

**DARJA BAJAGIĆ**

NEW GALERIE

Selected Press

Kunstanmeldelse: «The Banned Exhibition» dyrker død, ødeleggelse og ubehag. Den er både vellykket og overraskende tilgjengelig

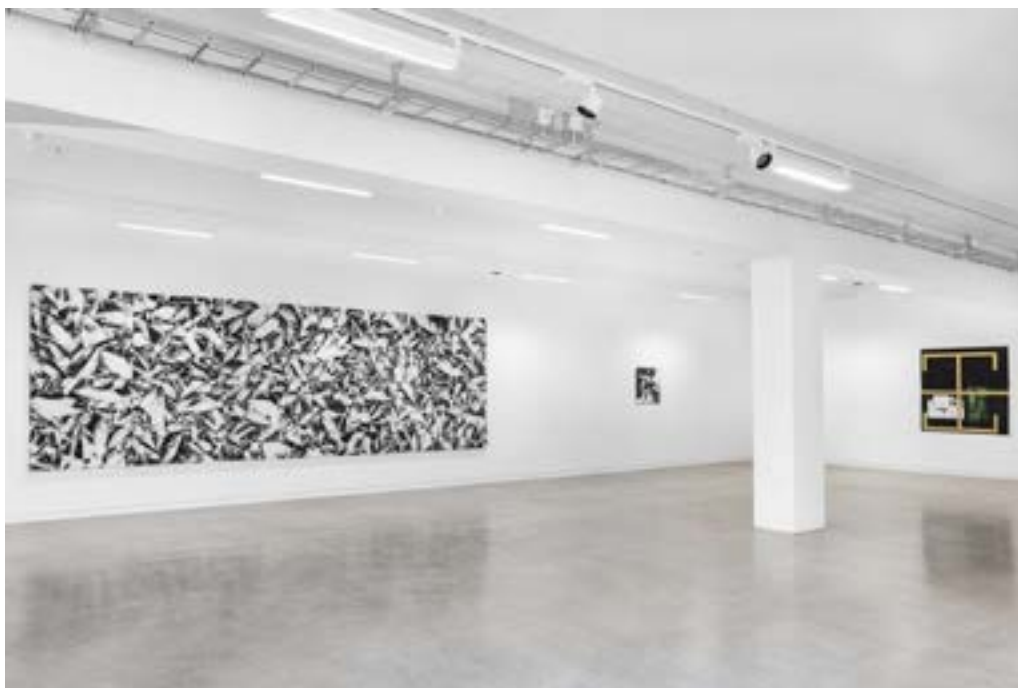
# Aftenposten

## **Review: «The Banned Exhibition» cultivates death, destruction and discomfort. It is both successful and surprisingly available.**

«Nazi art» too unpalatable for New York is exhibited in Oslo.

Yngve Sikko  
art reviewer

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Boyd Rice's greatest work brings more associations to the trash in the office than to Nazism and Satanism, but facilitates Darja Bajagić's more direct art.

In 2018, New York's Greenspon gallery was to exhibit work by the duo Darja Bajagić and Boyd Rice. The show never opened. After a storm of what the gallerist, according to *Artnews*, [described as both threats and criticism](#), Amy Greenspon decided to cancel the exhibition, prompting widespread debate and coverage in several [major art journals](#).

The reason was that one of the two, Boyd Rice—artist, noise musician, Satanist and notorious provocateur—has, among other things, made misogynistic comments in the past.



Darja Bajagić's «Graveyard of Happiness (after Simone Martini's 1317 The Altar of Saint Louis of Toulouse)» (2020)

## Facts: Art Exhibition: The Banned Exhibition

And worse: he is known to have figured with prominent American white power leaders on several occasions during the 1980s.

Despite this, Boyd has rejected all accusations of being a Nazi. In a 2012 interview with FACT magazine, he claimed to [bear no political convictions](#), and that he only posed for the photoshoot with Bob Heick, leader of the American Front because he was promised free beer.

