anywhere. All of us collectively are going down the toilet, but the fact that they took it so personally is in a way tragicomical. It started off harmlessly on the Facebook and it turned into 500-600 nasty comments. It really went too far, and then I realized how dangerous this negative mongering can be on social media. I was in this case a semi-anonymous artist who made a temporary sculpture for the purpose of the current exhibition. In the end, someone, incited and encouraged by those negative comments, demolished the sculpture. He thought, ok, if so many people said that it was bad and needed to be demolished, then, I could take a baseball bat or a bar and actually do it. And that is what happened. Then I realized how those apparently spontaneous comments could be serious. It's like, it is not important, it is just somebody's



opinion, which is by the way, inaccurate, unverified, banal and insulting. Then you add to it the comments of others and so they goad each other until it reaches culmination. In this case it was the demolition of the sculpture.

On the other hand, from the point of view of me as the artist, the destiny of this sculpture had in a way good ending. People reacted to it. Some thought it was ingenious, some thought it was trash. It does not happen very often that people react to an object of art, and any reaction is better than indifference. This sculpture raised a storm; it was in the headlines of a lot of media. It is an important work to me, much more important than I envisaged it would be, and not only because of its reception. It is important to me also because of that interplay between the sublime and the banal which often exists in my works, as we have already talked about. When you see it from the other side of the square, from the distance of some hundred meters, you see a pearly ceramic string and only when you get closer you see that this string is made of toilet bowls. In a way it produces a visual shock. It is too beautiful to be made of something so banal. But why are we running away from it? I do not understand why it was so offensive to some people.



DIMITRIJEVIĆ: Let's go back to the endless column in other versions. This work named *Waterfall of Bureaucracy*, is also some kind of an endless column but it is made of drawers and paper.

NIKOLIĆ: I found an abandoned archive in the village of Jalovik, where I had run a Visual Arts colony for many years. In a room with broken windows, which roof was leaking, there were all the documents like sale contracts,

birth certificates, various forms etc. I took all those documents and tried to bring them back to people, this time as an aesthetic object. I assembled the drawers on top of each other and let the papers hang out as some kind of waterfall. From the insipid bureaucracy I created a poetic work.

Chocking is also a very symbolic work because in Serbia everything needs to be “chocked” a little, nothing stands on its own, nothing is stable, neither the institutions, nor houses, nor buildings, transportation vehicles... Everything needs a little bit of something to be perfect, so those wedges represent that *something* that is missing. The whole sculpture is built of that something that is missing, and it actually supports the entire gallery, the institution, the door, whatever is necessary.

DIMITRIJEVIĆ: And again, we come to that aesthetics we have seen in your work in which each cog, each chock that is inserted brings some new kind of excitement arising from that assemblage; each one is different and is perceived as support; you can actually see that they are extremely unstable. This piece attracted people on the exhibition *Srpske lepe umetnosti 2*, but you could see that they approached it with caution, because it looked like it was just about to fall apart, which is interesting in your work, this instability, ephemerality, like something that is at the point of falling to pieces.





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S

BELGRADE PILLARS

Belgrade Pillars

5 wooden pillars, about 400 x 55 cm each, 2009/11
(US Embassy, Belgrade collection)

28

Branislav Nikolić, the author dealing for many years with a social dimension of the sculpture as a medium in public space, has acted as an archeologist of the contemporary society within the project *Belgrade Pillars*. The objects of his interest are wainscot, door frames and windows, abandoned beside garbage containers, which have lost their purpose: natural one (as a tree) and utilitarian (as woodwork). The artist uses the found waste as indexed location of social circumstances in order to create his own processuality, i.e., his own artistic gesture intervening in the social body. The process preceding *Belgrade Pillars* entails searching the streets and collecting materials, joinery thrown out of the houses, business premises and institutions. Then, their assortment, cutting – in order to obtain usable parts, and then assembling takes place as well as attaching of the ‘collage’ onto the previously prepared wooden constructions. Material of every pillar relates to certain part of the town, therefore the gallery now holds The Pillar of Banjica, of Dorćol, New Belgrade, Dušanovac... These pillars display colours characteristic of the part of the town where they came from. For instance, the specific red windows of Banjica ‘have painted’ this particular pillar in red, the typical old fashioned white color of the woodwork from Dorćol is responsible for the white color of this pillar etc. City vibrations become resonant in a way that optimizes the society and institution in artistic and socially engaged terms. The history of the town transformed and ennobled by this artistic gesture is inscribed into what one day will be institutional history of the specific gallery space.

An excerpt from the text by curator Maja Ćirić





30





FIRES

Fires

ceramics, about 30 x 40 cm each, 2001
(several private collections)

32

Work *Fires* is made out of series of five ceramic sculptures, created in 2001. Each sculpture represents a three-dimensional version of a camp fire like the one that can be seen in comics (for example, Donald Duck), or fire on the warning signs. The fires are placed in a circle imitating people who sit around the fire.



FIELD ON FIRE

Field on Fire
land art, grass, 55 x 220 m, 2011

34

The work *Field on Fire*, dimensions 55 x 220 m, was made in the summer of 2011 in the village Dubravica in the Slovak Republic as a part of the land art festival *Landscape Revisited* (organized by an independent association Periferne Centra) upon invitation of the Mexican curator and artist Carlos Carmonamedina. Starting point for this project were drawings and collages from the artist's blog. Looking for the right one that might easily be applied to the offered vast grass area, Branislav Nikolić and the curator Carmonamedina concluded it to be an iconic representation of little fire which, in this way, assumed new, almost grotesque proportions. First phase of work carried on this gigantic drawing was photographing the terrain and editing that material in Photoshop, followed by shoving the spikes into the ground. The spikes had numbers on them as well as flags on key points. Then they stretched the rope between the spikes. Next phase was mowing the meadow, that is, making the drawing. Grassy area around the little fire was mown in cooperation with the local farmers' cooperative with enormous tractor-mower. As the temperature that August almost reached 40 degrees Celsius, the mowed grass dried quickly and turned yellow so that already next day a contrasting picture appeared. It was visible from the viewpoint on the opposite hill, which gives view over the entire village and the surrounding area. The drawing immediately became attraction for the locals and visitors from surrounding towns who came to see the festival. Many took their pictures with the drawing in the background and posted them on social networks.



SCREAM FROM THE NATURE

Scream from the Nature
(with Lise Wulff)
land art/happening (with about
4000 people screaming), 70 x 50 m, 2013

36

The Scream from the Nature is an environmental art project which aims to raise consciousness about the relationship between humans and nature. The project is a contemporary interpretation of Munch's masterpiece *The Scream*, in which the iconic anxiety-ridden face is recreated outdoors in large format. Edvard Munch wrote several texts about *The Scream* motif, the most poignant among these being: "I was walking along the road with two friends. The sun was setting. Suddenly the sky turned blood red and I felt a huge unending scream course through nature". Now, over 100 years later, we hear another "scream" from nature: droughts, forest fires, floods, earth slides, extreme weather, melting glaciers, rising ocean levels and massive extinctions of animal and plant species are just some of the huge challenges the world faces today.

Measuring 70 x 50 meters, and with the sound of approximately 4.000 people actually screaming, *The Scream from the Nature* was both large and loud!

This project is initiated by Norwegian artist Lise Wulff. It was part of the official celebration of Edvard Munch's 150 anniversary and it is done in collaboration with Bellona and PureCSR organisations.



CATHEDRAL

Cathedral

metal, oil, electric heater, electric cord, 121,5 x 77 x 19,5 cm, 2012

(Collection of Wiener Städtiche and Collection of Smederevo City Museum)

38

The *Cathedral* is a sculpture made out of second-hand radiator. The ribs of the radiator visually represent ribs of the Gothic cathedral and the welded top part of the same module is a tower. This sculpture is fully functional as oil-filled radiator, heated by the electric element inside the appliance, and due to the metal wheels also mobile, so it can be moved around. This art object has the apparent utilitarian function to warm the house, or the gallery, thus appearing as a prototype, i.e. the first usable product made according to a new design approved for mass production.



