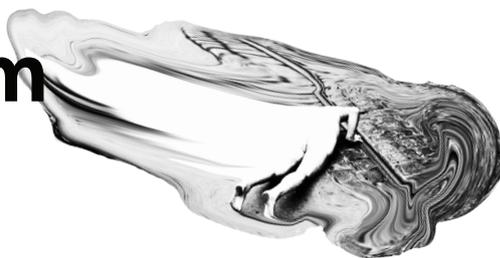


ústí nad labem house of arts



**Retrospective
Tomislav Gotovac**

**on Wednesday
December 13, 2017
at 6 pm**

**Crisis Anticipator
— Don't Ask Where
We're Going**

**in Ústí nad Labem
House of Arts
Faculty of Art
and Design at Jan
Evangelista Purkyně
University**

**14/12 2017 -
2/2 2018**

**Curators: Ksenija Orelj,
Nataša Šuković,
in cooperation with
Korou Girin**

**Open:
Tue - Sat
10 am - 6 pm
Admission free**

**Exhibition
commissioner:
Michal Koleček**

Ústí nad Labem House of Arts
Klíšská 1101/129a
Ústí nad Labem
Czech Republic
(next to the university dormitory K1, K2)
Trolleybus 52, 58, 59, bus 9, 17, 27
Stop 'Klíše - lázně'

For more information about the exhibition
and the side events visit www.duul.cz/en
or our Facebook page.

Retrospective Tomislav Gotovac
Crisis Anticipator – Don't Ask Where We're Going
14/12 2017 – 2/2 2018

Observation becomes a rhythm, a life in itself, with its light-whiteness and its dark-blackness, and a tempo that fills the rhythm of light and dark with silences and sounds/noises. Questions kept accumulating: What is a lie and what is the truth? Is it true that the devil often appears in the guise of God? (Point Blank, 1993)

The first retrospective of Tomislav Gotovac, aka Antonio G. Lauer (Sombor, 1937 – Zagreb, 2010), prepared in cooperation with the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Rijeka and the Tomislav Gotovac Institute in Zagreb, focuses on the persona of Gotovac as byword for *the avant-garde artist and hero of popular culture*, attempting to map out his influence on contemporaries and on younger generations of artists. In the words of Goran Trbulja, *Tom's body in art is huge*. The exhibition tries, nevertheless, to embrace it.

The retrospective exhibition *Crisis Anticipator – Don't Ask Where We're Going* meanders among the different media and varying phases of the artist. It combines more recent with older works, lesser-known with the key pieces. It compiles the artist's actions with the broader context from which they arose and which they also often influenced. The first Gotovac retrospective came into being seven years after his death. It gives the most comprehensive cross-section of his oeuvre to date. It takes on the form of a feature-length film, the main actor of which is also the director. The retrospective drops in to different genres, from the chase film, the political thriller or social comedy to the historical saga. *In fact, every great auteur non-stop shoots one and the same film, his film. I have done my best to make these actions just sequences of a single action that is called TOM IN PUBLIC SPACE.*

Making use of procedures that are close to the artist like associative montages, the contrastive confrontation of images or visual riddles, in the retrospective *Crisis Anticipator – Don't Ask Where We're Going* we endeavour to get up close to the author's cinematic feel for reality. We approach film as Gotovac's model for the creation of art, as well as a template for directing his own biography, where the borders between reality and fiction become blurred. We track the author's directorial approaches in cinematic and non-cinematic media – collage, photography, action and performance in intimate, public and media spaces. We follow up Gotovac's preoccupation with relations between film direction and the direction of reality, with a point of departure in apparently simple questions – what is there between us and what we are looking at? How does film shape reality? Who is the chief and who the assistant director? *Are we really into a period for which the storyboard has already been written?* From the cross-section of the artist's practice from 1954 to 2009 we have picked out both the more vehement and the more placid parts of his personal and collective biography, works in which an allusive crossword puzzle of the relation between individual and collective starts up in the foreground (such as *Gone with the Wind*, 2009). Linking up with this are experimental

and documentary works in which the fiction of the Hollywood dream factory comes up hard against the experience of reality in the age of socialism, or of post-socialism and the triumphant neoliberalism (as for example, *Don't Ask Where We're Going*, 1966, and *Four Monkeys*, 2008). What follows is a collage series that started in 1964 and the structural films (*The Forenoon of a Faun*, 1963; the trilogy *Straight Line (Stevens-Duke)*, *Blue Rider (Godard-Art)*, *Circle (Yutkevich-Count)*, 1964) in which the background structure of reality is stripped bare and turned into 'a drama of watching'.

With a set-up looking like the interior of a small cinema, in the sequence *Don't Ask Where We're Going* we present a surprising recapitulation of the historical period from the sixties to the beginning of the millennium. In three filmic considerations that are tinged with black humour, the spectres of the past emerge as the causes for and components of today's instability and the uncertainty of political crises. The collection of these films (*Ella*, 1966; *Don't Ask Where We're Going*, 1966; *Dead Man Walking*, 2002) prompts the incessant posing of the question of where we are going, despite the so-called certain answers.