This didn't convince his critics. The New York exhibit was canceled, and generated a complex debate regarding the expectation for art to be morally compliant, in relation to the brewing phenomenon of cancel culture

Now, the exhibition is on view in Oslo—behind a heavy black door in a backyard just off Alexander Kielland's Plass at Galleri Golsa. The exhibition has been titled *The Banned Exhibition*.

## Collages and violent stitches



Darja Bajagić's «Graveyard of Happiness (after Simone Martini's 1317 The Altar of Saint Louis of Toulouse)» (2020)

Despite the press release's emphasis on Boyd's role in the show, it is Darja Bajagić's works that steal the attention inside the gallery. The young artist from Montenegro is buzzing with references to Nazism, occultism, melancholy, religious iconography, internet pornography, and violence.

Nor is she completely uncontroversial. In the past, she has collaborated with a convicted American Neo-Nazi who is imprisoned, among other things, for killing a pedophile priest.

This is not art that tries to inspire or please.

All of Bajagić's works are collages. Various motives and materials are glued and sewn together with violent stitches. The stitches are methodical, almost reckless. They are more reminiscent of surgical stitches than textile seams. has been titled *The Banned Exhibition*. But it is also beautiful as the stitches repeat themselves again and again.

However, the collages are not insistent. They are perceived as open to interpretations, even though she invites the viewer through clear references.



Darja Bajagić «Uninterrupted Unreality: A Betrayal of Nothingness» (2020)

## Is it really okay to be here?

With Boyd, it's quite the opposite. His most striking works are reminiscent of close-ups of crumpled paper. There is nothing explicitly political about them. Perhaps it is true that he has no political convictions? His art nourishes the doubt.

The fact that Boyd did not exhibit in New York had more to do with the question of who within the art scene deserves a platform based on reputational standards, rather than a judgement of the content to be shown or presented.

It violates a basic principle of letting art and arguments speak for themselves. At the same time, there is a difference between art that creates discomfort when exhibited and art that is not allowed to be exhibited.

This is the problem that has been carried over from the show's previous iteration, and exists at the heart of the show at Galleri Golsa.

It is, formally, almost entirely black and white, though there are great contrasts in expression among the works on view. One can feel a sense of ambivalence as a viewer. Is it really okay to be here? Is it ok to give in to artists who, apart from allegations of neo-Nazism, fetishize violence and hatred?

The answers are not provided, the questions themselves seem to be a necessary part of the exhibition.



Darja Bajagić's «Untitled Study (Cross of Restraint; Weapon from Picture 52)» (2019)

## The hatred that permeates society

One thing that is certain, however, is that things are not always how they seem. References that appear throughout a selection of Bajagić's work in *The Banned Exhibition* include police evidence from a trial against the National Socialist Underground (NSU). Between 2000 and 2007, the German neo-Nazi group murdered ten immigrants. These are the best works in the show.

Expressions which lay at the intersection of what is real and what is staged seem to resonate with how we understand the world today through mass media. They provoke thoughts that linger. Bajagić's "Untitled Study (Picture 6: Jacket of the injured with considerable damage to the arm)" (2019) is a prime example of this.

For a long time, the NSU killings were pinned on the Turkish mafia, but it was not until 2011 that information concerning who was really involved had been learned. How could this have gone on for so long before the authorities made any significant progress? [The trial revealed](#) a possible connection with the German police, which led to a national scandal.

This is precisely the arena in which *The Banned Exhibition* is situated. It does not bother voicing yet another opinion aligned with the tired debate linked to the scenario the images in certain works point to, but reminds us that darkness permeates a large portion of our society. It's just that we don't always see it. At Golsa we do.

