

BON MÉNAGE...

LANA ČMAJČANIN, IVAN MOUDOV, ALBAN MUJA

Text by Tevž Logar

Dec 4TH, 2021

Jan 22ND, 2022

47 rue de Montmorency - 75003 Paris
Vernissage: Saturday, December 4th, from 3pm
Opening hours: Tue-Sat 11am - 7pm

Alberta Pane Gallery is pleased to present *Bon ménage...* a group show by Lana Čmajčanin, Ivan Moudov, and Alban Muja with a text by Tevž Logar*.

Stories of friendships between artists, curators, dealers, writers, theoreticians and collectors are often romanticized and they always lead us to feeling almost mysterious, overwhelmed with eclecticism, stirring up emotions stretching between mutual recognition or contempt. Many such stories of friendship are written posthumously and this is probably also the reason why we perceive many of them with a slight detachment yet we silently wish we could have been privy to them. Like meeting with the Surrealists in Café Cyrano along Boulevard de Clichy in Paris, discussing with Allen Ginsberg, Jean-Michel Basquiat and Grace Jones in Warhol's Factory in New York or gazing at the sky together with the Gorgona group in Zagreb. But without a shadow of doubt, we can state that these close friendships have affected the history of art very directly, from the very beginning to the present day. They have influenced the development of artistic practices, the production of artworks, theory, writing, the establishing of institutions, galleries, collections and many other aspects of the system that we currently refer to as contemporary art. It is clear that the contemporary art system is extremely subjective, which is why relations between people play a crucial role within it. Although they are often hidden behind the public façade. But there are many positive aspects to it, especially if they are sincere and truthful. Something that through a symbolic parallelism can be read in Viktor Misiano's text: *The Institutionalization of Friendship*, in which he proposes friendship as the most non-institutional and personalized type of social communication, which is not established through formalized procedures, but through the rhythm discovered by the participants when they listen to each other. And this definition of friendship in the context of contemporary art should serve as an initial thought for the exhibition project *Bon ménage...*, conceived by artists and friends, Lana Čmajčanin, Ivan Moudov and Alban Muja.

However, looking at this particular project, it should be stressed that friendship is not the concept of the exhibition, but rather creates a context in which the exhibition was developed. As mentioned above, friendship between artists often results in their mutual recognition of interests and this aspiration very often leads to collaborations. The *Bon ménage...* project is exactly the result of this. We could say that there is a causality between artists' friendships and their joint interest in the context of their practices, what directly tackles the issues that affect the public and private sphere alike. This is symbolically suggested by the title, which implies that relations between artists trigger

a chain reaction and cause a shift in the selection process as well. In other words, the exhibition dismisses the framework of a classic thematic presentation by rejecting a dominant theme and calling for a break, with the aim of self-reflection and a focus on particular artworks. Yet the exhibition does not seek to be a compendium of three estranged monoliths, but rather to showcase three artistic positions, three artworks, sharing the idea that an understanding of social, political, cultural or economic change can only come from an awareness and reflection of our environment.

It is important to understand that contemporary art never travels alone, and maybe Lana Čmajčanin's work *Balkan Cruelty* is the most direct testimony to this. Her wallpaper installation is based on graphic portfolio *Balkangreuel* by Gottfried Sieben, which was created in 1909 after Bosnia - Herzegovina was annexed to the Austro-Hungarian Empire as the outcome of the Berlin Congress, which redistributed colonies among the European powers. With the intervention, Čmajčanin repossesses the original motives, which served as wartime propaganda of a dehumanized enemy, who was portrayed as the Balkan savage, while a woman's body stereotypically assumed a role of the territory subject to usurpation and conquest. The work of Lana Čmajčanin thus establishes the relation to the problematic historical perception of a particular geo-political construct, while she concurrently points out the popularity of prejudices that are still valid and very much alive today. While Lana Čmajčanin's wallpaper establishes an interdependent tension between the past and present perception of a particular space, the series of paintings by Alban Muja, entitled *Brotherhood*, "report" a specific geo-political condition and exposes the very specifics of the omnipresent phenomena of Kosovan society, which is in its exaggerating form most visible in the countryside and in non-urban areas. The work has many layers but, first and foremost, it poses the problem of male tradition and how it is manifested through the status symbol – a house. A house becomes a symbol for the family and a basic unit of male pride which is visible on the outside. Besides the process of visual documentation and Muja's personal reflection, the *Brotherhood* project is somehow also a collection of people's stories that serve as the sincerest testimony to a particular space and time. The third artist and friend in the *ménage* exhibition project is Ivan Moudov, who, through his humorous appropriations undermines the mythology surrounding the notion of the artist and ingeniously interrogates power relations in the system of contemporary art. His recent installation project *Garbage 4* consists of series of plastic bottles that are filled with Moudov's household plastic waste. While at first glance a person could relate this work to the very topical issue of recycling and the environment, a more careful reading shows that Moudov is doing the opposite. As he transforms rubbish into a work of art, he creates a *ready-made* object that allows rubbish to remain rubbish and consequently directly revokes the possibility of recycling. But this gesture should not be interpreted as the artist's refusal of the process of collecting and processing materials that would otherwise be thrown away as waste and turning them into new products. This particular gesture symbolically directs attention to the system of contemporary art, its fabricated openness, which is often in contradiction with the established rules that in the long term contribute to the benefits of our society.