SECONDARY ARCHITECTURE

Secondary Architecture
found wood, metal, 360 x 305 x 230 cm, 2013/14

40

First *Secondary Architecture* project was produced in the framework of *Urban Incubator* – a large scale art/architectural event of Goethe Institute that took place from March till November 2013 in Belgrade, Serbia. Instead of making a sculpture of secondary raw material in the shape of a house, Nikolić joined forces with self-taught Roma 'architect' Boban Mladenović in order to build an ordinary slam house and place it at the gallery Magacin in Belgrade. A real slam house, dislocated from its natural environment and placed in the gallery, invited gallery visitors to think not only about the work of art, but about the social context as well. Second *Secondary Architecture* project was produced in the framework of 27th Nadežda Petrović Memorial in Čačak in September 2014. Concept was the same but the result is always different due to the different material found.

Boban Mladenović lived, with his family, in one such house in one of the many non-hygienic, slam settlements on the outskirts of Belgrade. He was well known in his community as the best builder, building houses and shacks for all his relatives and neighbors with secondary raw materials which he collected on the streets.

Several videos made by Nebojša Vasić and Vesna Grba were part of the work exhibited at both galleries. Two different time-lapse movies about the process of building a house were played to the audience inside the houses, on an old (second-hand) TV. Short documentary video was played outside the house, explaining the context of the project.

During the exhibition at the gallery Magacin, a panel discussion about slam architecture was organized. The panelists comprised of the most important Serbian architects, urbanists and artists dealing with the subject, as well as members of Roma community in Belgrade.





42





CITY MIRRORS

City Mirror (hive)

wood, metal, Ø 120 cm, 2014, (artist's collection)

City Mirror (school board)

wood, cloth, Ø 120 cm, 2017, (Contemporary Gallery Zrenjanin collection)

City Mirror (blue 2)

wood, metal, Ø 140 cm, 2016

City Mirror (yellow)

wood, metal, Ø 100 cm, 2016

City Mirror (large)

wood, metal, Ø 200 cm, 2014, (Šabac Public Library collection)

City Mirrors were made in the breaks between other larger works, from materials found specifically for them or from those that remained after earlier projects. These works satisfy the artist's unsurpassed need to paint. Only this time, instead of using brush and paint he used saw, planks, hammer, nails. *City Mirrors* are abstract paintings, which, as Nikolić likes to say, are painted by the city dwellers. He only places them in logical and harmonious relations and helps them to see the light of day. And all of us who sometimes throw from our homes an old door, window, cupboard or chair, can find a piece of ourselves in them.





46





FACTORY

Factory

wood, metal, rubber, 285 x 210 x 500 cm, 2015

48

Installation *Factory* was made at the location of the old brick factory Trudbenik in Belgrade in 2015 at the festival *Nine* (DEV9T). Today, after unsuccessful privatization, the former giant brick factory Trudbenik stands empty and abandoned. Local artists settled it and organized festival of contemporary art, film, theater, dance and music. Work *Factory* is made of materials found in the factory – old wooden and metal cabinets, wooden panels, barrels and rubber conveyor belts. It looks like a toy compared to the monumental dimensions of the old brickyard and it gives almost humorous note of the new hard situation. It represents a look ahead into the future and hopefully a sign of new beginning.



ROOF

Roof
wood, metal, 263 x 223 x 107 cm, 2015

50

Sculpture *Roof* is a model for a future series of works about Belgrade roof extensions. Due to the sudden influx of people in the big cities and the emergence of private investors, many buildings in Belgrade are being extended by several floors. Usually, it is allowed to extend one or two floors, but a legal loophole allows two or three “nonexistent” additional stores of the building. Builders and investors, largely self-taught and often without the help of architects are making good profit this way, leaving architectural ugliness in the cities that future generations will inherit.



SUPERSTRUCTURE

Superstructure

wood, metal, glass, 1760 x 1150 x 240 cm, 2016

52

In the English language, the word superstructure has several meanings all of which derive from different viewpoints and are manifested in the layered artistic references in the work of Branislav Nikolić. This word can be primarily interpreted in architectural language as an extension and refers to a part of a building or some structure which is above the foundations. The abstract connotations of the word are a physical or conceptual structure developed from base form. Finally, there are the more discursive meanings of the word which are also relevant to the artistic field of creativity in which Nikolić is active and derive from Marxist theory in which social ideology and institutions are seen as additions or a superstructure to the base which comprises the forces and relations of production and the economy. The methodology behind the work of Branislav Nikolić is enmeshed with all the above mentioned meanings of the word superstructure so that this word imposes itself as an obligatory polysemic starting point for the analysis of the artistic work and the project realised in the Salon of the Museum of Contemporary Art.

An excerpt from the text by curator Zoran Erić





54





IF THE HAT FITS THE SUIT

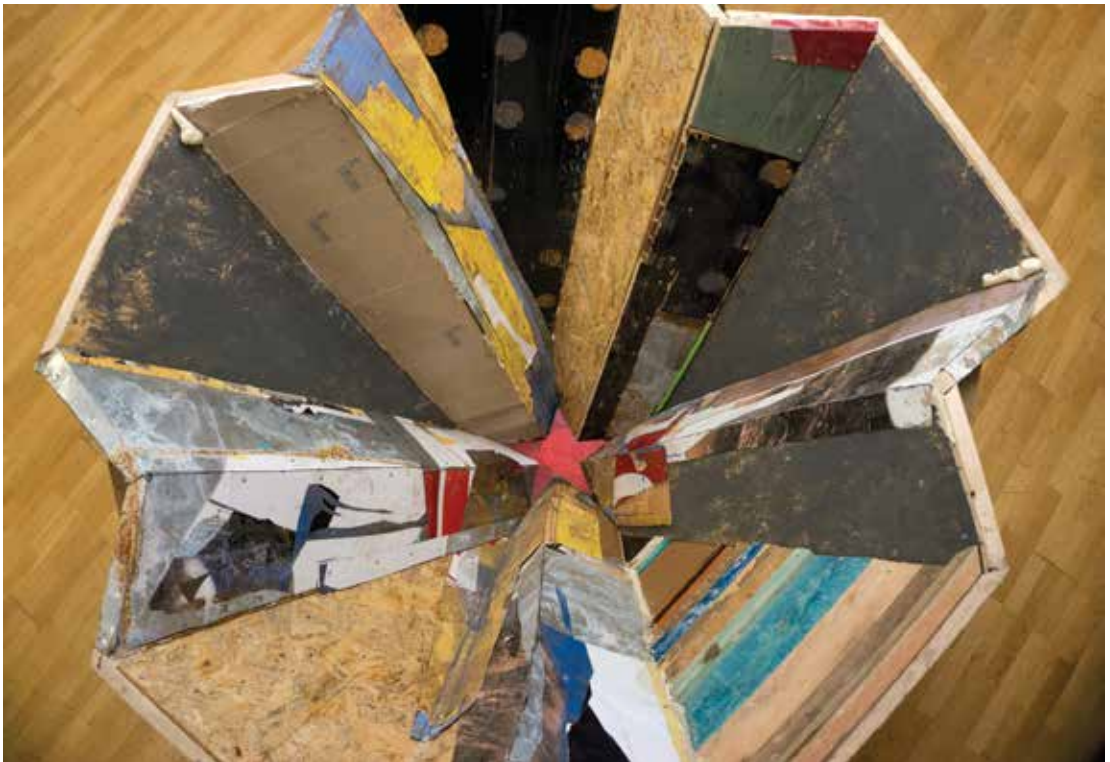
If the Hat Fits the Suit

wood, metal, plaster, 200 x 200 x 120 cm, 2016

56

The pyramid, built as a memorial to Albanian dictator Enver Hoxha and later abandoned, is perhaps the most significant piece of brutalist architecture in Albania. The decrepit building resembling an empty tomb of a ghost in the center of the Tirana. It's a "walkable" building, meaning that everybody feels the irresistible urge to climb its slopes to reach the top. Maybe inspired by its physical and tactile features, Nikolić decided to realize *If the Hat Fits the Suit*, a sculpture made with secondhand materials, wood, iron, plaster, and other, flipping the building upside down, turning it into an "im-ploded" pyramid whose way is no longer ascending but descending. The viewer's gaze moves from the top of the sculpture and edges down to the bottom, where a red star is located that, perhaps a little melancholically, shows itself to the viewer from the bottom of a story which is now part of Albania's past. It stands as witness to the common roots of modern Albanian and Balkan's history that cannot be ignored to understand who we are today.

