



Chris Marker, *Slon Tango*, 1993.

Newsreel Front

# NEWSREEL SHREDS

Newsreel Tribute – *Prime Time in Camps* and *Slon Tango*



Nace Zavrl

# A NEWSREEL HOMAGE: MARKER'S SMALL VIDEOS

In the history of post-war engaged cinema, the French experimenter Chris Marker – the prolific, but extremely enigmatic creator, born as Christian François Bouche-Villeneuve, known under his artistic pseudonyms Fritz Markassin, Jacopo Berenzi, Hayao Yamaneko and Sandor Krasna – has been inscribed as a first-rate pioneer, one of the central figures of avant-garde essay cinema and progressive documentary filmmaking. Watching the director's most famous feature-length works, his renown is justified of course. Recall the post-modern meditation *Sans soleil* (1983), the three-hour collage *A Grin Without a Cat* (*Le fond de l'air est rouge*, 1977) and, last but not least, the collective anti-war cry *Far from Vietnam* (*Loin du Vietnam*, 1967), in which he joined forces with political associates of his like Godard, Ivens, Klein, Lelouch, Varda and Resnais. Throughout his 60-year career, however, Marker constantly maintained another mode of production as well — he made shorter, cheaper, more modest and *smaller* films and videos that practically renounce the programmatic nature and first-person narrative force of the above-mentioned works, relying on poor, raw, bare images instead of aesthetics and worked-out arguments. Something in the vein of what film theoretician Volker Pantenburg claims about Marker's German contemporary Harun Farocki could also be applied to the Frenchman: “there is a less prominent but equally important strand in Farocki's work: his ‘observational films’ of the last three decades. Although these films have not been completely neglected, they tend to receive far less attention than the overtly reflexive works often described as essay films.”<sup>1</sup> For every feature-length epic that Marker made, we can

1 Volker Pantenburg, “‘Now That's Brecht at Last!': Harun Farocki's Observational Films”, in: *Documentary Across Disciplines*, eds. Erika Balsom and Hila Peleg (Berlin: Haus der Kulturen der Welt, 2016), pp. 144–145.

enumerate a few 30-minute television curiosities; for every *The Lovely Month of May* (*Le joli mai*, 1963), we can find at least one *Stopover in Dubai* (2011).

*Slon Tango* and *Prime Time in the Camps* (also known as *Le 20 heures dans les camps* and *TV News in the Camps*) are two of Marker's small videos, made in Ljubljana in 1993. On the one hand, there is *Prime Time*, a deceptively complex record of the activity of Bosnian refugees who set up a temporary production studio in the Roška refugee centre at 40 Poljanska Street. And on the other hand, there is *Slon Tango* [in Slovenian, 'slon' means: bull elephant] or, more accurately, *Cow Elephant Tango*, a five-minute shot of Ganga — a cow elephant that has lived in the zoo under Rožnik since 1975 — dancing. In the English version of the first, the voiceover is performed by the legendary left-wing agitator Robert Kramer, while, in the French version, it was none other than Mathieu Kassovitz, the director of the urban classic *Hate* (*La Haine*, 1995) and later the star of the European mega-hit *Amelie* (*Le Fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain*, Jean Pierre Jeunet, 2002). The second is remains content with simply the light ballet accompaniment of Stravinsky.

“What the two videos have in common” is the wrong question here. At best, Marker's glimpses offer an insight into the existence of the disintegrating Yugoslavia as imagined and captured on film (or electronic tapes) by outsiders, Westerners, uninvolved external observers. We must by no means forget, that at that time, other, perhaps even more prominent, names of the international art film were visiting the South Slavic territory. Paweł Pawlikowski made the bizarre *Serbian Epics* (1992), a sort of a surreal portrait of Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić, at the very start of the war, and in the abstract *Retour à Sarajevo* (1996), the provocateur Philippe Grandrieux tackled the horrors of the occupation, while with the Bosnian pamphlet of solidarity *Je vous salue, Sarajevo* (1993) and *Our Music* (*Notre musique*, 2004), Jean-Luc Godard added his contribution to the understanding of the Balkan problem. A little less than two years later, Marker, who was by no means unique in his concern for the crumbling federation, finished his miniature *Blue Helmet* (*Casque bleu*, 1995), a simple interview with a peacekeeper stationed near Srebrenica. All these videographic experiments are small, unknown, rarely screened and even more rarely seriously discussed, while in the historical record they will never rise to the level of Marker's larger, longer and heftier creations. But that is precisely why they are so valuable, and fascinating. *Prime Time* and *Slon Tango* can hardly be placed in the broader sphere of Marker's interests nor do they fit into the timelines of film history. Their significance hides precisely in this placelessness, this *non-contemporariness*, and so a non-contemporariness that is today, 26 years later, contemporary again.

Andrej Šprah

# TO BE HERE OR THERE AND ENABLE...

Since its beginnings, one of the fundamental missions of documentary cinema has been to convey images and information that show the extraordinary, the hidden, the never before seen... At the same time, documentary cinema has often been motivated by the desire to show events at the sites of states of emergencies and social marginality. It has endeavoured to convey their truth despite the elusive presuppositions of its credibility. This mission, however, has always reflected two opposing tendencies: the desire for a free recording and flow of images and the demand to take control of the situation and the social actors. This generic opposition is also foregrounded in the “existential definition” of documentary cinema, which Robert Kramer (one of the key filmmakers of the independent progressive documentary cinema in the US, the leading figure of the Newsreel movement and Marker’s collaborator on *Prime Time in the Camps*) employed at the 1998 *Autumn Film School* in Ljubljana to define the main difference between two types of documentary filmmakers: those that always want to completely control the situation and those that feel an actual need to be present where important things are taking place. “And not only that, they also want to do something. (...) Part of this wish to be present in the world – what I call a documentary, the real spirit of documentary filmmaking, which has nothing in common with anthology or the question of what is real – is above all a matter of direct experience in the sense of a sort of an existential definition of documentary cinema. Those that want to control the situation are not interested in this. Their struggle for control is similar to the struggle for domination in everyday relations with people.”

Chris Marker was by all means one of those artists that endeavour to make a factual and reflective film become an urgent

film – so that it not only calls attention to the pressing injustices, but also does something, intervenes in the state of things, liberates, and, even more, enables those who want to, but do not have the possibility to do so, to take action by filmic means. Marker's deepest creative tendency, his *modus operandi*, was based on enabling the expression of those who were or are there, who experience things on their own bodies, see with their own eyes, sense with their own senses, but do not have the means "to give shape to their perception of events." Starting in 1969, when he established the Medvedkin Group and thereby gave the striking workers in Besançon the possibility to tell their stories themselves in their own way, a large part of his works unfolded according to the principle of "giv[ing] the power of speech to people who don't have it, and, when it's possible, help[ing] them find their own means of expression." His subtle feel for hotspots where the right to and the domination over the truth of the events was claimed by the reporters in positions of power and by the "knowledge" of dominant media led him to nearly all meridians of the world. And it also brought him to Ljubljana. Incognito, without the knowledge of the local public, he filmed *Prime Time in the Camps* and thus made the voice, images and methods of the programme produced by the refugee television that operated at the refugee centre in the abandoned barracks of the Yugoslav People's Army in Roška Street accessible to world audience.