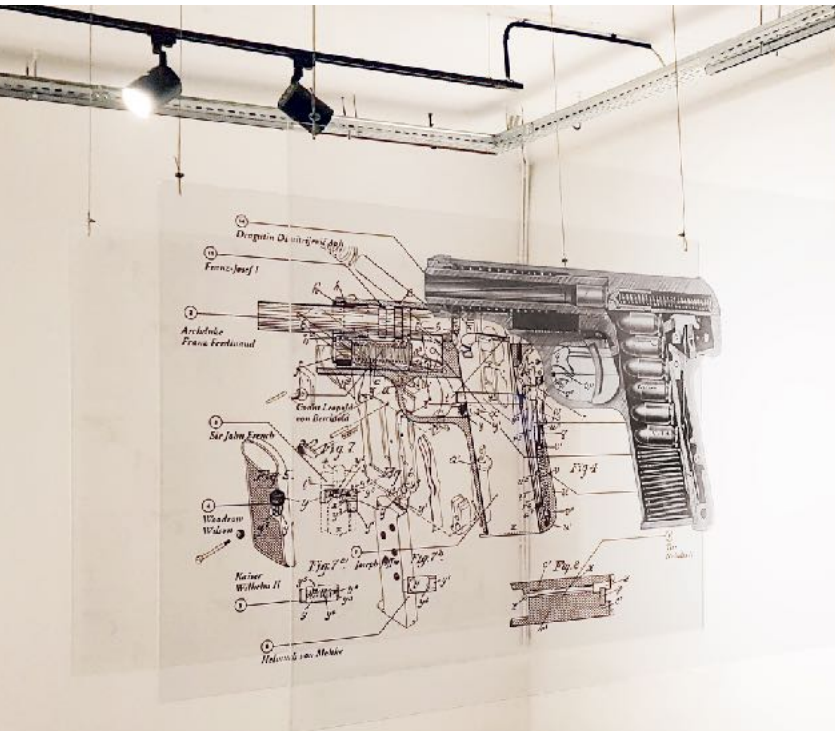
It is clear that the exhibition as a concept and structure avoids the classic thematic presentation and relates more to the relations between artists and friends and their joint interests in art. Nevertheless, since the works are formally and conceptually very different, it must be emphasized that the *leitmotiv* that connects them is very concise. Three works can be interpreted individually but without any doubt they also communicate with one another: no work of art, medium or concept has just the meaning in itself, but it also creates a new meaning that constantly interacts with others. There is no doubt that art has undergone many transformations, and this testifies to the fact that art invariably responds to the challenges in our environment even before the transformative effect on society becomes evident. And for this very reason, art is indispensable when it comes to shaping and understanding life and form. Especially if it echoes three friends when they listen and object to each other.

Tevž Logar*

* Tevž Logar works as an independent curator, editor and writer. For the 58th Venice Biennial in 2019, he worked with the Pavilion of Republic of North Macedonia as curatorial consultant and the Pavilion of Republic of Kosovo as a writer. In 2018, he edited a monograph about the work of the Croatian conceptual artist Goran Trbuljak. He has curated or co-curated a number of group and solo exhibitions, including *When in Doubt, Go to a Museum* (2021); *the Triennial*, 54th Zagreb Salon *Without Anesthesia* (2019); *Ulay: I Other* (2017), *Jasmina Cibic: For Our Economy and Culture* for the Slovenian Pavilion at the 55th Venice Biennial (2013) among others. He is a co-founder of the Ulay Foundation (2014) in Amsterdam, where he now sits as a member of the Advisory Board. In 2014, he was nominated for the Gerrit Lansing Independent Vision Award (Independent Curators International) in New York. He lives in Rijeka, Croatia.