An excerpt from the text by curator Stefano Romano



STAGES

Stage 2 (Brana's)
wood, 500 x 270 x 20 cm, 2017

Stage 3 (Belvil)
wood, 330 x 330 x 85 cm, 2017

Stage 1 (Cake)
wood, 300 x 300 x 90 cm, 2000

58

Sculpture *Cake* was made out of the boards found in the city of Lahti, Finland, in 2000. After the invitation to participate in the exhibition of sculptures in the public space, the author wanted to create a work which would be a part of the city life. Therefore, the *Cake*, aside from being a minimalist sculpture made as a collage of multicolored boards thrown by the citizens of Lahtia, is also a stage on the one of the main city squares where people can act, sing, drive a skateboard, or rest. Trash esthetics of this sculpture is in contrast to a smart city ambient of Finland.

Sculpture *Stage* was made out of the recycled wood found in Belgrade, Serbia, in 2017. Sculpture is second version of the previous work *Cake* made in Lahti, Finland in 2000. Minimalist sculpture become a stage on the one of the pedestrian squares in the New Belgrade's settlement Belvil. Stage was made in a framework of the international project called *If Buildings Could Talk*. Serbian magazine for the contemporary art *Supervizuelna* was the producer and organizer of the event. Other participants were Pesničenje, Manja Ristić and LP Electro. They were reading poetry, singing and playing, using this work as a live stage.







FOUR WATERS

Four Waters
metal, 360 x 270 x 225 cm, 2016

62

Sculpture *Four Waters* is a gutter for a non-existent house, an absurd structure that cannot divert rain because there is no roof from which it would pour into it. It is at the same time a very poetic work that speaks of water, which is the basic life resource. It also suggests the four corners of the world, thus positioning the sculpture into the center of the world from which water runs north, east, west and south.



CLEAN SCULPTURES

Clean Wall

hand made soap, 174 x 88 x 12 cm, 2017

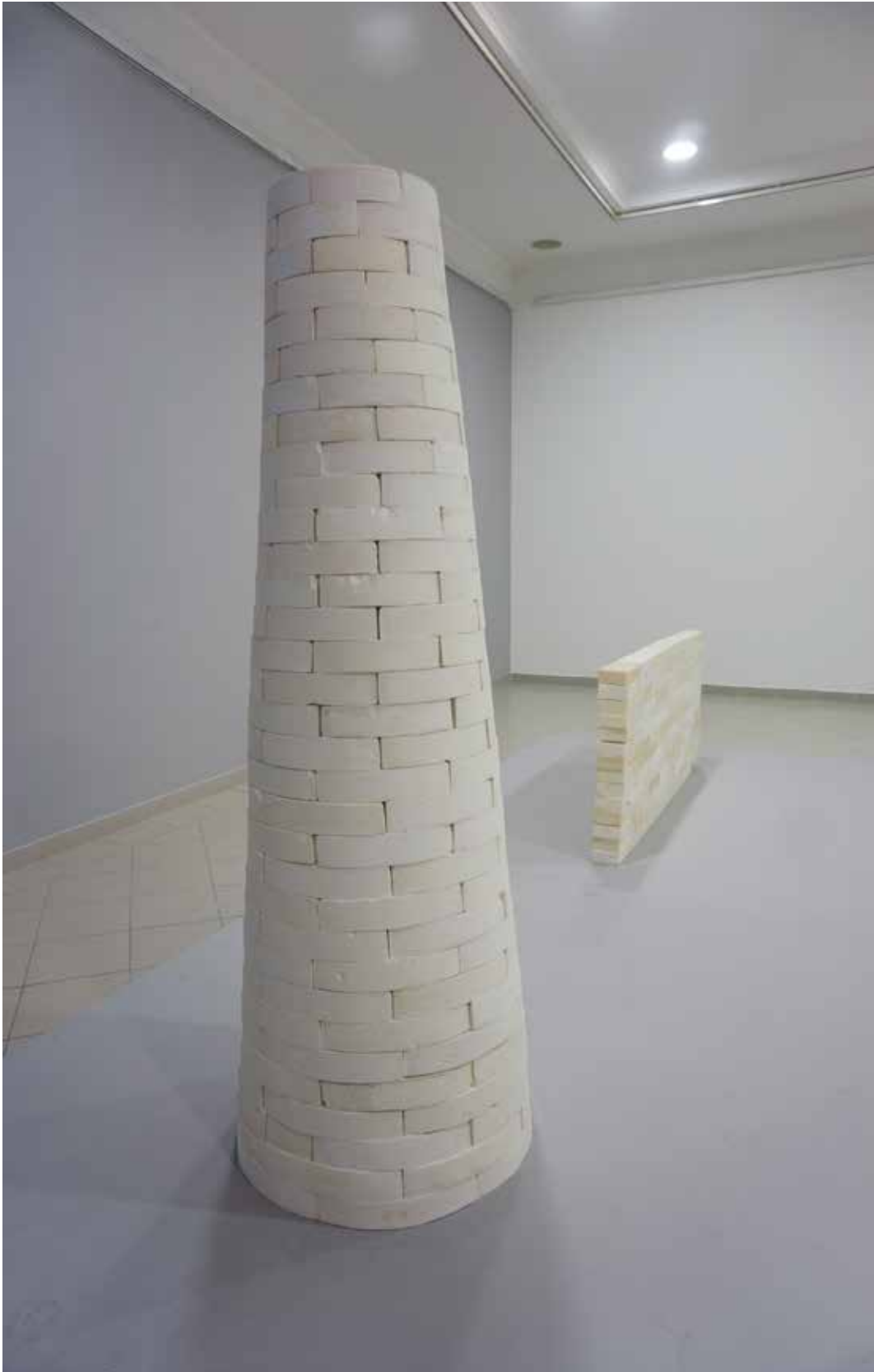
Clean Chimney

hand made soap, 200 x 46 cm, 2018/19

64

Clean Wall and *Clean Chimney* are sculptures made of home-made soap. Sculptures are ivory white, fragile and they smell of lavender. Artist found an old recipe for making natural soap, belonging to his grandmother Milka, a nice, simple but tough woman living in a small Serbian village Lipolist. She was using it for bathing, washing hands, clothes, dishes... Recipe is very simple, but the process of making the soap is hard, messy and demanding. One needs right amounts of ingredients, right temperature, timing, molds. Yet, it's fun and the result is beautiful and fragrant. Nikolić used this simple and cheap material to build simple architectural shapes such as a wall and a factory tower.

Building components of the *Clean Wall* are bricks (1:1 copies of the real brick sized 25 x 12 x 6 cm) made of soap. During the creative process the author had in mind the heterogeneous and often conflicting meanings found in underlying notion of wall, such as – division, obstacle, enclosure, but also protection, security, privacy. Bricks in this wall are not connected, so the wall can easily be disassembled or destroyed, which gives it a fragile and unstable character that is in the opposition with the meaning of the wall. Soaps can also be taken away and used for their primary purpose – washing. As if Nikolić was wondering how could we build a wall and at the same time remain pure before the world and ourselves.





66





BLACK ROOFS

Black Roof (After 20 Years I Called the Museum and Told Them the Title)
burned wood and hand made soap, 206 x 126 x 100 cm, 2017
(OMI Art Residency collection, USA)

Top (Church)
burned wood, 102 x 102 x 102 cm, 2017

68

Sculptures *Top (Church)* and *Black Roof (After 20 Years I Called the Museum and Told Them the Title)* extracts from Nikolić's large size work exhibited in 2016 at the Salon of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade *Superstructure*, whose topic was also a rooftop. *Superstructure* was an installation of huge proportions, shaped like a rooftop, built from the discarded material the artist collected (old doors, windows, furniture parts, planks...). The sculpture had a base of 120 square meters and it spread throughout the whole gallery. It was a colorful collage made of things we usually throw away. In contrast to the *Superstructure*, by burning such diverse pieces of wood in this work Nikolić gets a monolith representation that makes sublime, almost sacral effect by its natural, deep black color.







