

Tanja Radež, designer: A collection of collections

Opening: Friday, May 11th at 8pm

KiBela, space for art / Multimedia centre KIBLA

Tanja Radež was born in the iron-industry town of Jesenice. She chose designing as her profession when she was fifteen. Graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts and Design, Department of Visual Communications, Ljubljana. In 1989 she formed the TANDAR studio with two of her classmates, and created for twelve years in the field of design and creating new spaces. Tanja Radež has thus been active on Slovenian ground for over two decades. She could be described as a lively, distinctly feminine person – an author who works intensely and actively in the span of contemporary space and time, and who is rapt with affection for the urban archaeology of the recent past, the past socialistic era.

„Yesterday, after many years that have just flown by, I turned on my oldest computer. Grinning from ear to ear, I was so very delighted at the sight of the waking screen and its aged greeting. Those little eyes, the first computer-stunt in my life, are still winking. The mouse was hiding somewhere, so I still didn't get the chance to rummage through. Maybe we could try and create one of the projects together, to see if we still got it, both him and me. The Classic is really a portable computer, with a handle on top of the case, like the majority of the most popular Slovenian products from the golden age of Iskra company. “

Her everyday life is enriched by creative research that she has termed OSTALGIJE (Ostalgias), which in her language stands for author research and an upgrade of what we are leaving behind. She writes about her subject, searches for new values in used goods and transforms them, creates imaginary spaces on the basis of collective memory and tracks or reinterprets the visible remains of the recent history. Over a period of seven years she has published 38 columns under the title Ostalgije (Ostalgias) in Ambient magazine – the first one was about the local teahouse Gic – picturesque and detailed accounts of how she handles and how she feels, smells and tastes all kinds of forms that belong to the society and which constitute a respectable part of an individual's culture of living.

"To create something with your own hands is soothing. It feels to me that today, without any imagination and closely following instructions, all we do is assemble kinder surprise eggs and closets from a Swedish furniture store. Handicraft and DIY books have landed in the attic. Whenever our hands and our heads join in harmony to create something usable, useful or merely something beautiful, it creates a sort of balance, peace and a good feeling."

Tied closely to her native space and time, this is how she ponders on being Slovenian:

"Which are the points that make me a Slovenian? I nurture and heal myself with clear beef soup, with noodles and chopped parsley, I only eat potica (typical Slovenian festive cake, translator's note) on holidays and I love the way it tastes. Whenever I drive along the Gorenjska highway, I search for Triglav among the mountain-tops, I am an active voter and a great fan of the so-called human fish (Slovenian endemic species) and the Lipizzan horses, I get frustrated with every national brand that dies, I have cream cake in Bled, buy Slovenian products at the supermarket, drink Cviček (typical wine of the south-east region) in Dolenjska, I can name a minimum of three restaurants in the Karst, have visited Maribor several times, know where Prekmurje is, drive to the seaside passing Metlika, feel Tromostovje (the Triple Bridge) as the center of Ljubljana; I am careful to always use the dual number (a grammatical particularity), proud to have the letter 'ž' in my last name, and consider Kekec, Bedanec and Pehta (legendary Slovenian literary characters) as my relatives... The list is modest, old-fashioned and nothing really special, unfortunately. But fortunately for us - girls that were born in a country that no longer exists, the geographical area is still there. I can still cash in the fact that I am Slovenian for the price of a smile, a nice cup of coffee and a friendly word in Zagreb, Belgrade, Sarajevo, Skopje and Hvar."

One of her columns in the Ambient magazine was dedicated entirely to a former textile company in Gorenjska, whose fate is but one among the many that happened to a number of former textile and other companies in Maribor, closed in agony one after the other and ending irrevocably the era of different trademarks:

"Factory stores are a sort of a special passion to the amateur urban archaeologist. Usually placed inside an uninteresting, half-abandoned factory wing, they remind of a somewhat fancier warehouse, and have been ran for a number of years by the same person, often wearing a checkered shirt and a blue overcoat. Their visitors are the factory's employees, local inhabitants, product-junkies and freaks. Most definitely these factory stores host visitors with an absolute sense of belonging. The smell of Turkish coffee is something quite ordinary inside these stores. The products they sell are usually low-priced and often damaged goods. They are sold on kilo as well, if they can be weighed."

To the two dimensions of visual communications she has permanently added a third one, supported by contents and concepts. Today she is working creatively in the field of culture, education and science in her own studio, and helps creating contemporary spaces and events. Tanja Radež designs books and typographies, planners, illustrations, trademarks/logotypes, acknowledgements, commendations, recognitions, awards, school certificates, corporate images for artistic events, ambient, clothes and other – everything that we use on a daily basis, that we grow used to, and emotionally attached to.

She creates for various clients, but has been faithful to some for a long time. In her retrospect book that still needs to be published, we would come across Bunker Organization (festival Mladi levi (Young Lions), Mladibor), Municipality of Ljubljana (Župančičeva award), Kranj Theater, Ministry of public administration, Dance Theater Ljubljana, Contemporary Dance Association (festival Gibanica), The Old Power Station, festival Rdeči revirji (Red Districts) from Hrastnik, Pionirski dom Ljubljana, Fičo ballet (festival Pleskavica), festival Svetlobna gverila (Light guerilla), coffee shops (LP - ZRC SAZU, Nostalgia, Zlati zob (The Golden Tooth)), a number of companies, literary collections Kiosk and Prvenci (Debuts), yearly accompanying projects to the festival Mladi levi (Young Lions), like My ex T-shirt (recycling 1000 T-shirts), By the way garden, My street... and last, but not least there are her co-authored projects, like planners in cooperation with Zora Stančič, and Fragmenti naše in vaše mladosti (Fragments of our and your youth), a collection of unique plates for the Sarajevo Film Fest and others.

"As a great lover of books I never wonder whether the digital book is a threat to the printed one. With open arms I cherish any form of the book as such. The book is a story, an image, a letter, a word, a sentence, a content, a typography – and not just paper or screen."

The existent exhibition wishes to collect, read and showcase the collections that reflect the lost, undusted, full-of-aesthetics-and-humor cultural era. Throughout the years, the author's works too have become collections – as many as 18 planners or 14 images for the Mladi levi (Young lions) festival.

A series of posters entitled *Samouresničljive prerokbe* (Self-realizing prophecies) was created especially for the purposes of this exhibition, representing in a relaxed way the slogans and mottos that have marked the author's life.

Curator: Aleksandra Kostič

Kindly welcome! Admission free.

The exhibition will be showing between May 11th and June 3rd 2012

KiBela / KIBLA Maribor

KiBela – space for art is open on weekdays and Saturdays between 9am and 10pm, closed on Sundays.

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