

6th Helsinki Photomedia Conference 2024

Subtheme 2. Artistic research practices

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Title: **Curating the Non – Aligned Movement: Archives and Artistic research practices.**

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Introduction and Background:

The proposed paper and the subject of my visual analysis for the 6th Helsinki Photomedia Conference focus on my latest artistic research practice, where I have been working with a family archive as my primary artistic research method and tool. My long-term interdisciplinary visual research practice in recent years has been centered on memory, remembrance, forgetting, and the presence of the past. Working with both family and official archives has raised important questions about the role of archives in present artistic research practices. Archives can be socially and individually illuminating, shedding light on the relationship between perception, memory, documents, and the public. The archive plays a crucial role in preserving collective memory. I view archives as a platform where I can explore, question, and reinterpret my own identity, reflecting on my cultural heritage. The intersection between archives and visual artistic research practices provides an opportunity to highlight marginalized perspectives, question established truths, and challenge the way history is told or untold.

In my previous exhibition and book projects, I focused on the historical, political, and cultural context of former Yugoslavia and the consequences of the civil war in the 1990s. Using archives as my method, I raised important questions about my identity, collective trauma, and the presence of the past through photographs and projections of abandoned monuments, memorial landscapes, and the empty and destroyed Yugoslavian architecture. I visually analyze the terms "remembrance" and "forgetting" in the context of the disintegration of Yugoslavia and my own memories and personal history. In my recent artistic visual research, I continue to work with my personal and collective trauma, focusing on memory, remembrance, forgetting, and the presence of the past in the context of the first Cold War era, with a specific focus on the Non-Aligned Movement. My talk will delve into this issue, followed by a projection of my artwork.

Abstract:

“The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) functioned as a social movement in the international system, a third way between two blocs, aiming to change the existing global structures and to create a more just, equal, and peaceful world order. It was, in essence, an anti-imperialist, anticolonial, and antiracist movement” (Singham & Hune, *Non-Alignment in an Age of Alignments*, 1986).

The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) aimed to creatively contribute to an alternative to the existing world order and represented the first major disruption of the Cold War map. It embodied a quest for alternative political alliances, for an “alternative mundialization.” As a transnational political project, it was a coalition of small and middle-sized states, mostly former colonies and developing countries from the Global South, advocating for peaceful coexistence, disarmament, territorial integrity, and supporting anti-colonial struggles. Different collaborations and exchanges were established between non-aligned countries in the fields of economics, trade, education, and culture. Yugoslavia, as one of the founders of the NAM, participated in these processes and significantly contributed to its policies and activities.

The artistic research backdrop involves a search for the (non) monuments to the Non-Aligned, inspired by the geopolitical project undertaken by Josip Broz Tito, president of former Yugoslavia. Through archival images, documents, and a photographic essay featuring images from New York, San Francisco, Belgrade, and Berlin, the material explores the tension between the realpolitik of the Cold War, its remnants, and traces in the built environment, images, etc., and those of this utopic and ambitious project, which is much less recognizable since its heyday in the 1960s. Interdisciplinary artistic research is an open-ended visual dialogue across these periods, moments, spaces, and places through experimental juxtaposition and montage of historical and archival materials and the use of contemporary documentary forms that mix the architectural, political, and the autobiographical.

I was born and grew up in the former Yugoslavia, in a country that was geographically in the ‘East,’ psychologically in the ‘West,’ but geopolitically non-aligned. In this atmosphere and setting, my parents' generation grew up adjacent to the Iron Curtain, in a 'market socialist' economy yet culturally oriented towards European and American popular forms. My parents were born and grew up in Yugoslavia under the Non-Aligned movement.

I was born when the Non-Aligned movement was active and when Yugoslavia still existed as a part of the world map. Once my parents told me, “We were Non-Aligned and therefore worldly.”