YOUR ROOM

Your Room
wood, 297 x 247 x 197 cm, 2017

72

Your Room is both – funny and serious. It represents a real-scale room made to look destroyed. Like a toy with fitting parts spread around which could be put back in place. The pieces are scattered as if a bomb exploded or something else happened.

Sculpture was made of wooden planks colored in gray so from a distance it looks like concrete. But at closer sight one can see that it is a hand-made object.



CONFESSIONAL

Confessional

wood, metal, textile, 180 x 92 x 248 cm, 2018

Toi-Toi Confessional

concept, plastic, 2019

74

The Confessional was created for the international exhibition *My Art is my Reality* in Rijeka, Croatia. It is based on the conversation with Mr. Hermann Glettler, Austrian contemporary artist and the Bishop of Innsbruck, who once told the artist that he should use the collected material to build a confessional that would be used for some time in the Graz cathedral. The choice of materials for this work sheds a bright light on the marginalized social groups (the Roma and other minorities, as well as refugees whose number in Europe is constantly growing) and their degraded position in the society. The confessional, placed in the public space of the church, serves as a reminder of what is almost forgotten today: we are all equal in the eyes of God.

The concept of *Toi-Toi Confessional* is an upgrade of the idea from which the installation *Confessional* was created. It goes a step further. Placed anywhere in an open public space (as well as *Toi-Tois*), it becomes even more democratic and open to use. It can also be placed on construction sites, even church construction sites, in short – in all places where *Toi-Tois* are usually installed. Made of plastic, in mass serial production, as a product design, the *Toi-Toi Confessional* upgrades the function and brand of the *Toi-Toi* toilets, and in addition to the physical, it also enables mental cleansing through conversation with the person sitting beside.





76





YOU MUST BE SMARTER

You Must Be Smarter (Church, Factory, Mosque)
trptych, wood, 155 x 100 x 10 cm (each), 2018

78

Artist's careful perception shows to what degree minimal transformation of shapes brings to memory completely different representations, evoking at the same time different emotions, both positive and negative. The symbolism of tradition by way of religion, in this case Christian and Islamic, as well as the symbolism of modern civilization of industry, points to deep associations that such symbols provoke and how different nuances of forms transform our representations and emotions. The artist is showing us the thin line that divides broad possibilities of linking and bridging the boundaries to the extent of full fusion of functional and ideological aspect of the universal that applies to all cultures. The topic is as old as the mankind, and at the same time is relevant today especially in the light of growing tensions in leading modern societies.



79







GENERAL INTEREST

General Interest

(with Acaymo S. Cuesta)

installation, wood, discarded materials and photographs

dimensions variable, 2022

82

Canarian artist Acaymo S. Cuesta and Serbian artist Branislav Nikolić connected two regions where the project has been developed through a collaborative work making use of reused, recovered and discarded materials, mainly wood and other sorts of waste.

The installation seeks to establish bridges between the ecological problems of the Islands and the global ones, taking as its starting point the construction project of the Salto de Chira-Soria hydroelectric plant, whose controversy is dividing the citizens of Grand Canaria, alluding to the form of the architectural structure that crosses the space.

The artists suggest the danger of corporate imperialism that has been developing, especially in countries of the Global South, leading to the dispossession of communities of the First Nations and indigenous peoples and generating irreversible damage to the flora and fauna of the territory. This loss of diversity is also shown in the photographs found inside the room as a separate space created by the structure.

The artists thus appeal to the importance of global energy sovereignty away from the monopolies of power over resources, where the race for renewables runs the risk of falling into the hands of green capitalism, which perpetuates the concept of progress as infinite growth – a model that collides head-on with the limits of the biosphere.



83



TE HUUR

Te Huur
(with Jesse Siegel)
mixed media, dimensions variable, 2018

84

Branislav Nikolić and Jesse Siegel created a collaborative site-specific installation within L'Édition Populaire's two vitrine galleries. Primarily comprised of discarded construction materials found throughout Antwerp, Belgium, including wood, bricks, metal and stone, the construction evokes concepts of real estate, the idealization of the home and class. These concepts behind the installation were conceived as a way of exposing the construction of space, not just in their physical presence but also in the emotions that they evoke.

In *Te Huur* (for rent) artists use the hyper visible model of the vitrine to expose and freeze in space the labor of construction. A labor that is often performed in an invisible way by anonymous workers. The two vitrine galleries, separated by a few minute walk, offer a unified picture, moving seamlessly between construction and real estate. It is intended to be a singular multi-directional experience.





86





MAP

Map (Jalovik)
wood, 110 x 180 cm, 2017

88

In the series of works *Maps*, Branislav Nikolić used Google Maps in order to define precise contours of the geographical concept (town, village, continent or particular neighborhood) which has a special meaning for him or determines his life in some way. Then, he applied those contours to the already prepared wooden reliefs and cut their shape with a saw, flat file and sand paper, until he achieved the desired form. He made the reliefs mostly from wooden material found on the streets of that neighborhood, village, town, continent...



CHURCH (WRAPPED)

Church (wrapped)
metal, 98 x 23 cm, 2018
(Wiener Städtiche collection)

90

The Church (Wrapped) represents a silhouette of a typified church made of a rolled sheet of iron, recognizable only by its symbolism of cross and openings and arches of a sacral architecture. This repurposed chimney or exhaust outlet is a visual aphorism speaking to the profanation of organized religion, to the prescriptive sacred, a symbol of dominant and binding model of spirituality represented as the packing or an empty used shell of some long gone and burnt out values.



65 DINARS

65 Dinars

wooden fruit crates, paper, mould, 49 x 29 x 370 cm, 2019

92

65 Dinars is an installation made from wooden crates used for carrying vegetable and fruit. It was erected in the village Jalovik in an abandoned grocery shop where the crates were found. On the ceiling, right where the wooden pillar ends, was a mold that artist used as an image of smoke. That way the smoke appears to be coming out of the pillar/chimney. Nikolić thus thematise the motif of the factory that occupies a significant place in his work. In one of the crates the artist found a RSD 65 price tag, a price tag for a product that is long gone from the crate and from the shop itself.

A piece in fact tells the story of the village fragile economy.



ENDLESS COLUMN

Endless Column
ceramics, 440 x 46 x 36 cm, 2019

94

Viewed from a distance *Endless Column* looks like a chain of shiny white pearls, but when you approach it, you realize that it was made from toilet bowls aligned one upon another to form the pillar aiming for the sky, like Brankusi's *Endless Column* 80 years ago. Unlike the sculpture of Romanian artist who made his column as a reflection of humanity that strives for something sublime and mystical with no limits to the progress, this sculpture has a different perspective. It is a critical comment on current situation in which humanity is at the present time.

After two weeks on display, sculpture has been destroyed by unknown person. The organizer of the exhibition filled in a form with the police, but the perpetrator has not been found to this day.







CHOCKING

Chocking (Kajlovanje)
wood, 22 x 17 x 293 cm, 2019
(Gallery Nadežda Petrović, Čačak collection)

98

Everything in Serbia is chocked a little – doors, furniture, vehicles, institutions, houses... Nothing stands on its own, nothing is stable. So, artist decided to make a sculpture only from chocks. The whole sculpture is built from chocks and it actually supports the gallery, the institution, the door, whatever is necessary. After all, our cultural institutions needs some support.



WATERFALL OF BUREAUCRACY

Waterfall of Bureaucracy
wooden drawers, paper, 65 x 54 x 230 cm, 2019

100

While exploring abandoned premises of a former agricultural cooperative, artist came across an office with broken windows and cluttered shelves. There was a pile of papers in the room so rain and snow poured in soaking documents like sale contracts, birth certificates forms. Very important things in people's lives from few decades ago were in the garbage dump. Mass of paper typed in a dry, bureaucratic language, created a waterfall of people's destinies and voices.

Nikolić's sculpture *Waterfall of Bureaucracy* dynamically connects drawers and various documents that have been archived in them for decades. Artist assembled the drawers on top of each other and let the documents to 'overflow' from the drawers like waterfalls in all directions. Boring and dry bureaucracy acquires a fluid and unburdened character, highlighted as a gathering-point of people's lives and activities.