Lana Čmajčanin

Born in 1983 in Sarajevo, Bosnia.
Lives and works in Vienna and Sarajevo



FN M1910, 2014, Installation, UV print on the Plexiglass, 104,5 x 150 x 0,8 cm



Geographical Indication, 2016, Lambda digital print on Kodak Endura paper mounted behind Plexiglass, Installation view, Kunstraum Niederoesterreich, Vienna, Photo by (c) eSeLat Lorenz Seidler



Balkan Cruelty, 2019, installation, print on textile wallpaper, variable dimensions, exhibition view, *Framer Framed*, Amsterdam, photo by Maarten Nauw



1: 1 625 000, 2019, interactive installation, wood, plexiglass, led light, digital print on ohp transparency film, 95 x 203 x 120 cm



Once We Were Brothers, 2020, installation, neon light, dimmable neon sign transformer, wallpaper, 200 x 66 x 15 cm

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Ivan Moudov

Born in 1975 in Sofia, Bulgaria.
Lives and works in Sofia



Wine for Openings - La Biennale di Venezia, 2007

Bottles of Cabernet Sauvignon Red Wine distributed to the national pavilions in the 52nd International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Edition of 1764 + 100 AP

Installation view the Bulgarian National Pavilion at 52nd Biennale di Venezia, 2007.



Certificate of Authenticity, 2015, Institute of Contemporary Art – Sofia, November 2015



Performing Time, 2012.
HD video, no sound, 24 hours
(loop). Video still.
Courtesy of Prometeogallery di
Ida Pisani and the artist



Fragments Box #2, 2002-2007
Exhibition view *Fragments of Demand*, 2014, Alberta Pane Gallery, Paris, France

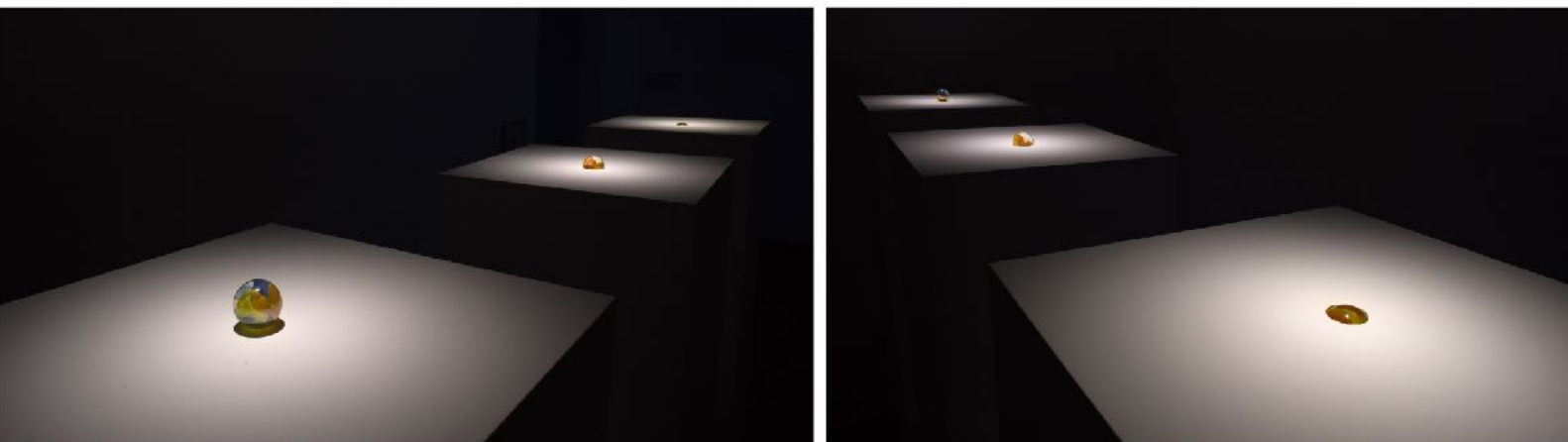
Alban Muja

Born in 1980 in Mitrovica, Kosovo.

Lives and works in Berlin and Prishtina, Kosovo



Above Everyone, 2021, acrylic and marker on canvas, each 60 x 50 cm



Just Another Hero, 2019, mix media installation, 150 x 45 x 45 cm



Family Album, 2019, 3 channel video installation, Kosovo Pavilion, Venice Biennale



HOTel, 2014, Mix Media Installation, 383 x 98 cm

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