

LIVING LIBRARIES: Archives of Civil Disobedience

живи библиотеки:
архиви на граѓанска непослушност
living libraries:
archives of civil disobedience



WE READ: PEOPLE AS BOOKS, BUILDINGS AS PEOPLE

Event within the long-term project “**LIVING LIBRARIES: Archives of civil disobedience**” in Skopje

Project curators: Filip Jovanovski, Ivana Vaseva

Associate: Bisera Bendevska

Date: **27-29.11. 2014**

Location: **GEM Club, Youth Cultural Center, Serious Interests Agency (SIA), CAC Mobile/Montage gallery, Skopje**

The event titled “**We Read: People as Books, Buildings as People**” is an attempt to conclude the long-term curatorial process titled “**LIVING LIBRARIES: Archives of Civil Disobedience**” launched in the country, aimed at creating space for sharing knowledge, opinions, analysis and debates, imposed as an imperative in the current divided vision of the world: narrowed by the neoliberals, and conservative as well.

In this phase, under this title, this event which has the goal to tackle the imperiled social values: the desire for knowledge, quality wide-range education, without the superficial instant information which is lost on daily basis, for a free articulation of thought.

Thereof, there is a need for space with different opinions, nearly antagonist, which promotes opposed opinions (and not singularity) and entices contemplations out of the set forth frames, pushing to subversive deconstruction and reaction. This project is aimed at creating of a thinking site about the value and the importance of a *former* city, of an almost *gone* building, of a *forgotten* literature, of *deluded* cultural values and through their verification, at providing demystification of the rapid transformation of the collective present times.

This event, through the personal and social recourse, is intended to evaluate the **knowledge**, the one that had been acquired on **individual** basis (1:1, I-book) and the **social** (me among others), i.e. the knowledge of the collective, the manifestation of knowledge for goals wider than one's own square meter.

Precisely in the form of the reading group, these two recourses meet. Therefore, it is the form the whole project “**LIVING LIBRARIES: Archives of Civil Disobedience**” is based on. Throughout 2014, the project has tried to offer space for analyses and debates on different issues in conditions of radical changes in the socio-political context as: re-reading the books, buildings, social contexts, return of the power of the written word, creation of a new document, living archive of certain historical and forgotten values.

The event includes display exhibition of many projects represented in mini forms, from Macedonia, Croatia and Serbia, a discussion on the importance of the informal education and the new forms of self-education, and closes with a big event focused on the importance of the City

Trade Center (GTC) in Skopje which is one of the most important examples of architecture under a direct threat, part of the contemporary modern cultural heritage.

Filip Jovanovski
Ivana Vaseva

LIVING LIBRARIES: Archives of Civil Disobedience is a long-term curatorial project that involves process of collecting and distributing of literature, through the process of donations, from individuals, NGO representatives and organizations, willing to act towards building an open and modern democratic society. At the same time the project is focused on the process of developing new educational forms, self-education and non-institutional, i.e. alternative education, through collecting literature about citizens' activism through NGO, foundations and individual donations.

Living Library represents an open archive, or collection of collective knowledge, created by the citizens themselves. Through the process of permanent construction and complementation of new content, the idea of what constitutes "knowledge" and how it manifests itself, in terms of radical changes in socio – political context, is revised. The project tends to generate new forms of citizen activism and function as an open platform that promotes the principle of direct democracy.

Prompting the process of public visibility through individual choice of specific literature, constantly reshapes the content of the "living" library, create critical discourse and serves as evidence for the collective understanding of the current situation.

One of its phases of the project realization involves constituting of alternative physical space, NI Cultural Center – Bitola, which will exist as a counterpoint to the official and dominant universities structures and will serve as a public space for debate and free dissemination of knowledge, through different forms of social and new media, reading groups, workshops and public actions. In the same time it will provide democratic access to "subversive " literature which is not included in the official curriculum and universities libraries.