Based on the radical guideline of searching for the "Medvedkin syndrome" as a creative necessity that invents the most authentic expression possible with which it defies the established terminology and the principles of the dominant language, Marker gave a voice to those who, due to their own experiences of being manipulated, played and discarded, no longer believed anyone. Least of all the dominant media. The basic feeling that members of the young refugee television team shared with their target audience was one of strictest distrust. That is why all the information they aired had to come from several independent sources – from radio stations in the territory of former Yugoslavia to the testimonies of individuals via amateur communication channels and the news of world news agencies and television corporations. Through their comparison, they drew attention to the relativity of "truth". And when pieces of information differed, or were even contrary, they did not select the "most suitable one", but enabled their viewers to directly cross-check them: they relayed every accessible version and the viewers could decide for themselves which of the sides involved had the possibility if they wanted to lie, which ones did want to lie, and which ones wanted to lie but did not have the possibility of doing so. Their fundamental imperative was thus not the truth, but the exposing of manipulations and lies. The journalistic team was aware that, due to their recent experiences at home, even the "verified" news could no longer be acceptable for everybody – for, in the flood of propaganda, ideological wars and

(mass-)media indoctrination, they could no longer trust anyone but themselves.

A very important role in the making of the programme was played by the so-called memory team, which filmed a series of episodes about the happenings in individual refugee rooms. A unique approach of playing on the motifs of newsreels can be seen at the beginning of every episode, in its detailing of a particular motif in the room. The method of foregrounding details, which newsreels used only to fill the gaps between two scenes, represented something completely different for the refugees. These details had a very special value because the foregrounded things, even the most insignificant, were proof that they too were once the bearers of an existence worthy of living. These motifs were also memory triggers, leading the refugees to testify about the horrors they had experienced, the loved ones they had lost and the life that no longer existed, but also, at the same time, about the plans with which they preserved hope for the future and from which they drew strength to survive. The filmmaker himself is convinced that it was precisely the memory team that, with its room fragments, was able to recover the lost and stopped time: “On both sides – those who film and those who talk (...) These Room Stories show a huge need to communicate and, at the same time, an understanding that they are recording their own memory.” The remarkable importance of memory is based on the presupposition of the necessity of testifying and on searching for a way to hold on to a certain moment and keep it for the time yet to come. For they were aware that most things that they themselves saw were not filmed and that, together with the killed people, their memories were lost, too. This is why they tried to preserve individual moments, experiences and meetings with them through testimonies, which, with the help of the camera, obtained a material, historical and archival value. Or as the head of the memory team reflects when he emphasises that although the revelations of personal tragedies wring his heart he feels happy at the same time, because he was the one who was “able to record these moments and this suffering, and at least one day someone else can see all that.”

At the aesthetical level, *Prime Time in the Camps* is marked by a subtle use of the stylistic elements of essay film adapted to the television format and includes a number of telling references to a dignified filming of people in situations of dehumanisation. By attentively focusing on the basic elements of film expression – especially at the level of framing, the use of lenses, camera movement and sound, we can see Marker’s correspondence with images from film history depicting moments of abjectness. With the utmost respect for his “social actors”, he at the same time demonstrates the sensibility for the most needed gesture – the restoration of dignity, which the refugees have retained at the personal level but is undermined by everyday experiences of exclusion from the ‘world of sovereignty’. “You turn up

somewhere where people accept you as if you were nothing, a complete zero. You'll get help, but not that real help which comes from the heart," one of the young journalists says resignedly.<sup>1</sup> For even the people working for the refugee television – despite the fact that they temporarily became the mediators of sharing individual solitudes and closed-in intimacy – are actually only the bearers of the denotation of refugee, which one of them explicitly wishes did not even exist. This is why, in the search for meaning and power in a hopeless nowness, the possibility of sharing this experience, which Marker enabled, was a welcome means of them recovering and strengthening their identity.

With *Prime Time in the Camps*, Marker – who, with his characteristic method of experimenting on the border between documentary cinema, art film and audiovisual practices, is one of the most in-depth essayists among documentarians, one of the most radical guerrillas among militant filmmakers and one of the most subtle innovators among multimedia artists – managed to hold time still and preserve the legitimacy of testimony for those left only with dignity and memory. At the same time, the film also includes a series of universal recommendations for the future, as it represents a unique time capsule that is activated upon every new tragedy permeated with the unbearable experience of the already seen but clearly never really grasped... The practical fact that – nearly 20 years later – his treatment of the refugee tragedy caused by the bloody disintegration of Yugoslavia will get its domicile only a stone's throw away from where it was filmed demonstrates the persistence of the cinema of urgency and proves its defiance against the increasing mass amnesia and insensibility. Yet, above all, it strengthens the belief that urgent images find a way to again become topical in every present engulfed by the oblivion of past experiences and the barbarisation of the once already achieved standards of humaneness. At the symbolic level, we thus understand this artistic gesture primarily as a reminder and the memory that this nation and country used to have more tolerance, solidarity, compassion or simply love for the Other.

1 For the sake of this argument's credibility, we should note that, in addition to the "silent majority" and the bureaucratic machine, which actually had a dismissive attitude towards the refugees but never openly opposed their settlement in Slovenia (unlike today), there were also numerous people that were not only favourably inclined to the refugees but also offered them shelter. In addition to the understandable hospitality of relatives and friends, there were also a number of acquaintances, professional colleagues and as well "merely" compassionate and good people who took them into their homes. Nika Autor provides more concrete numbers in her essay "Torn and Unfulfilled Images – A Detail that Represents Life," published in this booklet.



Andreja Hribernik

# SOLIDARITY, COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES

The collection of the Salvador Allende *Solidarity Museum in Chile* was conceived between 1971 and 1973. It was created as the artists' act of support for the socialist government of the then president Salvador Allende. Later, the motivation for the collection changed from that of a gesture of support to that of a gesture of resistance, as the legal establishing of the museum was prevented by the coup d'état in Chile. All the way up until the 1990s, the collection remained "in exile", for the idea behind it did not die and the museum operated as an international initiative that was also a critique of the military dictatorship in Chile. During this time, many artists donated their works to the so-called collection of the museum in exile, which could be legally established only after 1990. The international collection of the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Koroška from the 1960s, 70s and 80s can also be considered a collection of solidarity, since artists donated their works based on the museum's initiative to establish a Museum for Peace whose collection would present pacifist ideals and humanistic values, materially bearing witness to mutual understanding, friendship and equality, while at the same time warning against and reminding people of war. There are also cases of individual collections and archives that were created by individuals collecting artworks or documentation where no institutional system of collection existed. Such collections and archives are today key fields of interest for museums and researchers because they testify to a special, parallel history that was unrecorded by the institutions and formal histories of the time or often even denied and forbidden. One such case is the collection of the artist and curator Jiří Valoch, who donated his personal archive to the Moravian Gallery in Brno, an archive that bears testament to his work and the work of other artists at a time

when Czechoslovakia and many other countries were not favourably disposed to those art practices related to international art movements such as conceptualism, Fluxus, concrete poetry, performance art, etc. Artists like Zofija Kulik, Graciela Carnevale and many others were crucial documentarians of their and others' art practices in extreme circumstances.