## THE POWER & VITALITY OF THE IMAGE: AN INTERVIEW OF CONTROVERSIAL ARTIST DARJA BAJAGIĆ

IVIVIAN CHUI

Darja Bajagić is a Chicago-based artist who has become known in recent years for canvases that depict harrowing violence. Her works pull together fragments culled from a panoply of sources including pornography websites, religious iconography, murderabilia stores and sensationalized news reporting of grotesque murders. Brazenly explicit, these compositions hold a mirror to a sinister world that, despite its aspirations towards liberal advancement, is inflicted by the fetishism of cruelty and exploitation. Whereas others use their practices as platforms to assert political and social stances, Bajagić has been—and continues to be—steadfastly opposed to taking obvious moral stances in her work. While her intentional ambiguity often attracts misinterpretation and ire, the artist's seemingly compulsive attraction to gore and licentiousness stems from a desire to amplify truths about human nature's darkest inclinations.

Bajagić's practice, unsurprisingly, provokes controversy. She first gained notoriety seven years ago as an MFA student at the Yale School of Art, where the faculty critiqued her appropriation of hardcore pornography and urged her to seek psychotherapy.

Their derision, however, only emboldened the artist and it was at this juncture that she became increasingly fascinated with gruesome tabloid stories of young women who had been abducted, raped and murdered in monstrously obscene ways. Bajagić took interest not only in the brutality of these cases but also in their depiction by news agencies and on the Internet. She saw a likeness between the media's pairing of horrific headlines with innocuous photographs of conventionally beautiful female subjects, and the iconic representations of Orthodox saints who were, in her words, "victims of tortuous realities." The artist deepened her research by delving into gore websites where murderers and online bystanders peddle graphic portrayals of appalling homicides.

Filled with such images, her canvases force viewers to encounter the most debased strains of 21st-century voyeurism.

Over the past few years, Bajagić has drawn further contempt, to say the least, for turning her attention to the global explosion of far-right nationalism. Her work *Bucharest Molly* (2016), which features a woman wearing 'Heil Hitler' jeans while holding a Swastika-labeled teddy bear, was infamously removed from a 2016 group exhibition at the namesake city's Galeria Nicodim. She had stumbled upon the original image while casually combing the web for interviews with metal bands and appropriated it as a response to the exhibition's objective of examining "the aesthetics of paranoia and evil across a spectrum of cultural skeletons." Though the curator denied Bajagić's public allegations of censorship, its removal begged the question: under what circumstances should a work be considered too offensive for public presentation?

Far more inflammatory, however, was Bajagić's decision to participate in a two-person exhibition with Boyd Rice at New York City's Greenspon Gallery in the fall of 2018. Rice, more widely known by his music moniker NON, is an incendiary figure who has been well-regarded within countercultural circles for seminal contributions to the industrial noise scene. The iconoclast's decades-long tendencies toward fraternizing with white supremacists and engaging in misogynistic acts, however, sparked fury from an artist-run listserv, which in turn ignited heated protests and prompted the exhibition's cancellation before it ever opened.

Although most of the public's anger was harnessed towards Rice, the debacle caused an intense scrutiny of Bajagić's personal background, calling into question not only her own duplicity in actively choosing to collaborate with the elder artist but also her possible ties to white supremacism. Slated projects were further cancelled; former supporters either voluntarily cut their ties or were pressured into doing so; she regularly received hate mail. The enmity caught Bajagić by surprise, as Rice's monochromatic paintings had previously been exhibited and even received positive reviews without drawing any provocation. Of the backlash, the artist says, "I don't want to throw anyone under the bus with specific examples but, even today, I do feel that I get treated as if I have cooties. [It's] very juvenile, considering most of these people never saw the show (including images of the artworks) nor had they tried to learn about what was actually contrib-



The artist Darja Bajagić photographed by her mother Sekana Radović in her Chicago studio.

uted—what the thematics of the show were.”

