

David Maljkovic

Opening March 27th - 10pm
March 28th - May 31st

Leal Rios Foundation
Rua do Centro Cultural 17
1700-106 Lisboa



“I don’t know how I found myself in that place. Probably the unconscious again directed the course of my journey. I only know that I stood looking at the sight of the monument for a long time. Suddenly I succeeded in finding a narrow slit to escape from all these historical facts and the journey started.”¹

The turbulent recent history of Yugoslavia, and its artistic and conceptual Modernist avant-garde utopias of the 1950s and 1960s, have contextualized much of David Maljković’s work. His practice has long engaged in a non-linear dialogue with time, and a quest to reclaim and reconfigure past references and forms that have been obliterated. Since early in his career, he has constantly revisited and repositioned his own works, reassembling forms and meanings to construct new images and narratives that address lost memories and identities. Forgetting and remembering the past has driven much of Maljković’s art, engendering the possibility of new beginnings, arising in the space of those very absences.

An early project that touched upon the cultural history of the Balkans, the video trilogy and collages of “Scenes for a New Heritage,” 2004–2006, features a story that takes place in a distant future, between 2045 and 2060, and is presented in three installments. In the first part of the trilogy, a group of young men interact with an emblematic derelict monument to the Yugoslav partisan victims of World War II, built by Vojin Bakić in the Petrova Gora Memorial Park in Croatia in 1981, under the former communist regime. The failure of these young people to establish any connection with the memorial, along with the state of “collective amnesia” created by the historical and political conditions of the country, leave them permanently searching for new meanings.

project:

In recent years, Maljković's practice has increasingly focused on erasing content, and revisiting strategies of display and exhibition that reposition and reconstruct his own forms and presentation methods. In "Exhibitions for Secession," presented in Vienna in 2011, he emptied out the content of his objects and installations, reducing them to their structures, in an attempt to create new frames of reference for them. This intentional desire to erase and (re)generate new meanings is one more attempt for his practice to define its own spatial frame, and to reassess—to an extreme—his images and forms in relation to the new situation of each exhibition. It is, as well, a way to look back once more into the empty spaces of the past to create new content for the present, and to imagine future possibilities and interpretations. This dialogue with his own production, and his restaging of previous works in new configurations and layouts, is likewise the operating premise of Maljković's exhibition at the Leal Rios Foundation.

The exhibition presents an animation and video installation, a film projection, and a number of photographic collages and display forms that combine new works with remakes of previous ones from other series and exhibitions. In *Afterform*, 2013 (5:10 min.), the artist appropriates characters from a cartoon in a Croatian architectural magazine from the 1960s to create his first animation, with his own works inserted into the film. Projected on a screen set on a large white platform, under the rhythmic beat of what seems to be the sound of a mechanical clock, the animation presents several satirical characters playing absurd roles that involve Modernist forms: two men play a concentrated table game with rectangles; a waiter carries a building on a tray that later becomes an enlarged digital clock that crushes him; a snake charmer lures a form that successively transforms itself into the artist's works.

Maljković charts a history of his own artistic practice with three photographic collages from the same series, also called *Afterform*, 2013, which assemble a series of overlapping images from past works and installations. *Monochromes*, 2013, presents an expanded take on monochrome painting that refers back to the artist's early works in this medium. The piece, previously exhibited in other versions, features a classic Plexiglas vitrine on top of a white wooden table on trestles, with tiny (2–3 cm) monochrome canvases attached with paper clips to palm branches. In *Temporary Projections*, 2012, the artist treats another device to record time, a 16mm film projector set on a pedestal, as an autonomous sculptural form. Devoid of recorded images, the bright light of the projector illuminates two small red pins set on the wall. Going back to a malleable, circular sense of time, and to forms that have lost their function, in *Untitled*, 2004, the artist presents a digital clock, the numbers of which have been manipulated and are no longer legible.

Maljković's awareness of the past, and his urge to deconstruct his heritage and empty out form, contend with specific histories as they recover and re-assimilate memory. The generative open space of his objects becomes a site in which to internalize the search for, and the recovery, of collective memories and lost meanings. It also represents a potentiality, a desire, that can suddenly ignite to reveal new possibilities for living in the present and building a different future.

Rina Carvajal

¹ Maljković, David, "Prologue" in David Maljković: Exhibitions for Secession (Vienna: Secession, 2011), p. 104.

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