

INVERTED HOUSE



PROJECT SPACE
TATE MODERN
— LONDON

MUSEUM OF
CONTEMPORARY ART
— BELGRADE

Curated by Hannah Dewar and Una Popović

Graphic design by Tate Design Studio

Translation by Vesna Džuverović

Thanks to Andrej Dolinka and Marija Mitrić

This exhibition is a collaboration between Tate Modern,
London and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade

The curatorial exchange is supported by
Tate International Council

TATE
MODERN


MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART · BELGRADE

INVERTED HOUSE

TINA GVEROVIĆ & SINIŠA ILIĆ

PROJECT SPACE TATE MODERN
— LONDON

22 November 2013 – 9 March 2014

Another exhibition, forming the second half
of this collaborative project, will be shown at:

THE SALON OF THE MUSEUM
OF CONTEMPORARY ART
— BELGRADE

11 July – 14 September 2014

A NOTE ON THE EXHIBITION

Hannah Dewar, Tate Modern, London

Una Popović, Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade

This exhibition is the result of a collaboration between Tate Modern, London and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade and began with two curatorial residencies which took place in Belgrade in May 2013 and London in June. During these exchanges and the conversations that followed, we began to focus on the residency process itself as the key factor in our thinking about how to conceive an exhibition together, and make sense of our essentially common context.

A residency is the practice of working in a fixed geographical environment or location for a set amount of time. Its spatial and temporal parameters can be both constricting and liberating, just as the opportunity it offers to work in a new context can be both unsettling and eye-opening. The residency is usually tied to the notion of travel – a journey away from a familiar office or studio context – but as we discovered, its effects can be experienced as much at home as they are away.

Using the residency as a conceptual framework for the exhibition, we invited Tina Gverović and Siniša Ilić to undertake a residency of their own at Tate Modern in September 2013. Before, during and after this time, the new work and site-specific installation that fills the gallery space was conceived and produced. Exploring the nature of the residency as a creative process, this project is a response to the museum building, collection and visiting public, as well as a reflection on the larger international themes that connect both institutions within a global context.

As this booklet is being put together, the contents of the exhibition are yet to be finalised. To reflect this, we have included two artist-curator interviews – conducted before and during the residency in London – that serve as documents of each participant's thinking.

A Serbian language version of this booklet is available on the Tate exhibition webpage.

Primerak ovoga kataloga na srpskom jeziku, može se naći na veb stranici Tejta posvećenoj izložbi.

TINA GVEROVIĆ (b.1975 Zagreb, Croatia). Based between Dubrovnik and London, Gverović works with installation, drawing, painting, sound and video. Her work – often in the form of immersive, disorientating installations – engages with space, territory and identity and how these concepts are bound to invention and imagination. Gverović is currently completing a doctorate at Middlesex University in London and holds a BA in Fine Art from the Academy of Fine Arts, Zagreb and an MA from Jan van Eyck Academy, Maastricht. Recent exhibitions include: Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Rijeka; SE8 Gallery, London; Busan Biennale, South Korea; Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb; Lenbachhaus Kubus, Munich; MUU Gallery, Helsinki; and Forum Stadtpark, Graz. Gverović is the recipient of the Croatian Artists Association Award (2005) and the Radoslav Putar Award (2006), and has undertaken residencies at Baltic Art Center, Visby, Sweden (2012) and ISCP – International Studio and Curatorial Program, New York (2006).

SINIŠA ILIĆ (b.1977 Belgrade, Serbia, where he lives and works). Working with drawing, painting and installation, Ilić's practice addresses social phenomena and mechanisms, exploring forms of labour, tension and societal violence. He is a co-founder and member of TkH (Walking Theory) – an art and theory platform based in Belgrade – and has collaborated with artists, authors, performers and theoreticians on a range of projects. Recent exhibitions include: Calvert 22, London; Lofoten International Art Festival, Norway; Metelkova Museum of Contemporary Arts, Ljubljana; Open Space, Vienna; Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade; The Prague Quadrennial of Performance Design and Space, Prague; DEPO, Istanbul; and Mestni Muzej, Ljubljana. Ilić is the recipient of the Dimitrije Bašičević Mangelos Award (2006) and has undertaken residencies at Kamov, Rijeka, Croatia (2013), KulturKontakt, Vienna, Austria (2009), ISCP – International Studio and Curatorial Program, New York (2006) and Akademie Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart, Germany (2005). He holds a BA and an MA from the Faculty of Fine Art, Belgrade.