Through these initiatives, we can observe a paradigmatic change when the collecting of works in the sense of possessing objects becomes a collection of solidarity, a gesture of solidarity intended to preserve a certain historical memory, not in terms of what an archive or a collection is as a static set of objects, but what it is in Foucault's sense, as a kind of practice or methodology. Such collections of solidarity do use the existing and established mechanisms, but they turn their logic around and introduce a subversive element into society as a whole.

Thus, collecting in the context of a museum, especially that of a public museum, is subject to a certain internal contradiction. We cannot ignore the fact that collecting itself means an accumulation of objects, and thereby also capital, but it is also such collections and archives that to a large extent represent precisely the place of breaking with the logic of capitalism. In this field, a host of questions arises related to the historicisation, self-historicisation,<sup>1</sup> colonisation, neo-colonisation and also de-colonisation, cultural domination and diversification of collections. Those museums that deal with the contextualisation of collections and archives thereby create a historical memory and historical awareness that oppose the complete colonisation of society by capital that causes the flattening of both space and time.<sup>2</sup>

The indication of this resistance and a subversion of the logic of collecting can also be seen in the collections of solidarity that emerge in critical and epochal moments. When Sarajevo was besieged, the idea of an international collection for Sarajevo emerged, both in the international art space and in Sarajevo itself, at the same time and without the two sides knowing about each other. In cooperation with the Museum of Modern Art Ljubljana, Jadran Adamović and the IRWIN collective proposed the initiative and began the related activities. After the representatives of the Museum of Modern Art and the IRWIN collective visited Sarajevo, their activities were combined with the idea which the actors in Sarajevo had already developed, at the initiative of Enver Hadžiomerspahić — this working together then led to the establishment of the *Ars Aevi* international collection. Unfortunately, the

1 The terms 'historicisation' and 'self-historicisation' were introduced into art discourse by Zdenka Badovinac.

2 As Claire Bishop says, a museum's collection is its weapon against the stasis of presentism. Bishop, C. (2013): *Radical Museology, or, What's 'Contemporary' in Museums of Contemporary Art*, Koenig Books, London, p. 24.

collection still to this day does not have a museum, but it represents an important symbol and gesture of solidarity. Around the same time that the collection was being conceived, Radio Zid began broadcasting in the besieged Sarajevo, representing an important place of normalisation and cultural resistance in the beleaguered city, related to youth music subculture, publishing and artistic creation. Meta Krese keeps a collection of materials and a personal photo archive from that period, which we today perceive as a testament to that time, while at the same time, her personal archive is an important act in terms of preserving historical memory and awareness. It seems that the media of radio and television were very important at the beginning of the 1990s also as a means that gave certain social groups a voice and visibility. Thus, in 1993, Chris Marker documented the operation of the self-established Refugee Television in a refugee centre in Ljubljana, which, following the model of the usual television programmes, broadcast content that was related to the wars in the Balkans and the life of refugees and intended precisely for the isolated population of refugees from the countries of former Yugoslavia.

Based on the preservation of the awareness of recent history and the updating and universalisation of the question of war and suffering, we can also see a gesture of resistance in the current donation of the Newsreel Front, specifically, Nika Autor, who, as an invited artist to U3, donated two videos by Chris Marker<sup>3</sup> to the collection of the Museum of Modern Art Ljubljana. The donation is also an intervention in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art as such, since by being placed in it, both videos concretely intervene in the constitution and the transformation of the collection's narrative. To Ljubljana thus return two videos made at the beginning of the 1990s, that is, the period of the first U3 in Ljubljana, the time when the *Ars Aevi* collection was being established and the time when Meta Krese and her sister Maruša were cooperating with Radio Zid in Sarajevo, the time when the sharpshooters killed the last bear at the Sarajevo Zoo and when Ganga the Elephant tangoed at the Ljubljana Zoo.

3 Chris Marker: *Prime Time in the Camps*, 1993, 27'51", Chris Marker: *Slon Tango*, 1993, 4'10"

Nika Autor

# TORN AND UNFULFILLED IMAGES “A DETAIL THAT REPRESENTS LIFE.”

In addition to the invitation to participate in the 9<sup>th</sup> Triennial of Contemporary Art U3, curated by Vit Havránek, the invited artists also received an invitation to a workshop in Korte (a small village in southeastern Slovenia) entitled Korte Assembly: Towards a Collective Skin. We were also asked to write a contribution for the catalogue of the upcoming exhibition. The instructions we received were the following: “Select one artwork, poem, event, image (related to Slovenia) that encapsulates for you a potentiality or a promise that stays unfulfilled (...) while demonstrating your artistic approach to the material in relation to the actual time and the future.”

As I cannot recall a single image, song or text that I think would sufficiently represent a whole range of unfulfilled promises of the past, the present and thereby a possible prospect in the future, I would like to use this text in the form of fragments to serve to juxtapose the various, different, shattered, fragmented and torn images that marked and shaped the generation I belong to, the generation that grew up in the 1990s. The unfulfilled images, the ones that, in their attempt to capture and show, actually conceal and evade, remain elusive, uncatchable and thereby also shattered and torn.

Today, the 1990s are seen as epochal, both in terms of the new, changing and emerging social and political economies and dimensions, and in terms of imagining the future operation of museums and galleries and the related art production. They are the years that promised and demonised, erasing what came before to justify themselves. They are the years that, in their promises, also subtly excite the here and now. Because we observed this time, full of antagonistic breaks and jolts, but did not actively participate

in it, because we felt it, but often did not understand it; today, when we search through the shattered archives and fragmented documents, when we listen to various accounts and negotiate the traps of collective memories, we assemble it in the tornness of its promises. However, as this year marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first triennial, the inaugurating overview of Slovenian contemporary art entitled *Interregnum*, which was curated by Tomaž Brejc in 1994, it seems a suitable opportunity to also think about the art practices of the 1990s in relation to the here and now.

