

Spomin.

Odtisi uničenja in upor življenja

Jaka Babnik
Masaki Hirano
Bojan Radovič

26.-27. maj 2017

DUM – Društvo umetnikov,
Ljubljana

Skupinska razstava *Spomin. Odtisi uničenja in upor življenja* se osredotoča na fenomen spomina, ki ga v svojem genskem zapisu hranijo vsa živa bitja – tudi drevesa. Ta (lahko) živijo stoletja, mnogo dlje kot človek, zato pogosto postanejo nemi pričevalci zgodovinskih dogodkov. Spomin dreves se nalaga v njihovi telesni strukturi, ki pa jo je nemogoče natančno prebrati. Njihov spomin je tako ambivalenten kot podoba brez podanega konteksta.

Dela treh umetnikov se zato nanašajo na neizbrisljive sledi, ki jih je človeštvo pustilo v svojem neposrednem okolju, in tako pričajo o krhkosti in neznatnosti človeka v odnosu do velike narave in o njegovi zaslepljenosti z nadvlado nad planetom. A drevesa so dokaj nedogajana bitja, o katerih kljub znanstvenemu in tehnološkemu napredku človeštvo ne ve prav dosti. Zato je na mestu vprašanje: lahko drevesa zapisujejo tudi svoje spomine, tako kot puščajo sledi svoje rasti v koncentričnih krogih debla? In če jih, kako jih je mogoče razbrati iz njihove notranje strukture? Jaka Babnik, Masaki Hirano in Bojan Radovič se tem vprašanju posvečajo iz različnih perspektiv in konceptualnih izhodišč, skozi katere hkrati tudi drzno izprašujejo naravo fotografskega medija. Poslužujejo se nekonvencionalnih principov, ki so daleč stran od klasične fotografske reprezentacije, zato njihove podobe postavljajo več vprašanj kot (enoznačnih) odgovorov.

Kustos razstave: Miha Colner
Besedila: Miha Colner & Marina Gržinič

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Razstava bo odprta

26. maja (od 20.00 do 23.00) in
27. maja (od 10.00 do 14.00)

Produkcija / Produced by:



SEKTOR

DUM PROJECT SPACE



Memory.

Imprints of Destruction and Rebellion of Life

Jaka Babnik
Masaki Hirano
Bojan Radovič

26-27 May 2017

DUM Association, Ljubljana, Slovenia

The group exhibition entitled *Memory. Imprints of Destruction and Rebellion of Life* focuses on the phenomenon of memory encoded in the genetic code of all living creatures – also trees. Trees (can) live for centuries, much longer than humans, and therefore they often end up being silent witnesses to historical events. The memory of trees is stored in their bodily structure, however, it is impossible to read and interpret with our means. Their memory is as ambivalent as an image without a given context.

The works of three artists, Jaka Babnik, Masaki Hirano and Bojan Radovič, refer to indelible traces that humanity has left on its immediate, natural surroundings. They testify to the fragility and pettiness of humans compared with the grandiosity of nature, as well as human blindness and addiction to their supremacy on the planet. But trees are mysterious beings and humanity does not know much about them – despite immense scientific and technological development. It is, therefore, relevant to pose these questions: Can trees record and store their memories, like they leave traces of their growth in the concentric circles of their trunks? And, if they can, is it possible to read their memories from their internal structure? All three artists touch on these issues from profoundly different perspectives while questioning the very nature of the photographic medium. They utilise photography's unconventional principles, far removed from classic photographic representation, and hence their images pose more questions than they offer clear answers.

Curator of the exhibition: Miha Colner
Texts: Miha Colner & Marina Gržinič

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The exhibition will be open
26 May (from 8pm to 11pm) and on
27 May (from 10am to 2pm)



Masaki Hirano

Stumps of Silence: Tasmania, 2001, prints displayed in mosaic form.