Open call, for those who are willing to donate and share the book, considered as especially important in today's socio – political context, is announced. <http://zivibiblioteki.wordpress.com/>

The event WE READ: PEOPLE AS BOOKS, BUILDINGS AS PEOPLE and the whole project LIVINIG LIBRARIES: Archives of Civil Disobedience has been supported by the Foundation Open Society – Macedonia (FOOM).

The Center for Contemporary Arts, the Serious Interests Agency and the regional network Balkan Can Contemporary are partners of the event.

Gratitude to Jovan Ivanovski and Slobodanka Stevceska for supporting the event.

THURSDAY / 27.11

Location: **Serious Interests Agency (SIA)**

Title: **An attempt to escape from a minority**

Time: **21:00h**

Presenting:

- **visual and discursive presentation of Curatorial platform (Zagreb), Ivana Meštrov, Ana Kovačić**
- **video, Group ABS (Zagreb, Rijeka, Krk)**
- **mini-installation, The Ignorant Schoolmaster and His Committees (Belgrade)**
- **installation, Open Archive, Daniel Serafimovski**
- **installation, LIVING LIBRARIES, process – research – interpretation, Ivana Vaseva, Filip Jovanovski**

The idea of this display of long-term, research projects, has been built on several terms: equality, collective, reading group, political, based on several ideas of the French philosopher Jacques Ranciere, published in several books.

The desire to delve in and think more of his concept of subjectification or the thing that emerges as a result of emancipation explained as “escaping from a minority”, which inevitably includes a process of creating a “rupture in the order of things” is something that connects this set of projects in a group¹.

In the frames of an educational process and in a form of the presented projects, this elaborated thought emerges in a sort of step forward towards more practical contemplation about subjectification. Still, the display in this structure is just an attempt to “read” certain practices in terms of Ranciere on a more general but supportive level while the same projects open a set of other questions and realms that contain other depths of “escaping from a minority”.

Within this collection of different archives, there are several practices such as: the annual research of the Curatorial Platform of Arts and Industries (arts/autonomous artistic world, and heteronomous at the same time), ABS’s deconstruction of the supreme position of the professor (Jacotot as an example of true emancipation, the relations of the education authority which must be dissolved), the process of subjectification and emancipation (The Ignorant Schoolmaster and His Committees), alternative form for cultural exchange and sharing (Open archives, Daniel Serafimovski), the “LIVING LIBRARIES” as a process, survey and self-education.

All together, these separate archives are reexamining the relations, constellations and correlations, taking the previous discourses in consideration and re-evaluating them in the present times. They are part of a huge library of knowledge as Borges’s narrative “Babylon Library” where the world has been visualized as a great library which contains all the books that ever existed, in different volumes and formats, and at the moment we are exactly on this particular part, reading with great focus and concentration, the books we are supposed to know by heart.

¹ Bingham Charles, Biesta Gert, Jacques Rancière Education, Truth, Emancipation, London/New York: Continuum, 2010, p. 32-49

MORE INFO ON THE PROJECTS:

- Visual mini presentation of the Practicum of the Curatorial Program (module of the curatorial workshop “Correlation of Art and Production” 2013/2014 which resulted in an exhibition titles “Male Worker Female Worker / Male Artist Female Artist” at the custodian platform, Zagreb.

Ivana Mestrov (Slobodne Veze) and Ana Kovacic (“Miroslav Kraljevic” Gallery) will present the works of “Custodian Platform” and one of its segments –The Practicum within the exhibition.

The exhibition and the edition “Male Worker Female Worker / Male Artist Female Artist” deriving from the “Custodian Platform” Practicum – a program aimed at providing additional theoretical and practical education in the field of contemporary art and has been held in Zagreb from 2008, under “Slobodne Veze” led by the historians of arts and curators, Michael Richter and Ivana Mestrov.