The time in which the original exhibition was conceived was marked by numerous epochal, new, breathtaking as well as unfortunate events, by social, economic and political turns that willingly or not impacted the future of exhibitions, the practice of artists and the orientation, action and stance of the generation that grew up and was formed in this period. *Interregnum* presented various generations of artists so that “the continuity of Slovenian fine arts lived through it”.<sup>1</sup> In the period of the last eight editions, the title of the triennial changed from the Triennial of Contemporary Slovenian Art to the Triennial of Contemporary Art in Slovenia, which was curated by Nataša Petrešin Bachelez in 2013, and finally to the Triennial of Contemporary Art, curated by Boris Groys in 2016. In the last survey exhibition, the title that defined and dictated a national framework for the art production presented at the exhibitions was finally abandoned.

In 1994, when independent Slovenia was only three years old, the strong feelings that are a composite and connecting part of every organisation of a new state were still in full swing. Through designations such as Slovenian art, Slovenian artist and Slovenian painting and sculpture, the idea of national art was also present in the first triennial – subtly and in line with that time, space and context. We have to stress, however, that the original idea for U3 was to open the space and present contemporary art practices and the contemporaneous work of artists. The attempt at inviting artists living outside Slovenia was first made upon the fourth edition in 2003, when the curator Christine van Assche<sup>2</sup> invited Andreja Kulunčič to participate in the exhibition.

The 1990s represent a time when the many attempts, desires and aspirations related to shaping a national identity through visual appeals were nothing new – they can be detected much sooner, also in the visuality of more popular media.

1 Tomaž Brejc, »Interregnum, notice o sodobni slovenski umetnosti«, U3. Triennale sodobne slovenske umetnosti (Ljubljana: Moderna galerija 1994).

2 Between 1993 and 2013, Christine van Assche, an art historian, writer and film critic, was Chief Curator at the Centre Pompidou, where she set up the first video art collection, which today comprises more than 1,600 items. In 2014, Christine van Assche co-curated the first retrospective exhibition dedicated to Chris Marker.

One such example is the television advertisement made for the tourist promotion of Slovenia within a broader advertising campaign entitled *Slovenia, My Homeland*, commissioned in 1986. by the Chamber of Commerce of Slovenia and created by Studio marketing Delo, one of the largest advertising agencies in Yugoslavia. The creators of the campaign probably could not have imagined that, in a couple of years, a cheering mass would adapt the slogan *Slovenia, My Homeland* into the slogan *Slovenia, My Country*. However pretentious it may be to think that an advertisement<sup>3</sup> could have contained a prophecy, it is certain, as Repe writes, that “it caused the first mass homogenisation of Slovenians without which the national programmes could not have been realised.”<sup>4</sup>

But if the very first, inaugural exhibition of Slovenian art in 1994 embodied the desires, hopes and emotions of the new time defined by new borders and offered a reflection within a new space, today we cannot think about it without considering the broader context beyond Slovenia's borders and with a view at least to the marked events in the Balkans. Despite the absence of a broader political and social commentary on the current happening at *Yugoslav Documents*, the last Yugoslav exhibition, which took place in the burning year of 1989 in Sarajevo, it nevertheless offered, as Bojana Piškure wrote: “the last attempt at preserving a common Yugoslav artistic space – regardless of the polemical nature of the term – numerous artistic friendships, cultural networks...”<sup>5</sup> The first U3 five years later exhibited a similar lack of social and political commentary, but one that, in view of the war at the time, is much harder to understand. The basic idea of U3 was after all, as Zdenka Badovinac wrote in the catalogue of the first exhibition, to try to provide, through contemporary art practices in the form of an exhibition, “an overview of what will be happening before our eyes, as it were”.<sup>6</sup>

In 1994, brutal bloodshed was unfolding before our eyes for the third year in a row. Every day, the TV screens were filled with images of burnt villages,

3 The 90-second ad directed by Jaka Judnič and entitled *The Guests Are Coming*, which is a telling title from today's point of view, imprinted on our minds not only the shots of the Slovenian landscape and people performing various chores – from painting a fence to repairing a boat, cutting a hedge, grooming a Lipizzaner at Lipica, ornamenting earthenware, mountaineering, baking cakes and cleaning a beach – but especially the character of a painter that, in the idyllic Logar Valley, paints words of welcome in seven different languages on a big yellow billboard.

4 Božo Repe, »Vloga akcije Slovenija, moja dežela pri nacionalni homogenizaciji osemdesetih let«, v *Osamosvojitve 1991: država in demokracija na Slovenskem v zgodovinskih razsežnostih* (Ljubljana, 2011), p. 225.

5 Bojana Piškur, »Jugoslovanski dokumenti«, *Osemdeseta – Slovenija in Jugoslavija skozi prizmo dogodkov, razstav in diskurzov* (Ljubljana: Moderna galerija, 2018), p. 99.

6 Zdenka Badovinac, *U3. Triennale sodobne slovenske umetnosti* (Ljubljana: Moderna galerija 1994), p. 1

the counting of the dead, the exploded shells and the unsuccessful attempts and international interventions in the territory of the former Yugoslav republics. 1994 was the year that the first photographs and videos from the Omarska, Trnopolje and Keraterm concentration camps disturbed our imaginations for the second year, and the year Srebrenica was still unthinkable. That year, thousands of refugees filled the temporary refugee centers across Slovenia. And it had been two years since, on 26 February 1992, that the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia illegally erased 25,671 people from the Register of Permanent Residents. But 1994 was not only tragic and brutal in the local sense, it was also the year of the Rwandan genocide and the epochal year when South Africa got its first black president. In addition, it was in 1994 that the first season of the show that was to become the highly popular American series *Friends* aired on television. The series that shamelessly showed to our generation of the late 1970s and the early 1980s the inevitable future. A future where we, nearing our forties, are still living in roommate and 'friends' arrangements, unable to create decent living conditions for ourselves. In the introductory text, Brejc mentions a similar situation in 1994: "Most younger artists live on the brink of poverty (...) perhaps a new bohemianism is in sight, and the poverty of artists will give rise to new political art."<sup>7</sup> The possibility of a broader collective political organising was not realised; in its particularity and dispersion, it got lost in the next generation. In the generation that grew up with growing class differences and increasing poverty resulting from the idea of "everything is possible if you are self-employed". The generation that replaced the concept of solidarity and comradeship with the slogan "everyone for themselves", the generation enthroned in 1994 by a worldwide hit – the song in whose refrain Kurt Cobain repeats "rape me, rape me, my friend (...) hate me, waste me". This is why the understanding of the time that we did not belong to as an active generation, but that fragmentarily and inexorably marked us<sup>8</sup> when we silently observed it with our maturing eyes is also surrounded with a feeling of unease related to the lack of art more directly addressing the political and social breaks that marked the time.