102





CONVERTIBLE

Convertible
wood, 160 x 80 x 73 cm, 2019

104

Work *Convertible* is a standardized object that looks like a storage box and that changes its character depending on what kind of tower is added to it. A tower can be in the form of a cathedral, mosque, factory, or some other building, and the whole object changes its function and symbolism becoming a cathedral, mosque or factory by changing this one element. It has happened many times over in history that an architectural object had been repurposed into different functions.



105



CHAIR FOR GEORGHE DOJA

Chair for Gheorghe Doja

(with Nicolae Velciov)

recyclable materials – wood, metal, cloth, with wooden

resistance structure, 1600 x 300 x 80 cm, 2019

106

Organized by the Diplomatic Art Association within the program Timisoara 2021 – European Capital of Culture, the project European Echoes/Consulart #2 brought together the two neighboring countries, Romania and Serbia, through the sensitive connection of artists Branislav Nikolić from Belgrade and Nicolae Velciov from Timisoara. Artists were invited to creatively interpret the cultural heritage starting from the specifics of a given place, Gheorghe Doja Park located near the Serbian Consulate. Obviously, the two communities have common historical events, such as the Multiethnic Peasant Uprising conducted by Gheorghe Doja (1514), which led, through a European effort, to the removal of a dark Middle Age in favor of the formation of modern society. In the same way, the artwork *Transborder*, through a character of collaboration between artists, but also of active public participation, reiterated the idea of overcoming the limits of obsolete worlds, expressed through the fragmentary privileged point of view. Thus, the foundation of a globalizing reality is created through the multiple points of view that abolishes any frontier and, in this case, the representation of the torture chair that led to the martyrdom of Gheorghe Doja turned into a pathway that spectators were invited to walk along.



107



HORIZONT

Horizont
(with Domingos Octaviano)
charcoal and colored wood on the wall, 2019

108

Horizont is a collaborative wall piece between the serbian artist Branislav Nikolić and brasilian artist Domingos Octaviano realized in 2019 in their joined show *You'll Make Sense When You Find a Horizon* at the gallery Hestia in Belgrade, Serbia. Two artists made a drawing installation consisting of a charcoal drawing applied directly on the wall and wooden pieces attached under it.



LAST DROP

Last Drop
wood, metal, 146 x 257 x 10 cm, 2019

110

Last Drop is artist's homage to painting. As a painter, Nikolić often used liquid paint, which left paint drops on lot of his paintings. This monochromatic wooden relief is his attempt to transfer paintings' aesthetic into the sculpture. All wooden planks are found on the streets of Belgrade and were not additionally painted.



SMALL FACTORIES

Wooden Chimney

wood, 33 x 34 x 4,5 cm, 2018

Blue Mill

aluminium and wood, 24.5 x 36 x 1.8 cm, 2019

Small Factory

aluminium and wood, 25 x 17 x 1.8 cm, 2019
(private collection)

Factory (Waving Smoke)

aluminium, 33 x 34 x 2 cm, 2018
(artist's collection)

Black Factory

plaster and silicone, 11 x 9 x 14 cm, 2018

Chimney

aluminium, 22 x 46 x 2 cm, 2018

Various small models of factories, chimneys and other elements of industrial architecture are presented on the walls of the gallery.



113





114





BUILT-UP AREA

Built-up Area (outdoor)
metal, 500 x 250 x 35 cm, 2020
(public sculpture, Užice, Serbia)

Built-up Area (indoor)
wood, concrete, stone, brick, cardboard, plexiglass, sand
500 x 250 x 35 cm, 2021

116

A traffic sign for built-up area can be found at the entrance of every settlement everywhere in the world. The sign usually has black silhouette representing an amalgam of urban and village landscape on the white background. It is an abstracted version of the settlement. The general characteristics of the settlement and building tradition are sublimated in this silhouette. It represents the way in which the bodies adopting laws see the settlements in a particular country.

The signs are generally standardized and represent a combination of low and high raise characteristic for particular territory, often with foregrounded religious object, so they vary from country to country. In some places, the signs represent only low houses, in other, there are churches and high raise. In countries where gothic architecture dominates the landscape, we can see the silhouettes of such buildings, in Iran we can see mosques, in the Netherlands, windmills etc. The sign for built-up area in Serbia is a modified sign used earlier in Germany. Spiked top of the church is simply flattened and the building object is thus transformed into high raise.

The sculpture/installation *Built-up Area* is a threedimensional version of one such sign as a translation of the reality. It is a threedimensional interpretation of two-dimensional image that is a sublimation of the overall architecture of a particular country.

The piece is made in two versions of the same format. Monochromatic, sculptural version created in steel sheets 3 mm thick, has been placed in front of the Contemporary Arts Museum, and the installation constructed from found materials, which follows the same silhouette, was in the Museum itself as a part of the exhibition *Overview Effect*.





118





BLUE FACTORY

Blue Factory
concrete, 435 x 285 x 400 cm, 2020
(public sculpture, Šabac, Serbia)

120

The sculpture *Blue Factory* was inspired by industrial heritage of the city Šabac. A great number of inhabitants worked in some of the numerous chemical industry plants with impressive factory halls and enormous chimneys. Šabac was overwhelmed with promotional material extolling the factory. Each house had a calendar, schedule book, ashtray, flag, pen, pin or sticker, with the silhouette of factory's sawtooth roof and towering chimney. That was the image we grew up with that stuck to our memory and became the collective memory of the city.

The idea of the sculpture *Blue Factory* was to bring back this image of the factory, in an iconic, almost graphical manner, using concrete as material, to the settlement Benska Bara, inhabited mostly by factory workers. With its dimensions and appearance of a toy, when compared with the original monumental dimensions of the old factory, the sculpture gives positive, optimistic tone, and is linked iconically with the history of Šabac. It represents a look to the future and premonition of a new beginning.

The sculpture was created as a part of the Residential Programme for Visual Artists of the Culture Centre Šabac, under the auspices of the City of Šabac and with the donor aid of the companies Set and Gudmark in 2019/20.







WE WILL MEET AGAIN

We Will Meet Again
terracotta, 425 x 240 x 105 cm, 2020/21
(Terra Center, Kikinda collection)

124

Accidental factory

.
this is not an accidental factory
it has been here since the beginning of time
it was built by people
to make objects
to feed themselves
this is not an accidental factory
lo and behold, there are fields behind
and behind the fields is the river
and from the factory flows
the channel to the river
this is not an accidental factory
(stranger)
and now you can imagine
the foundations in the mud
and the chimneys in the fog
there has been a factory since the beginning of time
to feed and poison the town.

Milorad Mladenović



MOTHER CHURCH

Mother Church

terracotta, 65 x 36 x 25 cm, 2020
(Terra Center, Kikinda collection)

126

Mother church or matrice is a term depicting the Christian Church as a mother in her functions of nourishing and protecting the believers. It may also refer to the primary church of a Christian denomination or diocese, i.e. a cathedral or a metropolitan church. For a particular individual, mother church is the church in which one received the sacrament of baptism. The term has specific meanings within different Christian traditions.

At a "first see", or primatial one, a regional or national church is sometimes referred to as the mother church of that nation. For example, the local Church of Armagh is the primatial see of Ireland, because it was the first established local Church in that country. Similarly, Rome is the primatial see of Italy, and so on. The first local church in all of Christianity is that of Jerusalem, the site of the Passion of the Christ and of Pentecost, making it the Mother Church of all Christianity.

Wikipedia



SMOKE

Small White Bubbles

terracotta, 75 x 19 x 19 cm, 2020/21

Big Bubbles

terracotta, metal, 133 x 45 x 39 cm, 2020/21

White Smoke

terracotta, metal, 142 x 41 x 31 cm, 2020/21
(Terra Center, Kikinda collection)

Small Bubbles

terracotta, metal, 79 x 22 x 18 cm, 2020/21

128

Various versions of chimneys with smoke, made in terracotta and metal in different dimensions, were produced during the artist's stay at the Terra art residence in Kikinda (Serbia). The residence took place in the premises of the former tile and brick factory. Chimneys refer to Kikinda's socialist industrial heritage.