True to her defiant nature, Bajagić never issued a public apology and instead posted images of the censored works on Instagram. In hindsight, she feels that the scandal proved to be fruitful in that it provoked critical conversations about censorship within the context of the upending anger and disillusionment that may very well come to define our generation’s time, as well as about the current politicized climate of hyper-sensitivity. In an audacious move that is sure to further displease critics, she and Rice will be making a second attempt at exhibiting the Greenspon works, alongside more recent ones, this month at Oslo’s Golsa Gallery. To her, those who decried the original exhibition had failed to think critically before giving in to a collective knee-jerk reaction. The artist’s decision to realign with such a polarizing figure represents a personal stand against the art community’s rejection of practices that do not conform to a reductive mode of binary thinking. Bajagić found hypocrisy and danger in the perceived desire to “sanitize” and to “infantilize” complex subjects. Even in the face of intensely nuanced criticism, she rejects the notion that artists should only make creative decisions that can be easily digested and understood to have an uplifting, empowering or easily marketable political agenda.

In actuality, the series of works originally intended for Greenspon highlighted the barbarism of far-right terrorists, in the same way that Bajagić’s earlier works uncovered humankind’s shamefully instinctive fascination with the extreme sadism of rapists and murderers. The series revolves around a woman named Beate Zschäpe, a member of a German neo-Nazi group who was convicted in early 2018 for executing ten racially-motivated homicides. Police authorities had discovered a gloating video created by Zschäpe and her accomplices, which merged grisly images of the murders with an episode of *The Pink Panther* cartoon. Whereas news agencies opted to use photographs that portray the trio as maniacal and calculating, Bajagić chose others from younger stages of their lives, where they appear eerily pedestrian. The artist framed these compositions with disjointed versions of the Greek key—a motif commonly used in architecture and design that also exists as an emblem for Golden Dawn, a different neo-fascist political party based in Athens. Though absent of any obvious visual cues that might decry her subjects’ wickedness, Bajagić’s intentions—to reveal the insidious ways in which normality often masks revolting malevolence—is projected by the works’ titles, such as *Beate*, the stony-faced nymphomaniac power-freak, projecting an aura of normality with *Susann and Beate*—helpful, kind, nice, obliging, primitively aggressive and vulgar (both works 2018).

The argument that Bajagić’s lack of an easily discernible moral compass equates to not only a flagrant disregard for sensitivity but also a shirking of the artist’s—or, more profoundly, the white artist’s—responsibility to take a stance against traumatic imagery is certainly valid. Yet Bajagić’s practice may also rightly be interpreted as an anthropological study of human evil, not only of its manifestations but also of our collective reactions to its portrayal. While it goes without saying that our society should not tolerate white supremacy any more than it should the violent exploitation of women, Bajagić’s takeaway is that abhorrence can give new impetus to critical dialogue about sensitive topics, if we allow ourselves to meaningfully contemplate its existence. She refutes the presumption that stifling unsavory opinions and images will repress evil in this world; on the contrary, these forces thrive in the dark corners to which we turn a blind eye. Her work therefore deliberately confronts and offends viewers with the violence, hatred and depravity that most would rather not see. Ever merciless in her delivery, Bajagić’s practice is an assertion of a self-imparted responsibility to expose truth, no matter how unpleasant. As she puts it, “Provocation may be uncomfortable, but it’s necessary.”



A detail from the artist’s *Screenshot at 13:49/15:02 of the NSU’s “Pink Panther” confession video* (2018)

## DARJA BAJAGIĆ AND THE POLITICS OF THE PROFANE

interview by Adam Lehrer - photographs courtesy of Darja Bajagić

Where the political left was once the clear bastion of free speech and expression in the U.S., it could be argued that the new left silences thought and speech perceived as antithetical or offensive to its values almost as much as the right wing does, or did. This is a problem for culture, and evidently, for art. “Political correctness,” says Slovenian philosopher and cultural theorist Slavoj Žižek, “is a desperate attempt by the public norms to tell you what is decent, what is not.” What Žižek suggests here is that political correctness can be harmful in its ability to obscure the truth and dilute public discourse; by sanitizing rhetoric we sanitize cultural meaning. This climate of over-the-top, politically correct theatrics has infiltrated the art world; art’s job is ultimately to push back on societal taboos and interrogate prevailing norms. Good art is almost always offensive to someone.

