

Someone believes that their steps are led by ascendants and conjunctions of cosmic objects. For others, the starting point of their destiny lies at the crossroads of “big” history and “small” events related to a specific family or a specific person in terms of time, space, society, politics and culture. So who and what exactly determines who we are? As who we were born and whom we become during our lives?

No doubt it is our parents, grandparents, and siblings. Our teachers, classmates, friends, colleagues, partners, the local community, and the relationships we build with and within it. Our home. But what does it mean — home?

The perimeter walls determining the floor plan of the building, the type of windows, and the roof? The energy pulsating within the space, the loop of establishing our environment, and endless (even hated) cherishing? The accumulated things necessary to maintain our living standard? A scent? An echo of the songs sang during the morning shower? The neighbours' barking dog? The taste of food calibrated according to the preferences of the family members? The mist rolling over the valley in the morning? The sun that crosses the horizon at the same spot every day of the year? The crunch of the waxy shiny peel of an apple plucked in the hillside orchard, and the drops of the sticky juice running down the chin and into the sleeve? And what if it all disappears...

For no obvious reason at all. Maybe because you start moving. No matter if the movement is initiated by internal motives or external circumstances. If we leave our home, will we stay whom we were? And will those who move in after us perceive their new home – the house / the settlement / the city – in the same way? Where does the pulsating energy go if the house remains abandoned and gradually decays? Looking for the answers to these – and many more – questions is the author of the exhibition project called July 32, Marija Mandić, a doctoral student of Visual Communication at the Faculty of Art and Design of the Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem.

This Serbian artist who lives and works in Prague and Novi Sad visited the places her family members used to call “home”, originally spread across the former Yugoslavia

and now are located in several Balkan states. The questions she asked herself at the beginning of her artistic research were related to the above-mentioned intersection of general history, specific historical events, and the destinies of the individual participants of these events. At the same time, she asked her relatives to participate in the research and to draw situation plans of their former houses, monitoring the extent to which the current situation, the historical reality, and the projection of the relatives' memories and ideas matched.

The visitors of the exhibition are left to decide whether they will try to connect with their own broken family ties and forgotten historical contexts after seeing the installation. The author has no doubt that it is necessary to humbly listen to the past and have an open dialogue with it.

ZDENA KOLEČKOVÁ

The exhibition of a young photographer Marija Mandić (*1990, Serbia) entitled July 32 presents selected photographs from the cycle of the same title. The imaginative title itself refers to recalling distant memories in the current space-time and attacks the idea of the possibility of accurate capturing of the events of the past. Both human memory and landscape change over time. A non-existent date in the calendar speaks about the desire for material visual projection of memories.

The work displayed in Gallery 2 consists of two parts. The first part represents the scan of an older personal document of citizenship with the inscription “place for a photograph”; when examining it, we become aware of history while having a feeling that certain representation — a specific image — is lacking. The artist allows us to fill the empty space with images of our own and to activate our imagination.

The impulse for creating the second part of the work was the author’s interest in family history and the places where her grandparents come from. It is based on the idea that the place and the environment we grow up in co-create us as unique individuals. They become a reminder, and that is why we carry them with us in our memories throughout our lives.

Marija Mandić worked with the family photo archive and especially with the stories told by her grandparents. She listened intently to their stories of what their native and now distant region that they had left used to look like. The author recorded their memories in short descriptive texts. These texts subsequently served to her as a guide for finding and visually depicting the places in their memories located in the former Yugoslavia. She visited sites in Croatia, Bosnia, Montenegro and Kosovo, the ones her grandparents had described to her, sometimes in an overly detailed way. That’s how the cycle of black and white photographs accompanied by handwritten text — a guide to the mentioned places — emerged.

The photographic cycle July 32 represents the collision between the personal projections that we see in our mind’s eye when listening to the stories told by others, and the actual image affected by the ravages of time.

Marija Mandić encountered this interconnection of the inner and the outer worlds even as she was working on the photographic cycle: “The discrepancies in what I have found and what I have learned about those place from my grandparents, revealed hidden narratives that tell about demographic, urban, and, by extension, also rural and social changes, confirming that these dislocations between remembrance and the actual situation of the place unquestionably show entanglement between the private and the public spheres of the site.” The feeling of certain disappointment is replaced by the realization that we are balancing between the existing memories and the uncontrollable transformation of the world. In her creative work, Marija Mandić deals with individual and communicative memory and their mutual relationship in space.

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