IN/OUT

IN/OUT
concrete, 700 x 150 x 40 cm, 2003

130

Sculpture *IN/OUT* was exhibited in 2003, during the BELEF (Belgrade Summer Festival), on the lawn in front of the shopping mall Merkator in Belgrade. The word *IN* is 20 cm pressed into the ground and the word *OUT* is jutting out from it. The letters are made of concrete and dimensions of each letter are 100 x 150 cm (except the letter *I* whose dimensions are 30 x 150 cm).



KIOSK

Kiosk
wood, 310 x 200 x 260 cm, 2002

132

Sculpture *Kiosk* is made out of prefabricated wooden boards. It represents the original 1:1 copy of the typical Belgrade kiosk. Made for the 40th Belgrade October Salon in 2002. This work established a direct communication with the passers-by, because it was conceived as something between a sculpture and a real object.



TOWER

Tower
wood, 60 x 430 cm (largest), 1999/2000

134

Series of sculptures *The Tower* was made out of planks and boards found in the streets, in the period between 1999 and 2000 in The Netherlands. The form of the factory tower has been made in several dimensions – from 2 m up to 4,3 m in height. This sculpture was first one from the series of the public works, which are something between sculpture and a real object.



TV MOUNTAINS

TV Mountains

TV screens, concrete, wood, metal, installation, dimensions variable, 1998/2000

136

Installation *TV Mountains* is made in the period between 1998 and 2000 in The Netherlands and Finland. The screens of the old television sets and the monitors were covered with the 10 cm thick concrete layer. Many of those different sized elements, scattered in the space, form a small mountain landscape. Author wanted to recycle wasted technology and „bring it back to the nature“ in form of a petrified landscape. Covering of the Chernobyl nuclear central with enormous quantity of concrete (several dozens of meters thick), that created a huge artificial mountain, was the inspiration for this work. In 2000 *TV Mountains* were exhibited in front of the Museum of the Radio and TV, during the exhibition of the public sculpture, in Lahti, Finland.



137



DIARIES 98-02

Diaries 98-02
installation, dimensions variable, 2002

138

Diaries 98-02 is the exhibition that took place in 2002 in the gallery Golden eye in Novi Sad, Serbia. The author presented notebooks – diaries, together with the notes and sketches made in the period between 1998 and 2002, during his traveling through Western Europe. Diaries were put in the glass cases in the middle of the gallery, while their content was exposed. The visual part of the *Diaries* – sketches for the projects made by graphite pencil, were drawn directly on the gallery walls, and the literary part – notes and quotations, were printed and put in the wooden box, hanged on the wall, ready to be read. Additionally, two projectors showed slides of the realised works from the *Diaries*.



ASIA

Asia
installation, dimensions variable, presented as
black and white photography, 100 x 70 cm, 2000
(private collection)

140

Asia is a 'pocket' installation made of staples for tightening canvas. From the single U-shaped elements, the author produced a semi-abstract piece which, in fact, makes up the word ASIA. The whole installation is not bigger than 5 x 2 cm. The printed documentary photograph of the work (100 x 70 cm) later became a piece of work itself.



WINDOWS

Windows

burned wood, installation, dimensions variable

142

Windows is the space installation, made specifically for the villa Weiner in Ochtrup, Germany (villa in secessionist style from the beginning of the 19th century). As the part of the exhibition *You are here*, each of four artists who participated, had to create a work related to the villa's architecture. In this installation the existing windows are literally 'copied' on the opposite wall, reflecting exactly its dimensions and proportions. These wooden windows are burned in order to get a matt surface that absorbs light. The existing windows are included in the installation. In that way, a spectator is in the middle of the work, between two elements which he cannot capture with one glance.



143



RED STEP

Red Step
installation, red pigment, dimensions variable, 2000

144

Red Step is an installation made in the Dutch Art Institute in The Netherlands in 2000. One step of the main staircase at the entrance of this Academy was sprinkled with the red pigment. It is interesting that this act is immediately recognized as an art intervention, and it remained the way it was until the removing, two weeks later.



ARTIST RESUME

Branislav Nikolić was born 1970 in Šabac, Serbia. He graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Novi Sad, Serbia, the department of painting, in 1996. He received postgraduate degrees from the Dutch Art Institute, Enschede, the Netherlands in 2001 and from the Academy of Fine Arts in Novi Sad, Serbia in 2002. From 1995 he is a member of the Association of Fine Artists of Serbia. From 2002 to 2019 he was selector for the Jalovik Art Colony. He works in sculpture, painting, design and as a curator. Branislav Nikolić has exhibited his works independently and together with other artists, both at native country and abroad. He lives and works in Belgrade, Serbia.

SOLO SHOWS AND PROJECTS

- 2022 Works on paper and small sculptures, Matthias Kuper Gallery, Stuttgart, Germany
- 2021 Frozen Silence (with Selma Selman), Navigator Art Gallery, Belgrade, Serbia
- 2020 Blue Factory, public sculpture, Cultural Center, Šabac, Serbia
- 2019 Surviving Work (with Žolt Kovač), Nadežda Petrović Gallery, Čačak, Serbia
- 2019 Chair for Gheorghe Doja (with Miki Velicov), public sculpture, Gheorghe Doja Park, Timisoara, Romania
- 2019 You'll Make Sense When you Find a Horizon (with Domingos Octaviano), Hestia Gallery, Belgrade, Serbia
- 2018 Te Huur (with Jesse Siegel), Edition Populaire, Antwerpen, Belgium
- 2017 Ordinary Day, Cultural Centre gallery, Šabac, Serbia
- 2016 Superstructure, Salon of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade, Serbia
- 2016 Airlab Spring Exhibition (with Su Tomesen, NL), Zeta Gallery, Tirana, Albania
- 2015 Jungle, Ice Cream and Dots, Prototype Gallery, Belgrade, Serbia
- 2015 City Mirrors, Stepenište Gallery, Šumatovačka škola, Belgrade, Serbia
- 2013 Secondary Architecture, Urban Incubator, Magacin Gallery, Belgrade, Serbia
- 2013 Scream from Nature (with Lise Wulff), Munk 150 Celebration, Oslo, Norway
- 2012 Can Always Be Better, Gallery 73, Belgrade, Serbia
- 2011 ...your drawings are like those Tesla-s energy lines beside my landscape! with Selman Trtovac, KC Grad Gallery, Belgrade, Serbia
- 2011 Belgrade Pillars, Dom omladine Gallery, Belgrade, Serbia
- 2010 Visa to Transit, with Ivan Grubanov and Nikola Marković, Kulter Gallery, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- 2010 Paintings, Drawings and Cakes, Culture Center Gallery, Sopot, Serbia
- 2010 Paintings, Drawings and Collages, with Aleksandar Dimitrijević, New Gallery, Belgrade, Serbia
- 2008 Paintings, Drawings and Collages, Culture Center Gallery, Gornji Milanovac, Serbia

- 2002 Diaries 98-02, Golden Eye Gallery, Novi Sad, Serbia
- 2001 Collection/Asia, Fastarts Gallery, Turku, Finland
- 1999 Invisible, SKC Gallery, Belgrade, Serbia
- 1999 Collection 98-99, AKI2, Enschede, The Netherlands
- 1998 Ten Large Paintings, Old Obnova Building, Šabac, Serbia
- 1998 Ten Large Paintings, SKC Gallery, Belgrade, Serbia
- 1996 Works on paper with Slobodan Peladić, New Gallery, Šabac, Serbia
- 1996 Paintings, New Gallery, Šabac, Serbia
- 1996 The Bottles, Tribina mladih Gallery, Novi Sad, Serbia
- 1995 Paintings, Pinki Gallery, Belgrade, Serbia
- 1994 Small Spring Exhibition, Hall Gallery, Novi Sad, Serbia
- 1993 Collages on the wall, Šabac, Serbia