I first came across Montenegro-born, Chicago-based artist Darja Bajagić at the Independent Art Fair in 2017. Bajagić uses (mostly) monochromatic acrylic painted backgrounds to transform images found within the dark corners of the internet and other non-web sources. Screen-printed atop her canvases are symbols of evil or complex/dual meanings, pornographic images, and pretty girls and boys. Subsequent research reveals these girls and boys to be victims and/or perpetrators of abductions or murders. Bajagić also refuses to over-explain her work, nor does she seek to moralize it (responding to a reporter about her use of a Greek meander motif in recent works was met with Bajagić’s claim that her work is about “the banality of evil”). Her stance has led to her work being misread and mischaracterized. While Bajagić was attending Yale’s Painting and Printmaking program, the Dean suggested she seek professional help. Years later she found herself being censored when her piece Bucharest Molly was removed from an exhibition at Galeria Nicodim.

The cancelation of a duo show between Bajagić and industrial music pioneer, writer, and artist Boyd Rice at Greenspon Gallery reveals the toxicity of political correctness in the art world. Stemming from revelations of numerous events in Rice’s background, such as his usage of fascist imagery in “Non” (an industrial music project), these “revelations” caused an artist-resource listserv entitled “Invisible Dole” to ultimately threaten the gallery’s owner, Amy Greenspon (though it remained installed and was shown privately to those that wanted to see it.) The animus towards Rice was eventually transferred to Darja as well. What they don’t understand about Bajagić is her belief in art’s ability to create conflict, to provoke thought, and to deal with the complexities of the world with nuance and clarity.

If the art world keeps presenting this utopian, groupthink version of the world, art itself is going to collapse. Artists like Darja Bajagić make us look at what we might find ugly, distasteful, and upsetting. I want to be upset. Please offend me. When you offend me, you are forcing me to think for myself. Being offended is healthy. Darja and I corresponded over the Internet to discuss this fiasco as well as her work at large.

**ADAM LEHRER:** I assume you knew that showing alongside Boyd Rice at Greenspon might ruffle some feathers, but did you anticipate at all that the show would be so offensive to others that it might actually get cancelled?

**DARJA BAJAGIĆ:** I did not expect any feathers to be ruffled. Only two years ago, in fact, Boyd took part in a group show at Mitchell Alpus Gallery. So, I definitely did not foresee the show’s cancellation. The show itself did not cause offense; what generated offense was a series of falsities spread on a “private” listserv by a number of terribly misinformed “art world” persons. As a result of subsequent harassment directed at the gallerist by a select number of those aforementioned persons, including threats to the gallerist’s well-being as well as the gallery’s, the show’s opening was cancelled. Nevertheless, it was installed, and viewable by appointment.

**LEHRER:** How did you come into contact with Boyd Rice? Had you been a fan of his music and writing? What was it about showing work alongside of him that you thought would be interesting?

**BAJAGIĆ:** Chris Viaggio, the curator of our two-person, approached me with the idea in January of 2018. It goes without my saying it that Boyd is a pioneering artist. I’ve always appreciated the ambiguousness of his output. Rather than providing any answer(s) to what he re-presents, he functions as a big question mark—forcing the [concerned] individual to answer their own question(s). They must answer it. This modus operandi is now, more than ever, relevant and necessary in the face of the rising, violent insistence to identify and [over-]define to the point of infantilism.

**LEHRER:** Your work has often been misread and mischaracterized. Are you finding that it’s getting increasingly difficult to show work that is challenging and at the same time not in line with the typical “art friendly” topics of the day, such as identity or inclusivity?