Fotografija prečnega prereza štora, ki je razstavljena v galeriji v naravni velikosti več kot 250 let starega posekanega drevesa, japonskega fotografa **Masaki Hirana**, je spomin na tisoče in tisoče štorov, ki ostanejo v tišini devastiranega tasmanskega pragozda. Na fotografiji, ki ovekoveči prerez štora, kjer ločimo različne teksture, tkiva in celice, se kot neskončna pokrajina izrisuje tudi kapitalistični destruktivni pohlep. Tasmanija je otok na južni obali avstralske celine. Ponaša se s čudovitim pragozdom, ki ga sistematično uničuje sečnja in izvoz dreves na Japonsko. Sečnja, ki uničuje tisočletni tasmanski pragozd, pa se navzven, v javnosti, prikriva z »naravi prijaznim«
pogozdovanjem, ki ni v nasprotju z zakonom. Tako imamo po eni strani monopolni kapitalistični pohlep in po drugi kozmetične in nelogične ukrepe pogozdovanja, ki sledijo neoliberalni kapitalistični devastaciji. Vsak štor, ki ga ovekoveči fotografija, predstavlja življenjski cikel, ki je končan, zato je fotografija več kot le estetski zapis – je tudi oblika družbene odgovornosti. Fotografija Hirana, ki čeprav ne more ustaviti te rušilne monopolne požrešne uničevalske sle, vendarle opozori, da je sposobna refleksije in tudi neke avtonomije lastnega sporočila. Hirano razkaže trk med estetsko fotografsko perfekcionistično strukturo in nami, gledalci. Tudi mi, gledalci, smo kompromitirani, saj je težko namreč po vsem tem vzdrževati distanco. Navkljub perfekcionizmu fotografije, ta ni osrednjega pomena za fotografski učinek, pač pa je to tisto, kar se izrisuje na horizontu gledalčevega odnosa do celotne situacije.

The life-size photograph of the cross section of a stump depicting the more than 250 year-old felled tree, taken by Japanese photographer **Masaki Hirano**, serves as a reminder of thousands and thousands of stumps left in the silence of the devastated Tasmanian primeval forest. The image documents the cross-section of a stump, in which one is able to recognise different textures, tissues and cells, foregrounds the tragedy of the endlessly devastated landscape that is a consequence of capitalist greed. Tasmania is an island off the south coast of the Australian continent. This area contains wonderful primeval forests that have been systematically destroyed by logging for export to Japan. The logging is slowly devastating this ancient Tasmanian forest while the public remains, for the most part, unaware; instead, the media spreads a discourse of "nature friendly" reforestation. Hirano points to the monopolistic capitalist greed as well as the cosmetic measures of reforestation that come with neoliberal devastation. Each stump that was photographed shows a life cycle that has already come to an end and the photograph, therefore, is more than an aesthetic inscription – it is also a form of social responsibility. The photography of Hirano cannot stop the explosion of monopolistic destructive lust, however, it proves that photography is capable of reflection and of autonomy of its own message. The photographer emphasises the collision between pure aesthetic photography and us, the viewers. However, the audience is compromised by its knowledge about the ecological catastrophe. Despite the perfectionism of photography, this is not crucial for the photographic effect that shows the viewer's relationship with the entire situation.

Jaka Babnik se v seriji *Heroji mojega časa* poslužuje principov *aftermath* fotografije, da bi ovekovečil mesta, kjer so se zgodili nekateri odmevni, prelomni ali nepojasnjeni dogodki, ki še vedno posredno vplivajo na družbeno stvarnost v Sloveniji. Umetnik išče izbrana drevesa, ki so bila priče skritim ali prikritim dogodkom, drevesa, ki so „videla“ to kar večinska javnost ni videla. Zatorej se osredotoča na kraje simbolnega pomena, ki so danes pogosto pozabljeni, izrabljeni ali odrinjeni iz javnega diskurza. Na prvi pogled povsem običajne podobe prostorov pa se ob razkritem kontekstu izrišejo v povsem drugačni luči. Z zgodovinsko obsesijo in forenzično natančnostjo fotograf ustvari topografijo, ki odpira številna vprašanja o relativnosti zgodovinskih in medijskih diskurzov in o lahkotnosti njihovega spreminjanja skozi čas. Med upodobljenimi so tako jablane, ki so prisostvovala usmrtni talcev v Frankolovem spomladi leta 1945, kar je kasneje prešlo v ljudsko mitologijo, smreke, ki so „videle“ še vedno neadekvatno pojasnjeni umor predsedniškega kandidata Ivana Krambergerja leta 1992, ali hruška, pred katero se je odigrala aretacija Milana Smolnikarja v Depali vasi, afera zaradi katere je bil kasneje razrešen obrambni minister Janez Janša. V podobah pa se hkrati zrcali tudi vprašanje o naravi fotografskega medija, njegovi produkciji, prezentaciji in distribuciji.