GROUP SHOWS AND PROJECTS /selection/

- 2022 Down to Earth, CAAM, Centro Atalantico de Arte Moderno, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain
- 2021 Hotel Beograd, Art Weekend Belgrade, Beograd, Srbija
- 2021 Terra 39, sculptures in public space and in the gallery Terra, Kikinda, Serbia
- 2021 Overview Effect, MOCAB, Belgrade, Serbia
- 2020 So-Called Reality, The Contemporary Art Centre of Montenegro, The Petrović Palace, Podgorica, Montenegro
- 2019 63rd October Salon, Public Museum, Šabac, Serbia
- 2019 Srpske lepe umetnosti 2, Ostavinska Gallery, Belgrade, Serbia
- 2019 My Art is My Reality, Museum of Contemporary Art, Novi Sad, Serbia
- 148 2019 Hellfire, Drina Gallery, Belgrade, Serbia
- 2018 My Art is My Reality, Gallery of the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Rijeka, Croatia
- 2018 Color Lucida, Serbian Cultural Center, Paris, France
- 2018 Black and White, and Re(a)d All Over, Gallery Huto Jatkasaari, Helsinki, Finland
- 2018 Voyage: A Journey through Contemporary Serbian Art, China Art Museum, Shanghai, China
- 2017 Art Encounters, Timisoara, Romania
- 2017 Universallowed, Turnul Fabricii de Baterii, Timisoara, Romania
- 2017 Inner Migrations, Poola Gallery, Pula, Croatia
- 2017 OMI Art Residency open day, Ghent, New York, USA
- 2017 Plat-Forms, Planeta, New York, USA
- 2017 Shelters of Babylon, Kibla, Maribor, Slovenia
- 2017 Inner Migrations, national Museum of Montenegro, Gallery Atelier Dado, Cetinje, Montenegro
- 2017 Equilibrium, Luka Beograd, Belgrade, Serbia
- 2016 TICA Airlab 2016 Exhibition, Miza gallery, Tirana, Albania
- 2016 Bruderlichkeit und Einheit Im Zeichen der Deregulierung, Das Haus der Architektur Gallery, Graz, Austria
- 2016 Teatri i Gjelberimit: A Retrospective of Art about Public Space, FAB gallery, Tirana, Albania
- 2016 Inner Migrations, Duplex Gallery, Sarajevo, BiH
- 2015 Constellation, Serbian Cultural Center, Paris, France
- 2015 Local Municipalities, Visual Contact Gallery, Oradea, Romania
- 2015 Pop Up 19, Osijek, Croatia

2015 Affirmation, 37th Salon of Architecture, Museum of Applied Art, Belgrade, Serbia
 2015 DEV9T festival, Old brick factory, Belgrade, Serbia
 2014 27th Nadežda Petrović Memorial, Čačak, Serbia
 2014 Ping Pong, New Art in Embassies, American Residence, Belgrade, Serbia
 2013 From-To, Magacin Gallery, Belgrade, Serbia
 2013 34th and 35th session of JAC, Third Belgrade Gallery, Belgrade, Serbia
 2013 34th Art Colony Ečka, Contemporary Gallery Zrenjanin, Serbia
 2013 Haleb Yugo, Galerie 16B, Zurich, Switzerland
 2011 Landscape Revisited, Periferne Centra, Dubravica, Slovakia
 2011 Spring Serbian Salad, Lukas Feichtner Gallery, Vienna, Austria
 2011 Nature and Art, Belgrade Heritage House, Belgrade, Serbia
 2010 Nature and Art, Public Museum, Valjevo, Serbia
 2010 Nature and Art, Legat, Belgrade Heritage House, Belgrade, Serbia
 2009 Bank on Art, Toronto, Canada
 2009 Fascinating geometry, Magacin, Belgrade, Serbia
 2009 Museum Night 05, Cakes, paintings, Belgrade, Serbia
 2008 Politike drugog, Kolektiv, Public Museum, Šabac, Serbia
 2007 Art for Aid, Zuider Kerk, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
 2007 Museum Night 04, New Remote and Kolektiv, Šabac, Belgrade, Serbia
 2007 Velada de Santa Lucia, New Remote, Marciabo, Venecuela
 2007 Songs of the Apocalypse, New Remote, Art Mur gallery, Montreal, Canada
 2006 Postcards, Gallery MSU, Belgrade, Serbia
 2006 50 years of October Salon in Šabac, Public Museum, Šabac, Serbia
 2006 Igor Belohlavek prize winners, Cultural Centre Gallery, Šabac, Serbia
 2005 Museum Night 01, Cvijeta Zuzorić Pavilion, Belgrade, Serbia
 2004 ULSŠ, Cultural Center Gallery, Vranje, Serbia
 2004 Displacements, Museum in the open, Kalenić, Serbia
 2004 Life in Color, Artget Gallery, Cultural Center, Belgrade, Serbia
 2003 Hercegnovski zimski salon, Herceg Novi Gallery, Montenegro
 2003 BELEF 03, Belgrade, Serbia
 2003 Drawing 2003, City Gallery, Požega, Serbia
 2002 Time Codes, 5th Biennale of Young Artists, Vršac, Serbia
 2002 Crossings, 10th Biennale of Visual Arts, Pančevo, Serbia
 2002 Kolektiv, Sopot Gallery, Sopot, Serbia
 2001 Label Flashing Event, New Remote, SKC, Belgrade, Serbia
 2001 Real Presence, Belgrade, Serbia
 2001 42nd October Salon, Belgrade, Serbia
 2000 Open day DAI, The Tower (sculptures), Enschede, The Netherlands
 2000 Kunstvlaai 4, Westergasfabriek, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
 2000 Paradoxes of the Time, 4th Biennale of Young Artists, Vršac, Serbia
 2000 hah!, open air sculpture show, Lahti, Finland
 2000 Kunstdocument 2000, Enschede, The Netherlands
 1999 Interakcija (project), SKC Gallery, Belgrade, Serbia
 1999 Dummy Speaks, Wide Out, Paradiso, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
 1999 Kunstvlaai 3, Westergasfabriek, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
 1999 To Give a Place, Stefania Miscetti Gallery, Roma, Italy
 1999 1/2000, Chauny, France
 1999 You are Here, Window (installation), Villa Weiner, Ochtrup, Germany
 1997 JAC Workshop, SKC Gallery, Belgrade, Serbia
 1996 October Salon, Culture Center Gallery, Novi Sad, Serbia

- 1995 New members of ULUS, ULUS Gallery, Belgrade, Serbia
- 1994 20 years of Academy of Fine Arts, Culture Center, Novi Sad, Serbia
- 1993 Drawings, FLU Gallery, Belgrade, Serbia
- 1991 Drawing and Small Plastic, Cvijeta Zuzorić Pavilion, Belgrade, Serbia

RESIDENCIES

- 2019 Periferna Centrum, Dubravica, Slovačka
- 2018 Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Rijeka, Croatia
- 2017 OMI Art Residency, Ghent, New York, USA
- 2016 Tirana Center for Contemporary Art, Tirana, Albania
- 2011 Periferna Centrum, Dubravica, Slovakia
- 2000-19 Jalovik Art Colony, Jalovik, Serbia

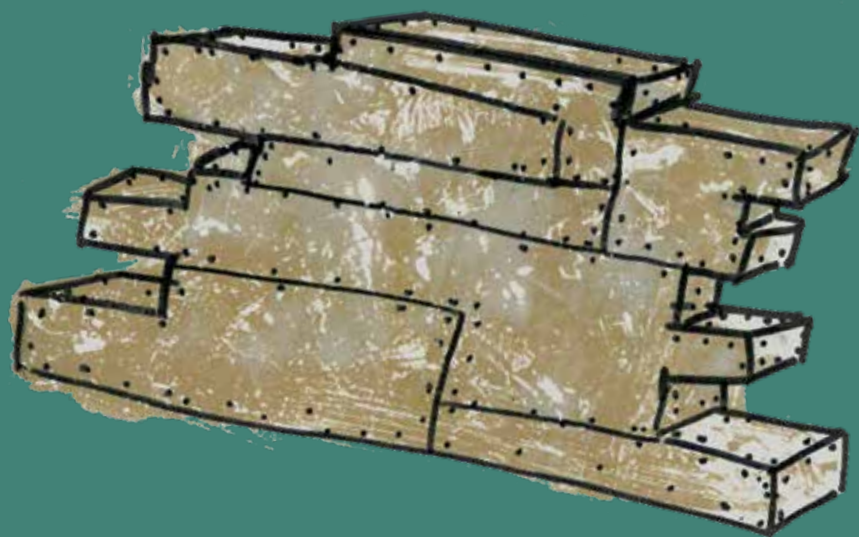
PRIZES

- 2015 Award for Experiment at 37th Salon of Architecture, Belgrade, Serbia
- 2015 Award for contribution to the development of fine arts, ULSS, Šabac, Serbia
- 2014 Audience Award at Nadežda Petrović Memorial, Čačak, Serbia
- 2013 First Prize at the October Salon in Šabac, Serbia
- 2008 Mara Lukić Jelesić Prize, ULSS, Šabac, Serbia
- 1995 First Prize at the October Salon in Šabac, Serbia
- 1994 Igor Belohlavek Foundation Prize for the best young artist, Šabac, Serbia
- 1992 First Prize at the October Salon in Šabac, Serbia