Questions related to individual and collective responsibility, the (un)necessariness of an artistic and institutional reaction to the war in the Balkans, the condemnation of the contemporaneous happening at the institutional level and an active reflection on the given situation, both within artistic paradigms and art institutions and more broadly within political theory, were first posed in a broader framework at the international symposium that took place in May 1996

<sup>7</sup> Tomaž Brejc, »Interregnum«, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> I remember such an event, a tiny memory of a morning at school when two chairs in our class remained empty. The explanation of our teacher, whom we were no longer allowed to call comrade, was that our schoolmates went "home". Home where? we naively asked ourselves then. Aren't we home?

at the Moderna galerija under the title *Living with Genocide: Art and the War in Bosnia, Political Theory and Art*. Four years later, the Moderna galerija published a special issue of the *M'ars* magazine dedicated to the symposium, which includes the contributions and transcripts of conversations between artists, theoreticians, curators and directors of art institutions abroad. One can sense a general unease in them; but the panel discussions at which the participants together thought about the questions connected to the attitude of artists or art institutions to the war in Bosnia today represent a precious document in our understanding of the current social and political happening, especially in relation to committed art production. Numerous participants of the symposium mentioned the silence and the lack of a broader, collective and organised reaction to the war in Bosnia in the early 1990s. The silence of the Western international art system was similar to the silence in Slovenia. In their joint statement on "Art and War in Bosnia", Borut Vogelnik and Igor Zabel wrote: "It is an evident fact that the contemporary art scene (and its broader European intellectual context) practically did not react to the war and the violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, or its reactions were inadequate and ineffective. This is all the more surprising since it is still believed that it is precisely art that represents the humanistic position par excellence."<sup>9</sup> But the silence, both international and local, also needs to be read through the optics of history and the geopolitical position of Yugoslavia. In the case of Bosnia, perceptible reality was anchored in at least two different ways: firstly, in Europe's memory of the violent events that had taken place 60 years before, in the memory that had until only recently insisted that such horror would not be repeated; and, secondly, in the fact that the lives that were now endangered were perceived as mere half-lives. Sontag explains "one of the main ways of understanding the war crimes committed in Southeast Europe in the 1990s has been to say that the Balkans were, after all, never really part of Europe".<sup>10</sup> The framework in which the lives that counted and those that did not were placed at the beginning of the 1990s was a strange mess. In it, the images of the past, various anthropological as well as racist discourses, political defeatism and impotence, and, above all, power and interest, were all mixed quite ambivalently. In *Frames of War*, Butler explains that: "The frames that work to differentiate the lives we can apprehend from those we cannot not only organize visual experience, but also generate specific ontologies of the subject."<sup>11</sup> The attempt at an institutional engagement as a response to the war in Bosnia and the connection and collective action of artists as a form of protest against the war remained more or less fragmented in individual attempts. Today,

9 Igor Zabel, Borut Vogelnik, "Umetnost in vojna v Bosni. Vabilo k sodelovanju", in *M'ars*, *Živeti z genocidom. Umetnost in vojna v Bosni*, vol. XI, 1999, no.1-2, p. 23.

10 Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, New York, Picador, 2003, p. 70.

11 Judith Butler, *Frames of War*, New York: Verso, 2010, p. 3.



their memories are preserved in oral tradition, narrations, shattered photos from personal albums and the surviving notes and letters that UNPROFOR delivered to friends, acquaintances and relatives that remained caught in occupied Sarajevo.

Despite the predominant silence, we do find attempts at engagement on an intimate, personal, individual and direct level among a handful of artists. Meta Krese remembers how, in 1995, upon the invitation of Zdravko Grebo, she and Maruša Krese brought twelve paintings by Andraž Šalamun to Sarajevo. The exhibition was mounted in the basement of the Faculty of Law. Zdravko Grebo, who was also an editor at Radio Zid at the time, put on regular concerts, exhibitions and also published books in translation. Among other things, they published Maruša Krese's collection of poems and *Zidne novine*, a publication edited by Meta Krese. Meta Krese recalls that the response to the organised events was very positive; concerts, exhibitions and performances were primarily seen as forms of contact with the outside world, from which the inhabitants of Sarajevo were completely cut off. In occupied Sarajevo art had a special status: it represented hope, oblivion and life; it represented normality in a state of exception. Amila Ramović says that Sarajevo's inhabitants were exceptionally proud of the fact that, despite the occupation, they maintained a strong art production as a form of resistance to aggression and destruction: "People literally risked their lives to attend artistic events (...) I remember an occasion when we were sitting in Kamerni Theatre 55, we were watching a war production called *Sklonište/Shelter* and, while watching, the bombing started – we could hear explosions, glass breaking, we were shaking and yet the performance was not interrupted and the audience remained seated."<sup>12</sup> Despite the initial silence, in *Sarajevo: State in Time* (2019),<sup>13</sup> Borut Vogelc sums up what was common to all individuals that reacted in some way or another to the war in Bosnia: "The first project came as a result of our trouble with being witnesses to the war in Bosnia (...) Friends of ours were there in this situation, we wanted to react somehow and we simply didn't know how to do it."<sup>14</sup> The sculptress Rene Rusjan explains that she actively collaborated with the inhabitants of the then still shanty settlements, the refugee centres in Vič and Trnovo, for a few years. With the help of the Association of Parents and Children SEZAM, she connected with the volunteers of the Belgian international NGO Causes Communes, which among other things was responsible for the donation of television and recording equipment to the refugees accommodated at the centre in Roška Street, the subjects of Chris Marker's 1993 film. Rusjan explains that, in such a horrific time,

12 Benjamin Jung, Théo Meurisse, *Sarajevo: State in Time*, HD. Colour, 2019.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

she understood “working in sculpture as an excuse for silence”<sup>15</sup>. Other artists in Slovenia, on the other hand, thought about the situation of the war in the Balkans, the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the concept of nationality and the loss of identity through their production of artworks,<sup>16</sup> like the *NSK State in Time* established in 1992. The first, if not the only institutional response in Slovenia to the war in Bosnia can certainly be recognised in the symposium organised in 1996 by the Moderna galerija. *Living with Genocide: Art and the War in Bosnia, Political Theory and Art* was directly related to the project *For the Museum of Contemporary Art Sarajevo 2000*, initiated in 1994 by the Irwin group and the Sarajevo artist Jadran Adamović. Borut Vogelnik explains: “In February 1995, Igor Zabel and Zdenka Badovinac and I set off for Sarajevo to determine whether such an initiative would even be welcome. There, we found out that Enver Hadžiomerspahić had already been working on a similar initiative, so we decided to join the existing initiative and support it. It was crucial that such an initiative be welcome in Sarajevo.”<sup>17</sup> In cooperation with Zdenka Badovinac, Igor Zabel and the Moderna galerija, they called on the international art scene to think about the future of the non-yet-existent museum and its collection in Sarajevo. In the 1990s, the idea behind *For the Museum of Contemporary Art Sarajevo 2000* for several international artists to donate their works to the future museum and for several international museums to support the solidary initiative repeated the questions related to the art practices of the late 1960s. Under what conditions, when, how, and in what way can art trigger a social reaction, in what way can a committed artistic gesture change this reality, when does art have a direct share in the existing reality, and how can art and reality be entangled and intertwined?