TINA GVEROVIĆ and **SINIŠA ILIĆ** began working together in 2006 whilst taking part in a residency program at ISCP – International Studio and Curatorial Program, New York as winners of the Radoslav Putar Award (Croatia) and the Dimitrije Bašičević Mangelos Award (Serbia). Since then they have collaborated on a number of exhibitions and artist books, creating works that deal with personal and social states of tension, uneasiness, fragility and confusion. Their immersive multi-media installations focus on the gallery space itself, the context in which the work is shown and the visitors' interpretation of it. Recent collaborative exhibitions include: Fordham Gallery, London; Arsenal Gallery, Białyostok, Poland; Project Biennial D-0 ARK Underground, Konjic, Bosnia and Herzegovina; Art Gallery, Belgrade Cultural Centre; 25th Nadežda Petrović Memorial, Čačak, Serbia; Nova Gallery, Zagreb; and Kontekst Gallery, Belgrade.

Conversation between Tina Gverović and Hannah Dewar
Zaton, Dubrovnik, Croatia / London, UK
September 2013

From: Tina Gverović
Sent: 03 September 2013 15:45
To: Hannah Dewar
Subject: Exhibition framework...

Dear Hannah,

What is your reasoning behind the choice of the residency as a conceptual framework for this exhibition?

Best,
Tina

From: Hannah Dewar
Sent: 04 September 2013 13:28
To: Tina Gverović
Subject: RE: Exhibition framework...

Dear Tina,

The project as a whole started for me with my residency in Belgrade, so in many ways I've come full circle in my thinking. The residency process is also something that's central to the agenda of the Project Space series at Tate; peer-to-peer collaborations with cultural organisations from around the world that are founded on two initial curatorial residency periods. Despite the obvious challenges of working with someone you've never met before, it's curiously not yet been addressed by any of the collaborations to date.

Having chosen to engage with the residency as our conceptual framework for the exhibition, we decided to invite yourself and Siniša to work at Tate Modern for a period of time, hoping to explore the particularities of this format of artistic production in a critical way and reflect upon our own ongoing collaboration. Considering the importance of collaboration to your practice, we decided that you would be ideal voices to add to the conversation.

On my last evening in Belgrade, my co-curator Una told me that she felt like she had had the opportunity to undertake a residency in her own city during the time that I was there, viewing it afresh with completely new eyes. Being a London resident yourself, I look forward to hearing whether you'll have the same experience.

Very best,
Hannah

From: Tina Gverović
Sent: 04 September 2013 21:51
To: Hannah Dewar
Subject: On residencies...

Hi Hannah,

In taking up a residency in the city where you live, I suppose one of the things to think about would be what sort of characteristics might be said to 'characterise' or define a place, which without recourse to stereotype might seem quite impossible? We can also talk of taking a residency in your own city as taking on the position of a 'foreigner', which for me has always been an interesting position to take. It leads to possible multiple readings and perceptions of places. In our work, both Siniša and I are interested in developing different, ungrounded and shifting angles on the topics we work with. The state of being ungrounded is ubiquitous: it's contemporary and familiar. In this case, ungrounded doesn't mean unfounded. In fact, here the subject is founded on (and formed through) all sorts of experiences and histories that are also themselves unmoored, so that ultimately an ungrounded subject might be more likely to experience state-less (geographical, not mental) reverie rather than disintegration and disenfranchisement.

What are your views on the residency as a creative process and how does it influence the way in which you and artists work?