**BAJAGIĆ:** Yes. First, They Came for the Art. What's remarkable is that, this time, it's coming from within [the "art world"]. Artists are fighting to censor other artists. It's truly absurd. They are executing what they claim to be fighting against, and using Gesta-po tactics. Their democracy is, in reality, totalitarianism. They are cowards, essentially. They fear the unknown (we have come back to the violent insistence to identify and [over-]define). What they fail to understand, time after time, is that the subject of art is not the artist. On top of this, it must be acknowledged that, today, the motive of profit outweighs the pursuit of art, in its truest sense. Opportunism is a widespread disease. Complexity is unfashionable, especially if it risks affecting [your] financial stability; an added incentive to degrade [the status of art]—as have we, so has art become reduced. Vapid ornament.

**LEHRER:** No longer can people seem to grapple with the fact that a depiction is not an endorsement. Obviously, when Pasolini made Salò he wasn't saying "I like fascism and child abuse," but he was using the extreme violence as a way to show how power destroys both the victim and victimizer. You, like Pasolini, don't take a moral stance on the work, which further complicates readings of it. Do you ever fear that if the art world keeps moving in this direction there just won't be any room for work like yours anymore?

**BAJAGIĆ:** It is evident that there is a pathetic tendency towards greedy mediocrity. There is an inability or unwillingness to deal in any depth with complexity. Now, when it is needed most, complex systems of aesthetics, or even provocations, are suppressed. That certain things are uncertain or unknown is simply an impossibility and certainly not permissible; you see, Google has all of the answers—as one listserv member wrote, "With one quick google [sic] of Darja and a look at her instagram [sic] I found some pretty questionable stuff." This included my following the account of Neue Slowenische Kunst on Instagram—clearly they are pitifully unenlightened. They go on to say, "To be clear: I have never met her, have nothing against her and know little about her work. That said, fuck Nazis, White Supremacists and Nationalists. Why is she using this imagery with seemingly no indication that it is not in support of it?". And there you have it. They admit to knowing "little" about my practice but are nevertheless put-out due to my lack of [an indication of] support towards my artwork's content, which they are only capable of superficially labeling as "Nazi, White Supremacist(s) and Nationalist(s)" imagery. Symptoms of a myopic perspective. This mania for a sterile, essentially dead, art is detestable. Art should not exist within a zone of safety—this would effectively eliminate its true efficacy and potentiality. Censorship occurs when this true efficacy and potentiality threatens the ruling ideology. What the censors fail to see, however, is that, paradoxically, censorship is like pruning: it gives new strength to what it cuts down.

**LEHRER:** Your work deals directly with "the banality of evil" as you describe it. What is it about the art world, do you think, that makes it so adverse to this subject matter? Certainly depictions of evil, violence, power, and destruction still exist in cinema (Michael Haneke, Lars von Trier, David Lynch, Catherine Breillat), literature (Brian Evenson, Ryu Murakami, Toni Morrison, Cormac McCarthy), and music (noise music, black metal, even hip hop). And the art world, to outsiders anyways, seems like the most radical of all these industries, but perhaps ironically is the most sterilized in its thematic content. Where is this irony coming from?

**BAJAGIĆ:** Sterilizing art is a way to defuse its power. Fear and the fear of generating offense is one excuse in the defense of sterilization. Offensiveness is subjective and relative. What a person chooses to be offended by is a matter of personal opinion. Hypersensitivity is a [another] widespread disease. So widespread has it become that it is now a tyrannical force. Everyone is catching it. And, as the Greenspan cancellation attests to, "even" the "art world" is forfeiting whatever semblance of [its support of] liberty it feigned—bigots and hypocrites, welcome. In regards to depictions of violence, violent images matter. We must force ourselves to see. We are not bloodless. Violent images are not dangerous, but what is is the overwhelming effort to sanitize, delete our access to an unvarnished reality.