The works of the concrete research project is part of the curatorial program, providing the participants with access to the possible methodology, technical and theoretical tools related to the conception and the realization of exhibitions/projects in the field of contemporary art.

The Practicum 2013/2014 has been designed in partnership with the “Miroslav Kraljevic” Gallery (www.g-mk.hr) and was conducted at two levels: via reading groups led by Ana Kutlesa, member of the BLOK organization and research group work on sub-topics, created and led by the curator and head of the “Miroslav Kraljevic” Gallery, Ana Kovacic. The goal of the Practicum was to instruct the participants in concrete research within pre-assigned topics: the correlation between art and production. The researches of the four groups of participants have led to the creation of draft studies on this topic and they serve as an introduction into further surveys of these particularly wide and complex subjects.

Besides the presentation of this project, Ivana Mestrov and Ana Kovacic will present a selection of articles from the “Cultural Worker” magazine that features some of the aforementioned topics. “Cultural Worker” was published from 1948 till 1991 by Prosveten savor from Croatia, with an agenda oriented towards the worker’s culture and its theoretical context as well as the emancipation of the workers through culture.

- video documentation of the project “ABS Practice Imagined as a Class Struggle Within the Highly Educated Art Class” of the ABS group performed at the Academy of Applied Arts in Rijeka, titled “Class Struggle in Painting Classes” (2012).

Along with acting in the field of visual arts, the ABS acts in the complicated pedagogical relation “teacher – others”. The members of the group are part of the institutional educational process: Alan Alebic is a docent with the Academy of Applied Arts in Rijeka, and Ivica Blazic was a third year teaching fellow from 2009-2012 with the same Academy in Rijeka, and Ivan Svrce is a teaching fellow with the Fine Arts Academy in Zagreb. This status defines a mediator role in the process of transferring knowledge among their superior professor status and that of the students, making them face two key issues: the way the higher educational institutions operate in the wider, European context, in a time when there are visual, cultural, gender, neocolonial and interdisciplinary studies, that is completely different from the expected education the students should acquire, in order to be able to face the current cultural and historical moment within which they realize their artistic identity.

On the sidelines of the project, titled “Class battle in the painting practice”, the ABS group has decided to perform an autocritique of its own practice, thus incite institutional educational interaction within the same student program.

Through the tactics of introversion, they have switched their positions as assistants with the subjected role of the posing model and by using their own bodies, they have been tried to set an example. Therefore, instead of posing as models, as the contrapost mode of Apollo of Belvedere, they offer simulations of various performances of neo-avantgarde and post-avantgarde artists from the ex-Yugoslav countries and

the world. In the process of knowledge transfer within an institution, where the apprehension emanates from the prism of the empirocentric act, the ABS group recognizes the symptoms of certain historical discourse, whose matrix facilitate the apprehension process.

With this posing act they incite the question: who has the right to set examples in the teaching practice- because setting examples is very important, affectation event which allows transformation of the art practice into a creative practice. By introducing this practice, ABS group aims to simulate collaborative work with the students. The supervisors are put in a position of meeting the needs of the students in this concrete cultural-historical moment. The intervention within the educational process of the institutions has been handled by voluntary cooperation between the students, with permission of the supervisors, primarily because the sitting has been perceived as art.

This project has been launched in Milan at the Nuova academia di belle arti within the Learning Machines project, in Rijeka at the Academy of Applied Arts and in Ljubljana at the Faculty of Fine Arts and Design, whereas the works have been showcased at the CIZ Gallery in Rijeka, the Museum of Contemporary Arts in Zagreb, NABA Milan, Gurini Gallery and MAKRO in Rome

- “LIVING LIBRARIES”, process – research-interpretation

Authors: Filip Jovanovski, Ivana Vaseva

This mini-installation represents a moment of the process and research within the project “LIVING LIBRARIES: archives of Civil Disobedience” which took place in the course of 2014 in Bitola, Tetovo, Gevgelija, Prilep and Kavadarci.