When the Eastern Bloc had already collapsed, when Yugoslavia was disintegrating and the new borders triggered a sense of loss of one’s cultural, social and political identification with the old space, the trite phrase of Slovenian politics repeated the promise of a ‘second Switzerland’ and forgot about the Balkans. 1994 was not only the year of the first U3, but also the year Chris Marker’s poignant

15 Rene Rusjan, in conversation, Ljubljana, 23 August 2019.

16 It was already in 1991 that the New Collectivism group designed and printed anti-war posters and put them up in Ljubljana. In 1992, Marina Gržinić and Aina Šmid made *Three sisters (Tri sestre)*, a video that examines the war in Croatia. *Labirint* is a video from 1993 that explores the issues related to the refugees in the vicinity of Ljubljana, while the 1994 video installation *Luna 10* refers directly to the war in Bosnia. In 1994, Bojan Štokelj organised a photo exhibition entitled *Odavde te može u oko* at Škuc Gallery, showing a series of photos shot in Mostar during the war. He also designed this project for internet presentation and prepared it in the form of a CD. In 1992, Marko Kovačič made *No More Heroes Any More*, a video on the topic of the war in Bosnia that reflects on it in a performative and parodic way.

17 Borut Vogelnik, conversation, 23 August 2019, Ljubljana.

documentary *Prime Time in Camps* (*Le 20 heures dans les camps*, 1993)<sup>18</sup> hit the screens. The film shot in Ljubljana does not construct scenes of an idyllic country presented in its potential, in its promise of a ‘second Switzerland’, but seeks out and shows the troubling points of the silenced, overheard and invisible reality of the 1990s in the Balkans. In addition, the film reminds us of the emancipatory potential of the SLON group of the late 1960s, when art demanded a direct share in reality. The film is an invaluable and precious record, also in view of today’s situation, with migrants waiting trapped in refugee centres, bureaucratic procedures and the vicious circle of violence on their path to a better tomorrow. Because the movement of migrants today means a way of politicising the concepts of state, border and nation,<sup>19</sup> the invitation to participate in the U3 exhibition at the Moderna galerija prompted me to think about the possibility of politicising cultural institutions. It prompted a reflection on issues related to the politicisation of art practices, the politics of exhibiting and the possibility of intervening in the museum’s existing national collection. In addition to exhibitions, newsreels, lectures, newsreel fragments and texts that we have been collectively producing within the Newsreel Front for a few years now, this time our gesture – A Newsreel Tribute – consists of the purchase of Chris Marker’s *Prime Time in Camps* (1993) and *Slon Tango* (1993) and their donation to the existing public collection of the national museum. A fragile and tiny fragment that tries to (re)write, supplements, tries to show and decisively demonstrates the possibility, potential and promise of the future and a commitment to tomorrow.

Chris Marker is one of the most unique and well-rounded cineastes, documentary filmmakers, essayists, poets, journalists, photographers and multimedia artists. In addition to the heterogeneous fields of creation, theoreticians and historians also ascribe to him a pioneering role in new media art.<sup>20</sup> Despite its dispersion and variety, his artistic work, which spans more than half a century, has maintained what Timothy Corrigan refers to as an attempt at documenting, capturing and recording dispersed and fragmentary human experiences through images and words. “As different as his subjects and media practices are, however, his concerns have remained remarkably consistent: memory, loss, history, human community, and how our fragile subjectivity can acknowledge, represent, surrender,

18 In 2016, Arte France released a DVD entitled *La trilogie des Balkans*, which, in addition to *Prime Time in Camps*, also includes *Casque Blue* (1995) and *Un maire au Kosovo* (2000). The DVD also comes with *SLON Tango* (1994) and a selection of interviews with François Crémieux and Jean-Michel Frodon.

19 Reece Jones, *Violent Borders: Refugees and the Right to Move*, London and New York: Verso, 2016.

20 In Catherine Lupton, *Chris Marker, Memories of the Future*, Marker is repeatedly described as a precursor, beginner or pioneer of new media and multimedia art (“grand old man of new media”, “pioneer of new media” and “new media pioneer”).

and survive these experiences.”<sup>21</sup> When at the end of the 1980s he tested the limits of new technologies – electronic video recorders – when he crossed as a pioneer the limits of computer arts and digital multimedia,<sup>22</sup> he had already been a key figure both in the field of essay film and in committed documentary cinema for several decades. In addition, he also marked the 1960s as an initiator of collective practices of art production, which we today often – and incorrectly – understand as political art. In one of his rare interviews, Marker said the following about the concept of politicalness in his work: “For many people, ‘engaged’ means ‘political,’ and politics, the art of compromise (which is as it should be – If there is no compromise there is only brute force, of which we’re seeing an example right now), which bores me deeply. What interests me is history, and politics interests me only to the degree that it represents the mark history makes on the present.”<sup>23</sup> With a series of essay films, from *Statues also Die* (*Les statues meurent aussi’s*, 1953) and *Letter from Siberia* (*Lettre de Sibérie*, 1957) to the cultish photo essay *La Jette* (1964), he can without any doubt be understood as the key representative, initiator, conceiver and experimenter of the film essay. Marker can be understood not only as a creator of essayistic, documentary, photographic, compilation and direct films, gallery events and multimedia exhibitions, but also as an arranger, a transcriber of history, someone searching the archives, the documents of history, wandering through the “glory hole of memory”<sup>24</sup> in order to outline anew, to copy what came before in relation to the here and now, to juxtapose the images that used to conceal, distort or even erase with a new possibility, a new promise. Looking at the existing history in order to think about the present more easily and dare to imagine a more just future is still a widespread practice among the creators of film essays, compilation movies or agitprop films today. Andrej Šprah writes: “To achieve a transformation at all levels of consciousness, it is necessary to question ‘historical facts’ – especially where the history has been written by conquerors and colonisers.”<sup>25</sup> It is precisely with this vision that Marker, in cooperation with Alain Resnais and Ghislain Cloquet, made one of the first film essays, *Statues also Die*. In 1968, in view of the stands of the most progressive art collectives that emerged

21 Timothy Corrigan, *The Essay Film, From Montaigne, After Marker*, Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 36.

22 Upon the invitation of Centre Pompidou in 1997, Chirs Marker used the technology of a CD-ROM to make *Immemory* (1998), a work that functions as a virtual map of memory, as an archive and a museum of personal memory.