Best,
Tina

From: Hannah Dewar
Sent: 05 September 2013 18:20
To: Tina Gverović
Subject: RE: On residencies...

Hi Tina,

By nature, the residency is a creative process with advantages and limitations. Its spatial and temporal parameters – working in a fixed geographical environment for a fixed amount of time – can be constricting and liberating, unsettling and eye-opening.

For me, the residency was a really productive experience: a chance to meet extraordinary people and to reflect on my own views and practices as well as

those of individuals working elsewhere. As for its influence on artists: that's probably a question for you rather than me, but I'm hoping it will be viewed as an opportunity – and a challenge.

Best,
Hannah

From: Tina Gverović
Sent: 05 September 2013 23:37
To: Hannah Dewar
Subject: Museum collection...

Hi Hannah,

This will be my first time spending a longer period of time in a museum environment, so answering this question is difficult for me since the residency hasn't yet begun.

Many artists these days make work within the framework of residencies which support production in terms of time and money. The work is often planned prior to their stay and it doesn't necessarily reflect upon it, which is an interesting aspect of contemporary art production. I recently worked on a film that deals with issues related to belonging whilst on a residency at Baltic Art Centre in Gotland, Sweden. After the stay, a number of different locations that I'd encountered and/or filmed (in Croatia and Sweden) started to overlap, which complicated the work slightly. The film is still in process, although there have already been various 'versions'. However, as I understand it, this forthcoming residency is as much about space for conversation and exchange as anything else.

Following on from this, it might be interesting to think a little about the museum as a space to think or work in, and to produce in – or for. Firstly, what is your interest in the museum and its collection as a framework for thinking – about research, interaction or larger international contexts? And secondly, you have – as a curator – the possibility to develop platforms for public debate and to create publics as much as provide for them. What 'platforms' or approaches to staging debate have you found to be especially valuable or productive, and how might residencies impact upon these?

Tina

From: Hannah Dewar
Sent: 06 September 2013 11:11
To: Tina Gverović
Subject: RE: Museum collection...

Dear Tina,

Working at Tate, whose collection is both a historical resource and a dynamic programme of contemporary conversations, I've long seen the museum collection as an important framework for thinking. It is, in the simplest sense, a research facility – a wealth of different international contexts – but it's the museum's capacity for public participation and engagement that is perhaps most interesting.

Considering the museum as characterised by three main components – the building, the collection it houses and its visitors – it is, in essence, a public resource whose primary function is interaction. There has always been much debate about the role and usage of the museum collection and these questions continue to interest me. How does the museum building function as a centre for activity, for example, and how are its resources negotiated on a daily basis by its public?

Within this context, one of the best platforms for debate is always one of open conversation between colleagues, partner institutions and international contexts – put forward by temporary exhibitions, collection displays and publications – with a means, as you say, to creating publics as much as providing for them. Whilst the Project Space series is a great place for these conversations, the residency format – which here involves bringing two active participants into the museum with a view to creating art instead of absorbing it – subtly alters the dynamics of space usage and raises a disjuncture between finished objects and works in progress. And as you've said, the residency as a space for production is as often an economic structure as it is a response to a specific locality.

Best,
Hannah

From: Tina Gverović
Sent: 07 September 2013 07:20
To: Hannah Dewar
Subject: Institutional parallels...

Hi Hannah,

Since in some sense we'll be working on ideas related to living or coping with 'unstable conditions' and ever-present 'temporary measures', alongside un-anchored people and places, it might be important to mention the fact that the main building of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade has been closed to the public for ongoing renovation work since 2007. It's itinerant in the same way that the semi-present figures in some of my paintings are.

With this in mind, and considering the apparent stability of Tate beside the fragility and uncertainty of many museums at present, can you say something about how the exhibition concept developed out of your experience of the parallels between both institutions?

Best,
Tina

From: Hannah Dewar
Sent: 09 September 2013 12:41
To: Tina Gverović
Subject: RE: Institutional parallels...

