

C H A R I M

Milica Tomić

Is There Anything in This World You Would Be Ready to Give Your Life For?

Opening 26 February 2026

Exhibition 27 February – 27 March

In his famous *Theses on the Philosophy of History* (1940), Walter Benjamin reimagines Paul Klee's image of *Angelus Novus* as an allegory of historical thought. The angel's face is turned toward the ever-accumulating "pile of debris" of the past, which he feels compelled to mend, but his wings are caught in the storm of "progress" that carries him inevitably into the future. For Benjamin, history is not a clean forward movement toward resolution; it is a mounting accumulation of unresolved violence that continues to shape the present. This vision finds a powerful echo in Milica Tomić's exhibition, *Is There Anything in This World You Would Be Ready to Give Your Life For?*. The artist's solo exhibition with Charim follows her mid-career survey at Kunsthaus Graz and her participation in the 13th Berlin Biennale last year. The title, a quote by the artist's mother, the Yugoslav actress and artist Marija Milutinović.

Entering the gallery, a site-specific chalk drawing of the Borromean knot introduces the exhibition's conceptual framework. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the knot binds together the three interdependent spheres of the human psyche, the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary. For Tomić, this form becomes a way of thinking through how subjectivity, social order, and political history remain structurally entangled. The knot also recalls her mother's macramé practice, a traditional knotting technique in tapestry-making with origins traceable to ancient Assyria. In this context, the structure invokes feminised labour and forms of generational transmission that persist across time.

The constellation of works in the second gallery foreground Tomić's research-based practice across film, installation, painting and archival display that interrogate political and military violence, social amnesia, and the mapping of situated micro-histories against the unresolved violent legacies of the 20th century. A core theme is investigating the entanglement of private interests and economic profit with histories of collective violence – rendering visible the conditions through which these are obscured, and perpetuated.

Four Faces of Omarska: Open Video Sequence (2020) is screened in the cinema space alongside an architectural model of the former iron-ore mining complex near Prijedor in north-west Bosnia and Herzegovina. Between May and August 1992, the site functioned as a detention, torture, and killing camp during the ethnic cleansing of Bosniak and Croat civilians; more than 3,000 detainees passed through the camp, and mass graves were later uncovered in the region. Developed through Tomić's long-term research into the political afterlives of industrial sites in the former Yugoslavia, the work traces the complex's transformation from socialist infrastructure to concentration camp and subsequently to a privatised mining site under multinational ownership. The architectural model was originally made by Zlata Cikota, an engineer who had worked on the construction of the site and was later imprisoned in the camp; she subsequently reconstructed the model for use as evidence before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague in 2004. Re-created by Tomić' in 2016, the installation adopts a clean schematic language as a stark contrast to the violence perpetrated within.

This tension highlights how administrative systems render lived atrocities into neutral data, carried over into the conceptual painting ***Farbenlehre (Reconfiguration of Property Relations)***

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over Land in Styria, 1938–1950–1999 (2025), presented alongside a vitrine containing related research materials. Drawing on research into the restructuring of land ownership and agricultural economies in Styria following the 1938 annexation of Austria to Nazi Germany, the work translates legal and financial reforms into a restrained chromatic composition. Tomić reveals how abstraction operates as a mechanism of power, organising and absorbing histories of violence into apparently neutral systems.

A large-scale photograph of participants at the first Non-Aligned Movement conference in Belgrade in 1961 spans the central back wall. The image recalls Yugoslavia's attempt to articulate a political position beyond Cold War blocs. It is shown alongside the video *On Love Afterwards* (2003), titled after a poem by Radovan Zogović, brings together testimonies from former Yugoslav Partisans who speak about their motivations for joining the anti-fascist resistance and reflect on courage, responsibility, and commitment in the face of violence. In this context, personal testimony in speech and writing brings the lived archive into closer proximity, offering a counterpoint to the forensic registers of other works.

In the back galleries, the exhibition moves toward a more intimate register with *Portrait of MM* (1999), which opens with the exhibition's titular question posed from mother to daughter, and was filmed in Belgrade during the NATO bombardment of 1999. The work unfolds as Tomić walks between her home and her mother's apartment, overlaid with conversations between them, using a first-person camera that mirrors the trajectory of a precision-guided "smart bomb". At the film's end, their meeting and embrace bring focus to connection against the backdrop of everyday life under attack, where anyone can be a target. It is presented alongside a display of slides of Milutinović's large-scale macramé tapestries, produced between the 1970s and 1980s and later destroyed by the artist in the early 1990s. Surviving only in archival form, they are luminous after-images of two decades of labour and artistic practice.

In the final gallery, Tomić presents *Is There Anything in This World You Would Be Ready to Give Your Life For?* (2025), a large-scale installation suspended from the ceiling, previously shown at the 13th Berlin Biennale and Kunsthaus Graz. Made in collaboration with IAM ShapeLab from the Graz University of Technology, the work combines 3D-printed clay with cultivated mycelium, allowing living matter to grow through and gradually reshape the constructed structure, unsettling the idea of a fixed, singularly authored art object. On the adjacent wall, vinyl scripts of forensic case numbers – drawn from identification systems developed by the International Commission on Missing Persons after the Srebrenica genocide – re-introduce the cold language of classification, developed with Grupa Spomenik, a collective Tomić is a founding member of. These codes refer to the DNA identification of human remains from mass graves.

Like Benjamin's Angel of History, Tomić's exhibition insists on a fractured temporality in which the violent debris of the past remain knotted into the fabric of both present and future. *Is There Anything in This World You Would Be Ready to Give Your Life For?* addresses a global condition shaped by the consolidation of militarised power, the normalisation of mass death, and the resurgence of nationalist state formations, revealing these as enduring structures rather than historical exceptions.