23 Chris Marker, “Marker Direct: an interview with Chris Marker”, *Film Comment*, vol. 39, no. 3 (May–June 2003).

24 Denis Valič, Chris Marker, skrbnik ropotarnice spomina, ob slovesu vsestranskega ustvarjalca, accessible at, <https://www.rtvsllo.si/kultura/film/chris-marker-skrbnik-ropotarnice-spomina/288882> (6 September 2012)

25 Andrej Šprah, *Neuklonljivost vizije, politični dokumentarni film po drugi svetovni vojni*, Slovenska Kinoteka, 2013, p. 19.

in France, it seemed self-evident that the task of art was, as Igor Zabel writes, “not only to deal with the reality outside itself, but to really enter that reality and, as the most radical representatives of this movement demanded, ‘dissolve’ in life’s practice”.<sup>26</sup> Collective artistic attempts, film experiments and political agitation through art became a crucial, indispensable and vital part of revolutionary endeavours, emancipatory movements, demands of the working class and the political resistances of the underprivileged and marginalised groups and individuals.

The famous *Société pour le lancement des oeuvres nouvelles* or the SLON collective (later renamed ISKRA) and the Medvedkin Group, which Trevor Stark characterised as “one of post-war Europe’s most significant experiments in cultural production from below”,<sup>27</sup> represent the collectiveness and the resistance of artists and filmmakers who, through their operation, established the fundamental principles of non-hierarchical collective work. Within the SLON group, Chris Marker initiated the making of *Far from Vietnam (Loin du Vietnam, 1967)*. In this film, its directors – Jean Luc Godard, Joris Ivens, William Klein, Claude Lelouch, Agnès Varda, Chris Marker and Alain Resnais – combined fiction, documentary, essay and newsreel methods. The film’s reception was accompanied by tensions between the “enshrined authority of the named directors and the humble anonymity of technicians and industry personnel”.<sup>28</sup> This is why SLON understood *Far from Vietnam* as an unrealised goal in their endeavours to create a more equal position for various film professionals. The film “had not successfully broken with the assumed creative superiority of the director, and did not influence any of the ‘star’ directors (apart from Godard) to change radically the way they made films.”<sup>29</sup> Despite the initial failure, Marker saw in the idea of collectiveness the future of cinema and an emancipatory attempt that he wanted to try out in a sort of film cooperative with a non-hierarchical structure. Thus, SLON’s operation provided not only technical help to militant left-wing groups, but also the post-production, funding and distribution of their films. In the framework of SLON, quite a few films were made that were based on anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist principles and contributed to the understanding of resistance all over the world. After March 1967, when textile workers in France again occupied a factory for the first time after more than thirty years, this time the Rhodiaceta textile factory, Marker and other SLON members followed the subsequent happening. What was special in the workers’ resistance and the case in Besançon was that, in addition to

26 Igor Zabel, M’ars, Živeti z genocidom. Umetnost in vojna v Bosni, vol. XI, 1999, no.1–2, p. 23

27 Trevor Stark, “‘Cinema in the Hands of People’: Chris Marker, the Medvedkin Group, and the Potential of Militant Film”, in October 139, Winter, 2012, p. 118.

28 Catherine Lupton, Chris Marker, Memories of the Future, London: Reaktion Books, 2005, p. 113.

29 Ibid.,p. 114.

higher wages and better working conditions, the workers also demanded the right to culture and art.

CCPPO, a local cultural organisation established in 1959 and led by René Berchoud, invited Marker to the factory. The factory library, now managed by workers as part of the occupation, was transformed into a place of meetings, various discussions and film screenings. Such an understanding of space within the factory should also be ascribed to the fact that Pol Cèbe, the first president of CCPPO, initially conceived an ambitious and progressive artistic and cultural programme intended for workers. Evening concerts, lectures on painters and sculptors, Pablo Picasso for example, film screenings and regular performances of Brecht's plays were nothing unusual for Rhodiaceta factory workers. Thus, a strong and lively bond was established between the workers and cultural organisations and filmmakers. Next year, Chris Marker and Mario Marett filmed *See You Soon, I Hope* (*À bientôt j'espère*, 1968), which was produced by SLON. It was made in close cooperation with the factory workers and depicts work in the factory, shows interviews with the workers that report on the happening in the factory and relate their demands. But at the premiere, the film was criticised by the workers and union representatives. The preserved sound recording<sup>30</sup> is today a precious document of a conversation that took place after the screening between the factory workers and the SLON collective. The workers criticised the film for its pessimistic representation of the situation and presenting workers as victims. Consequently, Chris Marker offered the workers the chance to learn how to use film equipment and thus the possibility to make their own films. SLON furnished the organised workshops in which the workers learned the basics of the film production process with an editing table, 16 mm cameras, sound recorders and other equipment, thus encouraging and supporting the workers in making their own films. In the process of its establishment the new collective, which had had no experience with the film production process and now primarily advocated a "collective and non-hierarchical model of production, seeking to abolish the separation between expert and amateur, between producer and consumer",<sup>31</sup> adopted the name of the Russian film director Aleksander Medvedkin.<sup>32</sup> In 1969, the Medvedkin Group made its first film entitled *Class of Struggle* (*Classe de lutte*, 1969). The film is an answer to the limitations and critique of *See You Soon, I Hope*. It conveys the happening during

30 The sound recording was released in the DVD collection Les Groupes Medvedkine (1967–1974).

31 Trevor Stark, "Cinema in the Hands of the People: Chris Marker, the Medvedkin Group, and the Potential of Militant Film", October 139, Winter 2012, p. 127.

32 The group that with its name paid tribute to Aleksandr Medvedkin inscribed itself directly in the tradition of Medvedkin's cinetrains and thereby the tradition of direct artistic experiments and effects that cinema could have within political and social organiki oddele

the resistance in a factory as perceived by and through the action of a young female worker and activist that persuades the other workers to take organised action. Over the next four years, the Medvedkin Group filmed, edited and distributed at least a dozen films made independently by a group of workers with the support of Chris Marker and SLON. In a 2003 interview, Marker said that, through the operation of SLON and the Medvedkin Group, he tried “to give the power of speech to people who don’t have it, and, when possible, to help them find their own means of expression. The workers I filmed in 1967 in Rhodesia, just like the Kosovars I filmed in 2000, had never been heard on television: everyone was speaking on their behalf, but once you no longer saw them on the road, bloody and sobbing, people lost interest in them.”<sup>33</sup>