Hi Tina,

Whilst there are many similarities between each context, the museum building and collection – monumental, rich and architecturally significant in both cases – is, as you say, subject to vastly different social, political and economical structures in each location that govern its role and usage in unique ways. This, in turn, affects the way in which space is negotiated by different people for different purposes. What does the museum represent once its collection and public are removed from the equation? Whilst we have tried to reflect upon these parallels, drawn out of our collective experience, we have found the wider international context that we share to be more productive.

Best,
Hannah

From: Tina Gverović
Sent: 13 September 2013 09:50
To: Hannah Dewar
Subject: On closure...

Hi Hannah,
Perhaps we can close with this question...

Belgrade's Museum of Contemporary Art has been closed for some time, and yet continues to function nevertheless, supporting and instigating very interesting work. Can you envisage, or fantasise about, the possible implications and outcomes of a period of closure for Tate Modern?

Best,
Tina

From: Hannah Dewar
Sent: 13 September 2013 18:19
To: Tina Gverović
Subject: RE: On closure...

Hi Tina,

Your question is a curious one, as with our new building rocketing up on the south side, we are already experiencing the effects of closure – in some small way. With the Turbine Hall – the museum's iconic and loved feature – temporarily closed to the public, they are forced to navigate the architecture of the site in new ways, finding new strategies to engage with what it has to offer.

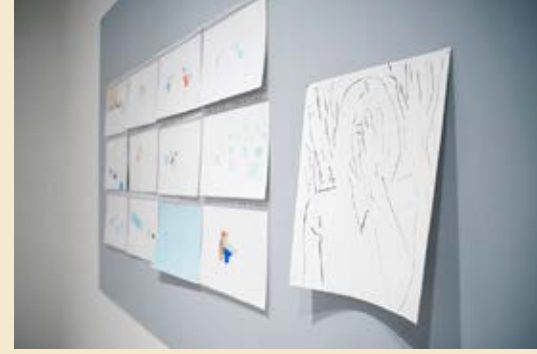
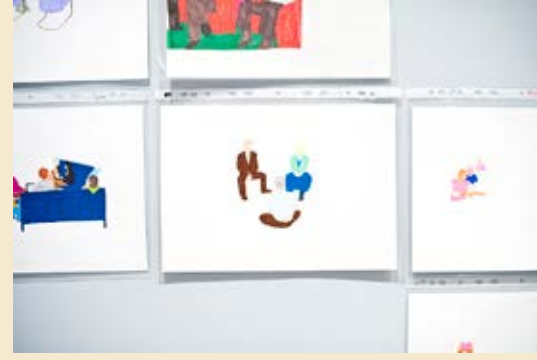
Very best,
Hannah



Tina Gverović and Siniša Ilić *Uncomparables. Forming a Suspicious State II* 2010, installation view, 25th Nadežda Petrović Memorial, Čačak, Serbia © Photography Ivan Petrović



Tina Gverović and Simiša Ilić *Uncomparables. Forming a Suspicious State 2010.* installation view, Gallery Nova, Zagreb, Croatia.
Exhibition design by Ben Cain © Photography Ivan Kuharić





Siniša Ilić *Sightseeing 1-6* 2013, acrylic and ink on paper, 180 x 240 mm © The artist





Tina Gverović *Parastates: Meltdown Shelter-Red* 2013,
gouache on prepared paper, 270 x 350 mm
© Photography Marko Ercegović



Tina Gverović *Parastates: Factories and Dancers* 2013,
gouache on prepared paper, 270 x 350 mm
© Photography Marko Ercegović



Tina Gverović *Parastates: Homeland Blue* 2013,
gouache on prepared paper, 270 x 350 mm
© Photography Marko Ercegović

Tina Gverović *Parastates: House Apart* 2013,
gouache on prepared paper, 270 x 350 mm
© Photography Marko Ercegović

