

Maja Bajevic / Marcelle Marcel

curated by Ami Barak

Maja Bajevic (Bosnia and Herzegovina/France), lives part time in Berlin and since this year part time in her native city (Sarajevo). The artist is a key figure of this generation of artists born in the former communist regime that have known and experienced all the changes and upheavals that rocked Europe in the last twenty years. She is rightly considered one of the most important and emblematic figures of the contemporary scene. Her works have been presented in numerous solo exhibitions, from the most recent at the DAAD gallery, Berlin (2012), over the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Palacio de Cristal, Madrid (2011), Kunsthaus Glarus (2010), Fondazione Bevilacqua la Masa in Venice (2008), National Gallery in Sarajevo (2006), in the Moderna Museet in Stockholm (2005) to P.S.1 in New York (2004) and in many international group shows such as Documenta 12 in Kassel (2007), the 50th Venice Biennale (2003), the Istanbul Biennale (2001) and Manifesta 3 in Ljubljana (2000).

Maja Bajevic (b. 1967) connects the private with the public and the intimate with the political. Focusing on the themes such as collective identity, loss of landmarks, the construction and deconstruction of ideology, she creates subtle and poetical works that critically cross-examine the political and economic structures of our present time.

She takes a critical and witty approach to art in order to pinpoint dualities in human behavior, in particular those involving power. In her artistic practice she questions fixed worldviews by showing how political structures and moral concepts are bound to historical settings. Maja Bajevic broaches the issues of History and Identity as unfulfilled constructions, unsteady and ever changing. The power of history is opposed to the power of choice and

interpretation; collective memory to collective amnesia, objective accounts to subjective storytelling and imagination - as a construction in progress, fluid and unstable, whose shifts and derivations react to contradictory stimuli. Bajevic's work, performative in many ways, ranges from video, installation, performance and sound to text, crafts, machinery and photography.

How do you want to be governed (2009) and *Art has to be national, an artist has to be national* (2012) are both taking after two former works, the first one after Rasa Todosijevic *Was ist Kunst* (1976) and the second one after Marina Abramovic *Art must be beautiful, an artist must be beautiful* (1975). While the earlier works address the world of art itself the later ones pose rather political questions.



Art has to be national, an artist has to be national, 2012, video still

Steam machine (2011) is a machine that produces moving steam onto which are projected slogans of social, political and economical turmoil over the last hundred years. Floating on ‘thin air’ the slogans are classified according to a children’s game, where the last word of one sentence has to be the first of the following one.

By using an ephemeral support and an absurd condition of appearance, the project tends to speak about the instability of our image of history and refers to Walter Benjamin’s sentence: “the real image of the past moves on fleetingly”¹.



To Be Continued, 2011, steam machine and slide projector

¹ Walter Benjamin, “On the Concept of History” (1940), in *Selected Writings*, vol.1. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Layers represent a series of photographs glued onto cotton and then embroidered with delicate flowers or birds. The rights to use the photographs were acquired by the artist from Version - a press agency in Berlin, and the title of each work takes over the original title of the agency. Decontextualised they become quasi-insignificant and express more a state of danger, of fear or of violent reactions than a real event. On each print the artist has added nice embroideries in contrast to the latent violence of the images that evoke a small bourgeoisie practice of closing eyes in front of events that might be disturbing.



Layers - D03GR0622ThessaProtest05, 2011,
embroidered photograph on cotton

Marcelle Marcel is a young artist duo that started their activity in 2011. Both of the partners have been involved, and still are, in the art world since some time, one works as a curator, the other is a artist, and therefore they choose to use a pseudonym when appearing in a new context and a different role.

For their first solo exhibition they choose replica paintings of images published on the front page of famous daily newspaper, such as the New York Times, from the 11th of September 2001 and the 9th of November 1989 accompanied by the journal itself. The gap in between the major events that happened on those two dates and the edition of the newspaper that is not yet showing those events but will only show them tomorrow is what drew their attention to the issue. The paintings are showing candidates on campaign trail meeting representatives from different communities or other events that in the light of the event that really happened on that date seem absurd, unimportant and even funny. The use of the painting genre for this type of connection and the mirroring effect wisely make the works otherwise eloquent.