The installation consists of reading sessions, productions, discussion groups, library of books and video data of public events. Its aim is not to present the working process, but to open the archive for new lectures and interpretations, estimates, which revive reality by establishing physical contact with the archive.

-Presentation of the project “Open Archive” of the architect Daniel Serafimovski

OPEN ARCHIVE is a project by Daniel Serafimovski (MAA Architect and Senior Lecturer at the Cass School of Art, Architecture and Design, London Metropolitan University), in collaboration with Serious Interests Agency (SIA), Skopje.

OPEN ARCHIVE is an art-architecture archival project which was first exhibited as an installation at the Museum of the City of Skopje (06.05.-01.06.2014) as a part of BIMAS 2014, XVII Macedonian Architecture Biennale. The exhibition started with an Open Call to the citizens of Skopje, to contribute with own material towards an archive whose aim is to slow down the process of the loss of collective memory about the City of Skopje. The archive is also intended as a platform where various and multifaceted research and documentation related to the city (and in particular in relation to its architectural and cultural heritage) could be gathered, archived, shared and made available for discussion and debate, critique and reflection/evaluation. Skopje is a city, which has undergone a series of traumatic transformations – including the devastating earthquake fifty years ago and the subsequent reconstruction, the socio-political changes at the beginning of the 1990s, and the more recent interventions that define the project known as “Skopje 2014”. The city is fast losing its sense of identity, with numerous valuable buildings replaced or transformed beyond recognition; the city’s rich modernist heritage, entire areas of the city and its general spirit are under threat, and a general sense of loss and powerlessness is ever-present. In this current climate, the need to unearth, document, gather and collect the shared research and critical thinking regarding the disappearing city, is a form of action/ reaction/ to the present reality.

For the duration of the initial exhibition of the Open Archive at the Museum of the City of Skopje, the ‘Open Call’ was open to architects and urban planners, to artists and writers whose work has been informed or inspired by the city and life within it – but also to ‘ordinary’ citizens who may have developed a particular independent interest, formed a specific collection of books, photographs, maps or postcards, or citizens who may simply wish to participate in a public debate / public arts project concerned with the city (and

whose insights were welcome as potentially valuable for those dedicated to contributing directly to the physical form of the city- architects, urban planners, etc). The incrementally growing exhibition displayed the collected material within the installation on a long central table and two long walls. The exhibition 'concluded' with a public debate (regarding the collected works and their relevance for inclusion in a subsequent publication) - a 'performance' element adding to the interactive and discursive ambitions of the project and exhibition format. The participants of the debate included Risto Abramovski, Minas Bakalcev, Nikola Gelevski, Zvezdan Georgievski, Vlatko Korobar, Ivan Mirkovski, Maksim Naumovski and Daniel Serafimovski.

Over the past months, the project has continued to grow, with new contributions and ideas for its expansion and further development. The current inclusion in the project "Living libraries", curated by Filip Jovanovski and Ivana Vaseva, exhibits a selection of the collected material in the forms of files, book, drawings, photographs, maps and other works – arranged on both a table and a long wall, as part of an installation resembling a public reading room sited within the gallery space of SIA, the Serious Interests Agency in Skopje (and currently the 'permanent home' of the Open Archive).

Contemporary art has an intense interest in the archive, both in a literal and a metaphorical sense. This 'archival impulse' as Hal Foster calls it, raises questions regarding the possibilities of truth, testimony and mourning through the archive. The work of artists such as Gerhard Richter, Ilya & Emilia Kabakov, Tacita Dean, Susan Hiller, Bernd and Hilla Becher illustrate the powerful potential of the archival form as a witness of the artist's research and creative process (Richter's 'Atlas'), or as a depository for both realised, unrealised and unrealisable / utopian projects (Kabakov's 'The Palace of Projects' or 'Monument to a Lost Civilization'). The very notion of the archive embodies a sense of nostalgia, a certain yearning for the past and all that has been irretrievably altered or lost; at the same time, they suggest that 'looking back' could be important for looking forward. The book form of these 'collected works' is in itself a form of archive, also as art-works in their own right, rather than a mere documentation of past art projects.