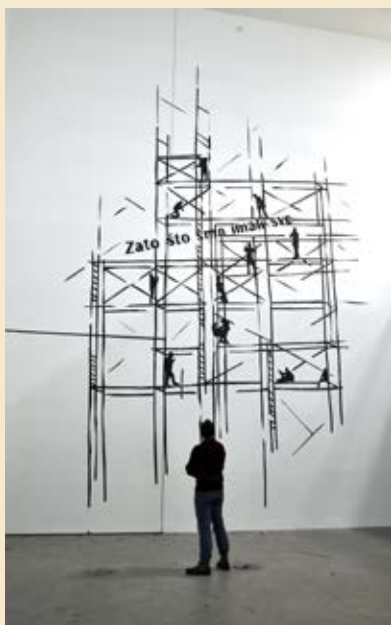


Tina Gverović *Parastates: Vulnerable Brown* 2013,
gouache on prepared paper, 270 x 350 mm
© Photography Marko Ercegović





Siniša Ilić *Stage 2012*, installation view,
Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade, Serbia.
© Courtesy of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade



Tina Gverović *Because We Had It All* 2012, installation view,
Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb, Croatia © Photography Ben Cain

Conversation between Una Popović and Siniša Ilić
Belgrade, Serbia / Zagreb, Croatia and London, UK
September – October 2013

UNA POPOVIĆ:

Siniša, you work across different mediums including drawing, installation and the performing arts. How did you decide upon such a combination of approaches, and could you describe your work from the point of view of the media that you use?

SINIŠA ILIĆ:

It's quite difficult for me to describe my work in terms of a particular media, and I feel that it's not hugely important. What interests me is the image itself – the narrative that surrounds it, what is taken away from it, the way it's presented in the mass media and how it reflects upon and responds to our reality and the current political moment. I am also interested in the ways in which we remember the images that we grew up with, their materiality and history. Basically, I am interested in the organisation of pictorial material, which includes working with space and the working processes themselves. Still, I do employ various media: *Uncomparables. Forming a Suspicious State* 2010 and *Precarious Adaptations* 2011 – my joint works with Tina Gverović – consider work as a space through which the audience moves without a clear plan, linking individual segments together to form narratives, be it through drawing, photography, sound or architectural space.

UP: Common themes in your work are uncertainty, instability, violence, desire and expectation. Would you define your work as political? Do you think art is still political today and to what extent do you think it should be?

SI: The topics you mention map out the problems of today: an intermittent, over-saturated and exhausting time that's full of tension. This isn't new, but it does make us nervous and aggressive because we are living in expectation whilst very little is changing – or, if it does change, it changes too slowly.

As a public activity, art is always political, but it's difficult to determine its measure or format. The interior of the Project Space that Tina and I are currently working on is a temporary context: a micro space, which deals with the personal and the geopolitical results of instability, disintegration of solid ground and dependence upon fragile states. There are architectural elements of deconstructed wall-like structures, recalling colour schemes of museum walls that date from another time. These form a type of space, and image, which is caught between being unregulated, disrupted, unruly, wild, out of control, and a place that is regulated, that is slowly growing into something.

UP: How would you define the position of an artist in Serbia? In the situation we're currently faced with – two major national museums in Serbia, the Museum of Contemporary Art and the National Museum, both in Belgrade, have been closed to the public for years due to building reconstruction work – the overall strategy surrounding culture is vague. How would you describe the role of an artist in our society – does it actually exist – and what strategies might be taken up by curators, artists and cultural workers that would be helpful at this stage?

SI: I would say that one of the roles of artists and cultural workers is to reflect on society in a critical way, examining its weaknesses and opening spaces for discussion. It seems to me that the position of an artist in Serbia is almost an invisible one, as is that of the arts in general. Useful strategies could involve education, solidarity, mutual exchange of information about the work that is being developed and some sort of unified front, but these are unlikely in today's society, oriented as it is towards self-interest and in each segment being completely dependent on the economic condition. The museums have been closed for too long, which raises the question of what the reality of art is today with a lack of institutions.

UP: Tina Gverović and yourself have received an invitation to present your collaborative works at Tate Modern. What does this opportunity mean to you?