It was precisely in 1994, the year of the first triennial in Ljubljana, that Marker released the film that would doubtlessly have deserved to premiere in front of the largest possible audience nowhere else but in Ljubljana, since it is where he filmed it a year before. In 1993, Chris Marker visited a refugee centre and the zoo in Ljubljana without the broader cultural, film, gallery and museum scene knowing about it. Today, *Prime Time in Camps* and *Slon Tango* are part of MoMA’s collection. With the opening of the 9<sup>th</sup> Triennial of Contemporary Art U3, they will become part of the collection of the Moderna galerija in Ljubljana. The film shows the story of Bosnian refugees living at the Roška centre for temporary refugees at 40 Poljanska Street, who, with the help of a Belgian organisation, set up a temporary television studio and regularly edited and produced their news. The initiative for the project of a television studio at Roška came from Theo Robichet, a French documentary filmmaker who in 1967 worked with Chris Marker on *Far from Vietnam*. In *Prime Time in Camps*, Robichet emphasizes the importance of such organising, since what struck him most when he visited Ljubljana was the isolation of the refugees. “The first thing that struck me was that people were closed in not only inside those walls but inside themselves.”<sup>34</sup> In the refugee centre, people who had had no previous contact or experience with the process of creating a television show found themselves in the role of anchors, editors and script writers, and, in an attempt at empowerment, created a television programme and titled it *Izbegljička Televizija* (Refugee Television). One of the creators said: “Once you learn how it works, you start to think differently about television. I too changed (...) Once you learn the production process of the image, you look at the image differently.”<sup>35</sup> This incredible, unique story and struggle and the attempt at producing moving images,

33 Chris Marker, “Marker Direct: an interview with Chris Marker”, *Film Comment*, vol. 39, no. 3 (May–June 2003).

34 Chris Marker, *Prime Time in Camps*, video, 28’, 1993.

35 Chris Marker, *Prime Time in Camps*, video, 28’, 1993.

films and television programmes “through the common labour of those previously kept separate”<sup>36</sup> resonates very strongly with the 1968 story within the SLON and Medvedkin groups. The newly defined relation between the creator, the camera, the topic and the person or the community examined and presented by the film, which the SLON and Medvedkin groups strove to do in 1967, was established precisely in Ljubljana. In 2003, Marker explained: “I found the Medvedkin syndrome again in a Bosnian refugee camp in 1993 – a bunch of kids who had learned all the techniques of television, with newsreaders and captions, by pirating satellite TV and using equipment supplied by an NGO (non-governmental organization). But they didn’t copy the dominant language – they just used the codes in order to establish credibility and reclaim the news for other refugees. An exemplary experience. They had the tools and they had the necessity. Both are indispensable.”<sup>37</sup> Through the interviews of individuals living at the refugee centre and working on the television project, *Prime Time in Camps* shows how they collect and edit the footage daily taken from the existing news programmes on CNN, Sky News and other European satellite television stations, composing them into a sort of assemblages or collages, which they then show daily to other people living at the refugee centre. In addition to showing the happening in the television team and the refugee centre, the film also opens the question of understanding an individual within such forms of accommodation. It represents the resistance against being designated or named as merely a refugee and then their resistance against ‘being’ and remaining refugees. In the process of assuming a new role and identification and through the operation of the television, they became anchors and editors, camerapersons and the makers of proper television programmes, but above all those who write the memories and the images of their own experience, images that point to the possibility, potential and promise of the future. I saw a similar change of ascribed places and the demand for a variegated, complex and heterogeneous position and identification of individuals in 2012 in the former Omarska concentration camp when, upon the 20-year commemoration, the survivors wanted to actively step out of the role of the victims that was automatically ascribed to them and, in front of television cameras and numerous journalists, spontaneously assumed the role of actors – performers. The actors of their memory, the performers of their own experience. In *Prime Time in Camps*, which was made nine years before, we learn that, in addition to the daily news prepared by the team of Izbeglička Televizija, a special team of camerapersons records and documents individual testimonies. In the filming, writing and documenting, they see the possibility of preserving “the

36 Trevor Stark, “‘Cinema in the Hands of the People’: Chris Marker, the Medvedkin Group, and the Potential of Militant Film”, October 139, Winter 2012, p. 119

37 Chris Marker, “Marker Direct: an interview with Chris Marker”, Film Comment, vol. 39, no. 3 (May–June 2003).



moment for a time that is yet to come”.<sup>38</sup> They filmed everything from their living conditions to the things they brought with them after they had been displaced. The cameraman explains: “Every little thing has a sentimental value (...) every detail is important because it represents life.”<sup>39</sup>

This was the time when several tens of thousands of refugees from the former Yugoslav republic were granted temporary protection in Slovenia. In 1991, around 23,000 refugees from Croatia were registered in Slovenia. During the war, around two million people left their homes in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 1993, around 45,000 refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina were registered in Slovenia. At least an additional 20,000 were not registered and lived with their relatives. Today, 25 years later, there is practically no asylum for refugees. Instead of accommodation and protection, we offer them a complicated labyrinth of bureaucratic traps and isolation in asylum centres. We are allocating millions to build repressive infrastructural projects along Slovenia’s border; we are building a mesh fence topped off with razor wire. Together with armed police and military patrols, the direct threat in the form of razor wire along the border near the rivers Sotla, Kolpa and Dragonja frightens the migrants away and increases the chances of them drowning in the fenced-off rivers. Migrations and migrants have become one of the alternating, on-again, off-again popular topics in political circles, especially when it comes to attacking the weakest and rousing the basest human emotions. In the last 25 years, the migrant story alternated with the erased, the Roma, workers, unions and single women, and then the refugees and the LGBT, queer and intersex community. In its visual form, the razor wire on the border with Croatia reminds us that after all we are here and they are there. And it was precisely in the immediate vicinity of the wire fence that Vito Havránek’s invitation brought us artists together for the *Korte Assembly: Towards a Collective Skin* workshop, whose title includes two telling words: assembly and collective. I cannot remember a similar meeting of artists that encouraged the participants from different regions, generations and creative practices to think about the two concepts. The title appealed to us, it seductively promised the possibility of thinking about the new dimensions and potentials of artistic creation, operation and meetings. Three generations of visual artists, writers and choreographers. The opportunity to open topics such as underpaid or unpaid work, the lack of personnel and poor infrastructure in cultural institutions and an overview of all pressing and urgent topics that could be addressed through the exhibition slid through the torn, fragmented and above all individualised wishes of us invitees. The meeting remained an unfulfilled promise, irreversibly broken when Maja Smrekar reminded us of the 1986 advertisement

38 Chris Marker, *Prime Time in Camps*, video, 28’, 1993.

39 Chris Marker, *Prime Time in Camps*, video, 28’, 1993.

*The Guests Are Coming*, which nobody, considered in relation to the razor wire on the border with Croatia; when Teja Reba agitated for workers' rights, but they dissolved in the acceptance of self-exploitation; when Lenka Dorojević sensitively broached the topic of concentration camps and the Balkans and we truly did not hear her; when Vit Havránek urged us to think about the unfulfilled promises of various movements in the history of art, but we drowned his voice out with our own wishes. Our bodies finally dissolved and depoliticised in the space of fragmented individuality when Mateja Bučar reminded us of the time before 1989 and talked about the dance–choreography relation and the body–space–political concept, and when we could not recognise the dispersed heterogeneous wishes as a possibility, a potential in the collective and the political.

Newsreel Shreds  
**Newsreel Front**

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