**LEHRER:** You keep a fairly low public profile when compared against the endless self promotion of many artists in the digital age. This has me thinking of "cancel culture," which I find to be inherently childish and a bit faux, which happens on both sides of the political isle (the left canceling Kanye, the right canceling Nike). By you taking a back seat from self promotion and controlling distribution of your image, are you hoping to at least somewhat emphasize the importance of divorcing your work from your persona?

**BAJAGIĆ:** For sheeple, innuendo trumps truth. Provincialism is rampant. Even opinions that diverge from those held by [these] mentally incapacitated persons spur onset extinguishing—this is a dangerous intolerance; it, in fact, calls for extinguishing as it eradicates the possibility or potentiality of anything other than itself to exist. Furthermore, yes, it is troubling, the death of the "marketplace of ideas". Everyone deserves the right to express, discuss, their views. However, we have, instead, in place an obsessive preoccupation with victimhood, and it triggers a furious and compulsive cleansing—a moral panic. And, always,

the threat takes on a symbolic form, as in the examples you list. It is an irrational one, as is the subsequent response [of the public]. Society's hissy fit. As to my emphasizing my art over myself—I find the tendency to focus upon the artist reductive. The subject of art is not the artist. Art is impersonal and external, not in the sense of detachment [between artist and artwork], rather in that it is the process of a truth which is external to the artist but to which the artist is committed. It is addressed to everyone. All interpretations are correct.

**LEHRER:** You have said that those who get offended by your work are victims of hypersensitivity, but also that you are sympathetic to that hypersensitivity. But also, the work probably wouldn't be as powerful if it didn't offend at least some, correct?

**BAJAGIĆ:** I do not regard my art as offensive. What you are referring to was an answer to a question regarding "negative reactions to the subject matter of [my artworks]." And I followed by saying that What is in fact obscene, offensive, and oppressive is this hypersensitivity, imposing morality. With that said, I am definitely out to make trouble for people who like things to be simple. Because they are not. Things are incredibly complex, subtle, and nuanced.

**LEHRER:** One thing I am drawn to in your work is that it necessitates engagement beyond one dimensional looking. For instance, if there is an image of a young, pretty girl, the aesthetics of the work might trigger a subtle uneasy feeling but it is only through the extra step of research will the viewer find out that this young girl was the victim of an abduction and only then the art work's full meaning is attained. Is this a conscious goal of yours, or am I reading too much into it?

**BAJAGIĆ:** Yes. There is no single definition or "essential nature" of images, and different meanings and use can overlap. The meaning of a word is its use in the language. This is a fact, and it inexhaustibly excites me. Instances of this in my most recent artworks are Beate—helpful, kind, nice, obliging, primitive, subliminally aggressive and vulgar and "German Madeleine McCann," two paintings that were a part of the Greenspon show. They feature the Greek meander—one of the most important symbols in ancient Greece, and, still today, one of the most common decorative elements. It's on everything, from architecture to Versace thongs and bikinis designed by Instagram "celebrities," as well on the flag of the Golden Dawn, a political party in Greece that is ultranationalist and far-right. It is thought to symbolize infinity and unity; to the Golden Dawn, they see it as representing bravery and eternal struggle. So, does this make Versace a supporter of ultranationalist and far-right policies? Of course not. The meaning of a word is its use in the language. However, judging by, say, the logic of the attitudes of the persons who forced the shut-down of the Greenspon show, Versace is unequivocally a supporter of ultranationalist and far-right policies due to their continuous use of the Greek meander in their designs, a symbol now notoriously tied to ultranationalist and far-right policies.