SI: Art, artistic work and communications occur in different contexts and spaces. I am curious about the opportunity to exhibit at an institution such as Tate. This invitation was unexpected and is, in many ways, an important step in my artistic career and development in a world organised according to the rules of institutional success and recognition.

UP: Your work is often collaborative – involving collaboration with a variety of authors – and you have already worked with Tina Gverović a number of times. Do you make a distinction between individual and collaborative work, and does the collaborative process have an impact on your individual work?

SI: What I like about collaborative work is questioning the subject from different angles and perspectives, including the heterogeneous nature of the completed work. Within the activities and contributions of TKH (Walking Theory) – an art and theory platform from Belgrade of which I am a co-founder – I have been, amongst other things, constantly learning

about the procedures of collaborative work. On the other hand, individual work requires a different organisation of time and I experience that type of effort as being the most focused moments for my work, which can be later 'dismantled' and 'edited' in various ways.

My collaborative work with Tina concentrates on subjects of uncertainty, fragility and feelings of the lack of solid ground. Our collaborative practice is enriched with the contributions we receive through communication with artist Ben Cain and other colleagues and friends with whom we have worked in the past. Although collaboration is sometimes criticised as a pragmatic and economic approach to work, I find it tense and full of uncertainty, and see it as a space for both successes and failures; something that distracts us from ourselves.

UP: One section of the exhibition presented at Tate will include drawings and texts created by Tina and yourself and then exchanged via email. Why do you think this process is interesting, what does it record and what is its contribution?

SI: It's a process that reflects the time and conditions in which we live and work, based on improvisation, speed and mobility which, in this case, involves internet communication. Its main advantage – and, in some sense, its disadvantage too – is the notion of constant availability, always and everywhere: drawing and writing on your knees, in coffee shops, at the airport, sending emails at every hour of the day and night. This process might not be interesting and unusual in itself, but it does record different modes of work and communication – something that I believe occurred in your curatorial collaboration as well. On the other hand, it brings a nice slowness: slowness in reading emails, slowness in observing pictures, the pleasure of returning to the inbox and the anticipation of some new material. A characteristic of such work is its physical mobility: we carry it along with us, somewhere in our email, and it comes into being materially in different places that carry various atmospheres, thoughts, exhaustions and problems. The particular work we will be presenting for this exhibition was created during travels between Rijeka, Zaton, Belgrade, Zagreb, London, Kabelvår, Svølvær and Bremen. It is almost possible to track this journey by looking, for example, at the types of paper or paint that are being used, since the range of materials on offer varies from one place to another.

UP: The work in this exhibition doesn't hide the process by which it was made. The intention, rather, is to openly demonstrate the meeting of

different milieus, communities, opportunities and institutions, and to show how this process of meeting and connecting with others has led to the creation of the work on show. For this exhibition, Hannah and I – the curators – didn't simply select finished works to exhibit. Instead, we have had, from the very start, the intention of introducing the public to the direct processes of collaboration and communication that have characterised both our curatorial cooperation, and your artistic one. How do you view artist residencies and do you think that they have contributed to the potential of this exhibition or not?

SI: I believe that even short conversations say something about the working process and our positions – perhaps even more than we think or are comfortable with. As we are having these conversations at the same time as we are conceiving our work for the exhibition and making organisational arrangements, there is something live in this process. We are building the exhibition piece by piece. I am now getting familiar with the context for the exhibition, thinking about the topics that you have proposed, such as the collection, building and museum. Tina and I are trying to (re)organise the elements of the mural, the 'false' museum walls scattered around the space, the abstract or ready-made objects used by the institution itself, as well as the images of the 'samples' of society, nature, traces of violence and conflict, disconnection, and technological waste. From a very personal perspective, artist residences – generally speaking and in spite of all their problems – have a positive impact on my work, artistic articulation and production. This time has been no different – meeting people and contexts first hand is always a valuable experience.

Tina Gverović and Simiša Ilić *Inverted House* 2013,
gouache on prepared paper, 1220 x 1520 mm © Tate Photography