In the series of photographs entitled *Heroes of My Time* **Jaka Babnik** follows the principles of 'aftermath' photography in order to document places where some of the most resounding, groundbreaking and unexplained events occurred in the past – events that still influence the socio-political reality in Slovenia today. The artist seeks out specific trees that witnessed covert and concealed events, trees that "saw" what most of the public did not see. He focuses on specific places, the symbolic significance of which have already fallen into oblivion, or have been exploited for different purposes, or simply relegated from public discourse. Quite ordinary seeming places are understood entirely differently once their broader context is revealed, and so the photographer, with his historic obsession and forensic preciseness, creates a topography that opens up questions about the relativity of historical and media discourses, and the ease with which they are modified through time. Among the images are the apple trees that witnessed the mass murder of prisoners, killed by the Nazis in Frankolovo, Slovenia, in the spring of 1945, and was later canonised in local history and mythology; the pine trees that saw the still inadequately clarified assassination of presidential candidate Ivan Kramberger in 1992, a Slovenian version of the JFK assassination; and a pear tree in front of which the arrest of Milan Smolnikar took place in Depala vas, near Ljubljana, the affair that hinted at an attempted *coup d'état* in 1992 and ousted the defence minister Janez Janša. Beside their relevance to the immediate political context Babnik's images raise question about the nature of photographic medium, its production, presentation and distribution.

Jaka Babnik

from Heroes of My Time series, Blaž Furjan († 1997), color reversal films in a light box, 2016-2017.



Bojan Radovič

Hibakujumoku tree, 2016.

V skrajno metaforični in abstrahirani luči pa se raziskovanja strukture in teksture dreves se v delu *Hibakujumoku* loteva **Bojan Radovič**, ki je z improvizirano pripravo skeniral debela drevesa v japonskem mestu Hirošima, pač tistih, ki so dovolj stara, da so doživela in preživela uničujoči udar atomske bombe. Ta prva detonacija nuklearnega orožja se je zgodila 6. avgusta 1945, ko je bomba iz ameriškega letala uničila (skoraj vse) življenje v mestu. Vendar sta flora in fauna bolj vzdržljivi kot se zdi, saj so nekatere rastline, živali in tudi ljudje – kljub dolgoročnim posledicam – preživeli uničujočo eksplozijo. Radovič z odtisi debel metaforično skenira zgodovinski spomin in zapis teh dreves, ob tem pa pod vprašaj postavlja katastrofično moč, ki jo poseduje človeška vrsta. Po detonaciji prve bombe v Hirošimi se je do danes na različnih krajih sveta zgodilo še preko 2100 podobnih, pogosto celo mnogo močnejših jedrskih detonacij. A pričujoče fotografije poleg svojega družbenega konteksta odražajo tudi klasično dilemo fotografskega medija, ki je bil nekdaj razumljen kot najbolj objektivni pričevalec stvarnosti, ki nikdar ne laže. Radovičeve fotografije oziroma skeni pa so zaradi svoje abstraktnosti brez podanega konteksta neprepoznave in nerazumljive v klasičnem narativnem smislu. S tem avtor izpostavi ambivalentno naravo fotografije in vizualnega nasploh, ki tako zelo pogosto služita manipulaciji in posledično propagandi.

One can perceive the work entitled *Hibakujumoku* by **Bojan Radovič** in a very metaphorical and abstract way. Radovič explores the structures and textures of the trees by scanning the trunks of the trees with an improvised device. He scanned the trees in the city of Hiroshima, trees old enough to have experienced and survived the devastating impact of the nuclear bomb. The first detonation of the atomic bomb took place here on 6 August 1945 when the bomb from the American aircraft destroyed (nearly all) life in the city. However, the flora and fauna are much more durable than it seems as some plants, animals as well as people – despite the long-term consequences – survived the devastating explosion. With imprints of the trunks Radovič metaphorically scans the historical memory of these trees. Moreover, he questions the catastrophic power held in the hands of the humankind. After the detonation of the first bomb in Hiroshima and up until now, more than 2100 similar – often much more powerful – nuclear bombs were detonated across the globe. Beside their socio-political context, the photographs reflect a classical dilemma of photography once perceived as the most objective medium that never lies. Radovič's photographs or scans are unrecognisable and incomprehensible in the usual narrative terms. The artists thus exposes the ambivalent nature of photography and visual culture in general for they both, very often, serve for the purposes of manipulation and consequently propaganda.