150

COLLECTIONS AND PUBLIC WORKS

- Terra Museum collection, Kikinda, Serbia
- Nadežda Petrović gallery collection, Čačak, Serbia
- US Embassy collection
- Wiener Stadtliche collection
- Jalovik Art Colony, Jalovik, Serbia
- OMI Art Residency collection, Ghent, NY, USA
- Wilson Center collection, Washington, USA
- City of Šabac, Serbia (public sculpture)
- City of Užice, Serbia (public sculpture)
- Contemporary Gallery Zrenjanin collection, Zrenjanin, Serbia
- Telenor Montenegro collection, Podgorica, Montenegro
- Telenor Serbia collection, Belgrade, Serbia
- Public Museum Šabac collection, Šabac, Serbia
- Šumatovačka Art Center collection, Belgrade, Serbia
- Šabac Public Library collection, Šabac, Serbia
- Dubravica, Slovakia (public sculpture)
- Babe Art Residence collection, Serbia
- Smederevo Museum collection, Smederevo, Serbia
- Institute for Textbooks collection, Belgrade, Serbia
- City of Belgrade (public sculpture)
- UNHCR collection, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- several private collections in Serbia, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, USA, Switzerland, Canada



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152

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- *Neobična postavka mladog Nikolića*, Glas Podrinja, Šabac, 1992.

LIST OF WORKS

Belgrade Pillars

5 wooden pillars, about 400 x 55 cm each,
2009/11 (US Embassy, Belgrade collection)

Fires

ceramics, about 30 x 40 cm each, 2001
(several private collections)

Field on Fire

land art, grass, 55 x 220 m, 2011

Scream from the Nature (with Lise Wulff)

land art/happening (with about 4000 people),
70 x 50 m, 2013

Cathedral

metal, oil, electric heater, electric cord,
121,5 x 77 x 19,5 cm, 2012 (Wiener Stadtliche
collection and Smederevo Museum collection)

Secondary Architecture

found wood, metal, 360 x 305 x 230 cm, 2013/14

City Mirror (hive)

wood, metal, Ø 120 cm, 2014, (artist's collection)

City Mirror (school board)

wood, cloth, Ø 120 cm, 2017
(Contemporary Gallery Zrenjanin collection)

City Mirror (blue 2)

wood, metal, Ø 140 cm, 2016

City Mirror (yellow)

wood, metal, Ø 100 cm, 2016

City Mirror (large)

wood, metal, Ø 200 cm, 2014
(Šabac Public Library collection)

Factory

wood, metal, rubber, 285 x 210 x 500 cm, 2015

Roof

wood, metal, 263 x 223 x 107 cm, 2015

Superstructure

wood, metal, glass, 1760 x 1150 x 240 cm, 2016

If the Hat Fits the Suit

wood, metal, plaster, 200 x 200 x 120 cm, 2016

Stage 2 (Brana's)

wood, 500 x 270 x 20 cm, 2017

Stage 3 (Belvil)

wood, 330 x 330 x 85 cm, 2017

Cake 1 (Cake)

wood, 300 x 300 x 90 cm, 2000

Four Waters

metal, 360 x 270 x 225 cm, 2016

Clean Wall

hand made soap, 174 x 88 x 12 cm, 2017

Clean Chimney

hand made soap, 200 x 46 cm, 2018/19

Black Roof (After 20 Years I Called the Museum and Told Them the Title)

burned wood and hand made soap,
206 x 126 x 100 cm, 2017 (OMI Art
Residency collection, USA)

Top (Church)

burned wood, 102 x 102 x 102 cm, 2017

Your Room

wood, 297 x 247 x 197 cm, 2017

Confessional

wood, metal, textile, 180 x 92 x 248 cm, 2018

Toi-Toi Confessional

concept, plastic, 2019

You Must Be Smarter (Church, Factory, Mosque)

triptych, wood, 155 x 100 x 10 cm (each), 2018

General Interest (with Acaymo S. Cuesta)

installation, wood, discarded materials and photo-
graphs, dimensions variable, 2022

Te Huur (with Jesse Siegel)

mixed media, dimensions variable, 2018

Map (Jalovik)

wood, 110 x 180 cm, 2017

Church (wrapped)

metal, 98 x 23 cm, 2018 (Wiener Stadtliche collection)

65 Dinars
wooden fruit crates, paper, mould,
49 x 29 x 370 cm, 2019

Endless Column
ceramics, 440 x 46 x 36 cm, 2019

Chocking (Kajlovanje)
wood, 22 x 17 x 293 cm, 2019
(Gallery Nadežda Petrović, Čačak collection)

Waterfall of Bureaucracy
wooden drawers, paper, 65 x 54 x 230 cm, 2019

Convertible
wood, 160 x 80 x 73 cm, 2019

Chair for Gheorghe Doja (with Nicolae Velcirov)
recyclable materials – wood, metal, cloth,
with wooden resistance structure,
1600 x 300 x 80 cm, 2019

Horizont (with Domingos Octaviano)
charcoal and colored wood on the wall, 2019

Last Drop
wood, metal, 146 x 257 x 10 cm, 2019

Wooden Chimney
wood, 33 x 34 x 4,5 cm, 2018

Blue Mill
aluminium and wood, 24.5 x 36 x 1.8 cm, 2019

Small Factory
aluminium and wood, 25 x 17 x 1.8 cm, 2019
(private collection)

Factory (Waving Smoke)
aluminium, 33 x 34 x 2 cm, 2018
(artist's collection)

Black Factory
plaster and silicone, 11 x 9 x 14 cm, 2018

Chimney
aluminium, 22 x 46 x 2 cm, 2018

Built-up Area
metal, 500 x 250 x 35 cm, 2020
(public sculpture, Užice, Serbia)

Built-up Area
wood, concrete, stone, brick, cardboard,
plexiglass, sand, 500 x 250 x 35 cm, 2021

Blue Factory
concrete, 435 x 285 x 400 cm, 2020
(public sculpture, Šabac, Serbia)

We Will Meet Again
terracotta, 425 x 240 x 105 cm, 2020/21
(Terra Center, Kikinda collection)

Mother Church
terracotta, 65 x 36 x 25 cm, 2020
(Terra Center, Kikinda collection)

Small White Bubbles
terracotta, 75 x 19 x 19 cm, 2020/21

Big Bubbles
terracotta, metal, 133 x 45 x 39 cm, 2020/21

White Smoke
terracotta, metal, 142 x 41 x 31 cm, 2020/21
(Terra Center, Kikinda collection)

Small Bubbles
terracotta, metal, 79 x 22 x 18 cm, 2020/21

IN/OUT
concrete, 700 x 150 x 40 cm, 2003
(public sculpture, Belgrade, Serbia)

Kiosk
wood, 310 x 200 x 260 cm, 2002

Tower
wood 60 x 430 cm (largest), 1999/2000

TV Mountains
TV screens, concrete, wood, metal, installation,
dimensions variable, 1998/2000

Diaries 98-02
installation, dimensions variable, 2002
(artist's collection)

Asia
installation, dimensions variable, presented as
black and white photography, 100 x 70 cm, 2000
(private collection)

Windows
burned wood, installation, dimensions variable,
1999

Red Step
installation, red pigment, dimensions variable,
2000

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161

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