The figure of *the lone rhino in flight from the hunters taken from Hawks' movie Hatari*, to which Gotovac dedicated his performance *Lying Naked on the Asphalt, Kissing the Asphalt (Zagreb, I love you!)*, alludes to the need for the autonomy of the artist, for independence from the system in which he works and creates. Gotovac is presented in a play with predetermined roles, mechanisms of prohibition and restriction. *Human life at the end of the 20th century is the product of someone's wishes, scripts and at the end direction... The artist is ... the one who attempts to swim up against the avalanche that is coming crashing down. Exactly, swims in vain.*

An important theme in the work of Tomislav Gotovac is also the research into the manner of re-shaping reality via the opposition of artistic to political direction. This principle, summed up in Gotovac's ultimate project PARANOIA VIEW ART presented in a separate sequence that works as a retrospective within a retrospective. In PARANOIA VIEW ART, we pick out the archive of documents in which the artist reconstructs his own history through numerous personal papers, documentation of works and official documents. With his own figure and work, he opposes collective myths and the writing of history according to the recipe of the ruling structures, reducing the objectivity of the official viewpoint to the absurd.

The author's systematic principle of rearranging the hierarchies of importance are given in the story *Krajiška 29: Tomislav Gotovac aka Antonio G. Lauer*. The artist's retreat, his working and living base is mediated as a total artwork, dedicated to seemingly unprepossessing and subsidiary samples of reality. With excerpts from *Krajiška 29* we thematise Gotovac's lifelong project for recombining the view, a subtle methodological system for gathering and reshaping apparently unimportant details of personal history that easily get lost in the peripheral vision.

Another of the possible interpretative lines of Gotovac's work focuses on works in which Gotovac exposes his naked body as primary statement of freedom and tests out its acceptability in various spaces –public, gallery, media or political environment (*Integral*, 1978; *Foxy Mister*, 2002). Instead of images, objects or photographs that are usually to be found in galleries, in the set-up in the offices we have opted for naked body of the artist, invoking the question about what content makes us feel most awkward.

Moving along the marginal figures of the jolly weirdo, the exalted preacher, embittered curser, witty provocateur, artist-paranoiac, obstructor of public peace and order, Gotovac, irrespective of the difference of media expressions, social and political references or artistic dedications built into his work, remained consistent to the anarchic principle. *Prohibitions are a part of the scenario and a part of stage directing... So, why not violate them? ...As a parameter, you must set a goal not to hurt others intentionally... The way that some people who have authority do. This is the difference in attitude between people who have authority and us who do not have it. We, who do not have the power, try to fuck them.*

We have orientated the exhibition *Crisis Anticipator –Don't Ask Where We're Going* to the artist's strategies for bringing disorder into the appearance of order with which social structures attempt to conceal their own slippages and to keep up the illusion of control. We highlight Gotovac's examination of the relations between individual on one side and authority, father figure, political leader, owner of a media empire, a film producer or *global director*. Alongside the artist's persona as performer and action artist and his film personifications, we present his caricaturing of political actors that irrespective of their ideological sign speak softly but always carry a big stick. We identify his anarchistic principle in the ways in which he avoids any unambiguous reading of his own art, being placed into leftist or rightist camps.

In the title of the exhibition itself, *Don't Ask Where We're Going*, we are referring to the metaphor of the individual sated with ideologies, screened through the phantom depiction of the man-surface that is led or that leads in a dubious direction. The title has been borrowed from Gotovac's first acted and experimental film of 1966, the first in which the music of Glenn Miller (American Patrol) and ideological symbols (cross, turned into swastika) appear, working as a suggestive reminder of the unstable character of reality and the facile grasping for its illusions.

In the retrospective *Crisis Anticipator – Don't Ask Where We're Going* we endeavour to capture Gotovac's meandering along ideologically delineated fields and his skilled bypassing of institutional rules, making current the question of whether the artist can remain unpredictable and subvert the interests of the ruling establishment for his own benefit. In the artist's words: *The general public has to be given a chance to understand everything ironically, and not bindingly. Everything I did on the streets was my conflict with reality in some passive manner, for I never forced anyone to do the same. Ultimately, I think it must have been fun to watch*

me. I put myself into an awkward position so that for others it might have been more pleasant.

With his complex oeuvre Gotovac sketched out the crisis situations that obsess us today, the fascinating and disturbing deceptiveness of words and pictures, the falsification of history, political imbalance, the schizophrenic effect of the mass media. In parallel to his works, with the basis in known facts and the development of suspect and paranoid elements, riddles and ambiguities, he drew in possible shifts and deviations from predetermined directions and rules of movement. His naked or disguised body became an artistic occasion for the examination of what is hidden in everyday life, measuring oneself up against the official stories and recombining their directions. *Crisis Anticipator* or, put more simply, provocateur of illusions of reality, even today does not let us slip into the mere appearance of public order and peace, but does a persistent striptease of the political system.

The project is part of the programme of the European Capital of Culture, Rijeka 2020, and the programme line *Seasons of Power*.

The exhibition could not have been displayed without the loans from the following collections: Collection of Sarah Gotovac and the collection of the Tomislav Gotovac Institute in Zagreb.

Ksenija Oreli, Nataša Šuković

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