-self-education editions published in the course of 2011, 2012 and 2013 by "The Ignorant Schoolmaster and his Committees" in Belgrade.

***The group ABS from Croatia, during this day, is visiting the Faculty of Fine Arts in Skopje within the drill lessons held by the teaching fellow Slobodanka Stevceska, M.A. (Paining Program of Studies) in the frames of their project "ABS Practice Imagined as a Class Struggle Within the Highly Educated Art Class".**

FRIDAY / 28.11

Location: **Serious Interests Agency (SIA)**

Title: ***Male Worker Female Worker / Male Artist Female Artist***

debate/ open reading group regarding the work of **a Curatorial Platform from Zagreb** and one of its segments – Practicum (Ivana Mestrov, Ana Kovacic)

Time: **12:00 h**

Reading group text: from the magazine "Cultural Worker", which was published from 1948 till 1991 by Prosveten sabor from Croatia, with an agenda oriented towards the worker's culture and its theoretical context as well as the emancipation of the workers through culture.

Location: **GEM Club**

Title: **READING: PEOPLE AS BOOKS**

Debate

Time: **18:00 h.**

The Burning of the Books

When the Regime commanded that books with harmful knowledge

Should be publicly burned and on all sides

Oxen were forced to drag cartloads of books

To the bonfires, a banished

Writer, one of the best, scanning the list of the Burned, was shocked to find that his

Books had been passed over. He rushed to his desk

On wings of wrath, and wrote a letter to those in power ,

Burn me! he wrote with flying pen, burn me! Haven't my books

Always reported the truth ? And here you are

Treating me like a liar! I command you!

Burn me!

Bertolt Brecht

This debate proceeds from the idea that the dominant political structure through its books, “capital projects” of translation and distribution of “top” literature, demonstrates strong power positions and easier control over young generations than professional, systematic and strategic investment in education and knowledge that will stimulate analysis of the social problems and critical thinking that should induce changes in the society. This leads to indifference towards true, critical inclusion in the society as well as neglecting literature that would promote differences, criticism and necessity of self-defining and self-education.

Therefore this debate is based on the deconstruction of the political knowledge in the educational process, knowledge as hidden or forbidden force, or in a word, about political power of knowledge considered from many (historical) aspects and presentation of models.

Moderator: **Robert Alagjozovski**, independent researcher, writer, critic and essayist (Skopje)

Participants:

Vladimir Milcin, director, executive director at Foundation Open Society – Macedonia (FOSM) and retired acting professor (Skopje)

Branimir Sojanovic, philosopher and psychoanalyst and part of “The Ignorant Schoolmaster and His Committees” platform (Belgrade)

Iskra Geshoska, culture theorist (Skopje)

Zarko Trajanoski, human rights activist (Skopje)

Filip Jovanovski, Ivana Vaseva, curators of the project “LIVING LIBRARIES: archives of citizen disobedience” (Skopje)

***The group ABS from Croatia, during this day, is visiting the Faculty of Fine Arts in Skopje within the drill lessons held by the teaching fellow Slobodanka Stevceska, M.A. (Painting Program of Studies) in the frames of their project “ABS Practice Imagined as a Class Struggle Within the Highly Educated Art Class”.**

SATURDAY / 29.11

Location: **Youth Cultural Center, Skopje**

Title: **READING BUILDINGS: GTC (City Trade Center) AS A BOOK**

Reading group

Time: **12:00 h.**

Therefore, I will say again, like government, like architecture

Boris Cipan

This whole titled READING BUILDINGS: GTC (City Shopping Mall) AS A BOOK denotes reading of the City Trade Center in Skopje and production of a book "111 theses about GTC", a book created and including public opinions and readings related to the meaning of this facility set in 11 theses by 10 significant thinkers of the contemporary architectural stage in the country.

Reading this facility in public, we will try to emphasize once more, reinvestigate and protect its undoubtedly cultural, social and artistic significance in a broad historical period that, during the last few years, has been trying to erase it, literally, physically from the Macedonian culture, by its almost barbaric "baroque" facade cover. Reading GTC as if it were a book, is an attempt to revive its, most of all, social value.

The 111 theses about GTC is a direct reference to the book "111 Theses About Architecture" by Boris Cipan and a symbolic act, reminding of some values that are not only being forgotten naturally, but intentionally deleted as well, actually by returning back, fine-tuning of the history via the classical period, about which Cipan will say, "The ensemble of the City Trade Center in Skopje is an architectural accomplishment that constantly brings excitement and urges thinking. It is not architecture in the sense of inherited and still alive errors used by the Kunst historians for educational purposes. While studying the "grand works" of the classical period and the Renaissance, we were incorrectly taught – to see decorative dust in architecture and not space, to appraise them esthetically and not sociologically. The credit is to be given to them for the fact that the society indifferently accepts every area it can move in, and then praise or criticize its appearance and with professional reviews of architects reward the architecture that "reached a high level of plastic shaping and significant achievement in the aesthetic expression".

The book "111 Theses About GTC" will present a minor handbook manual, a one-page initiation about the manner this facility should be read from one side, but from the other to create and sublimate a meaning which will communicate with the public in emphasizing cultural values, in this case the architecture of the city of Skopje, as the most endangered representative form of the current times.

(Cipan's text was published in Belgrade "Politika" on 22 May 1976, and taken over by the weekly "Globus").

AGENDA:

Moderator: **Martin Guleski**, Architect, University professor

12:00 – 12:40 h FIRST SESSION OF THESIS

1. Sociological-political context and typology

Product of planned or market economy?

Shopping Mall (mall), department store or covered market place?

2. Urban setting

Part of an idea or an individual idea?

Minas Bakalcev – Architect, Dean of Faculty of Architecture, Skopje

3. Artistic / stylish shaping

Spatial volume structure and shaping – clear European or hybrid language

Ana Ivanovska - Deskova – Assistant professor at Faculty of Architecture, Skopje

4. Author or collective project?

Dominika Boskova – Architect, University professor

13:00h - 14:30h – Debate

14:45 – 15:15h: SECOND SESSION OF THESIS

5. Cultural heritage

Donka Bardzieva – Trajkovska – University professor and President of Center for cultural heritage, Skopje

6. Complete or incomplete concept?

Mihajlo Zinoski – Architect, University professor at Faculty of Architecture

7. Programmed or live (evolving) organism?

Dejan Ivanovski (Architectri) – Associate expert at Faculty of Architecture and American College (UACS), Skopje

15:15 – 17:15h - Debate

17:15 – 17:45h: - THIRD SESSION OF THESESES

8. Interior/design

Misko Ralev – Architect, University professor

9. Anthropological and sociological aspect

Goran Janev – Anthropologist, associate professor at ISPJR (Institute for sociological, political and juridical research), Skopje

10. Initiative I LOVE GTC

Nikola Pisarev – Art historian and archeologist, activist

Danica Pavlovska - Architect

17:45 – 19:15h: Debate

Location: **CAC Mobile/ Montage Gallery**

Title: **ABS Practice Imagined as a Class Struggle Within the Highly Educational Art Class**

Time: **21:00h.**

- Presentation of the collaboration of the Group ABS from Croatia on the Faculty of Fine arts in Skopje within the drill lessons held by the teaching fellow Slobodanka Stevceska, M.A. (Painting Program of Studies), as part of their project “ABS Practice Imagined as a Class Struggle Within the Highly Educational Art Class”.