Another instance, in this same body, is Beate Zschäpe in Lonsdale, shrouded in intrigue. In it, Zschäpe is pictured in a Lonsdale top. Lonsdale is a long-running (ca 1960), hugely-popular UK-based brand of sporting clothes. In the late 1990s and through the early 2000s, neo-Nazis co-opted the brand as a means to bypass laws outlawing the public display of Nazi symbols, as by cunningly concealing the first and last two letters with a jacket, only the letters NSDA were left visible, one letter short of NSDAP, the acronym for Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (National Socialist German Workers' Party). Lonsdale reacted to this trend by marketing initiatives promoting multiculturalism and sponsoring anti-racist campaigns ("Lonsdale Loves All Colours" and "Lonsdale London Against Racism & Hate"). Notwithstanding, the trend (coined Lonsdale youth) was too widespread and took on a life of its own. It was subsequently selectively banned in schools across Germany and the Netherlands. Still, does this make every Lonsdale wearer a neo-Nazi or a member of the NSDAP? Of course not. The meaning of a word is its use in the language. We have to engage with things as they are and not as they appear to us.

**LEHRER:** One thing I find interesting, if a bit overemphasized, in your work is the critical focus on your use of pornographic images. The porn in the work is usually softcore, especially in comparison with what people see all the time on pornhub and its affiliate sites. But, by divorcing the porn from its source material and placing it into a fine art context, you are able to amplify its meaning to subversive effect. It's like you are giving an image its power back after that power has been weakened by the sheer amount of images that surround it on the internet. Is this idea something of interest to you?

**BAJAGIĆ:** Sure. Art prompts the viewer to see and then re-see, and, in this, the power and vitality of the image [in an artwork] is less likely to go unnoticed. It applies to a pornographic image or another—it could be an image of a potato. Reanimating it, in the context of art, often impels suspicious engagement as it recalls its illusionary status. It reminds us that images are not to be taken at face value. They are symbolic constructions, between us and reality. Therein is their power.

## **CHRIS KORDA ET DARJA BAJAGIĆ EXPOSENT À PARIS : DEUX REGARDS CRITIQUES DE LA BIEN-PENSANCE.**

### **A PARIS, CHRIS KORDA ET DARJA BAJAGIĆ, ARTISTES ISSUS DE GÉNÉRATIONS DIFFÉRENTES, INVOQUENT DEUX EXPLORATIONS LIBÉRATRICES DU DEGRÉ ZÉRO DE L'IMAGE ENTRE ÉCUEILS DE LA CRITIQUE ET CÉLÉBRATION.**

Par Ingrid Luquet-Gad

Deux mois après le 11-Septembre, Chris Korda expose dans une galerie de Boston sa vidéo *I Like to Watch*. Soit une vidéo format clip de quatre minutes, mêlant deux types d'extraits : les images mille fois vues de la chute des tours et d'autres qui semblent tout aussi familières issues du répertoire standard de la pornographie. Accompagnée d'un morceau d'electro-house qui sortira sur Null Records un an plus tard, la vidéo est captivante, jouissive même. Normal : Chris Korda combine les deux types d'images les plus efficaces qui soient, toutes deux pornographiques en ce sens qu'elles ne laissent aucune place à l'interprétation. Elles ne se déchiffrent pas, elles s'éprouvent. Elles ne parlent pas à l'intelligence, mais aux émotions primaires.

#### **Pour Chris Korda, une prise de conscience précoce de la crise écologique**

Pour Chris Korda, la vidéo n'est pas censée véhiculer une critique de la société des médias, mais recèle en revanche une fascination perverse pour l'émasculatation à grande échelle de l'Amérique – lui-même se définit comme transsexuel. Cette vidéo est visible à l'exposition que consacre actuellement le project-space parisien Goswell Road aux archives du travail mené par Korda depuis 1991, et qui a fini par devenir indissociable de sa personne : *The Church of Euthanasia* (L'Eglise de l'Euthanasie). L'Eglise, dont Chris Korda est le révérend, est une organisation religieuse dont les quatre piliers sont : le suicide, l'avortement, la sodomie et le cannibalisme. Ces doctrines prennent en effet leur source dans la prise de conscience précoce de la crise écologique.

La seule manière d'éviter le réchauffement climatique et la réduction de la biodiversité ? Que l'homme disparaisse. Dès les années 1990, l'Eglise mène des actions en pleine rue, passe à la télévision nationale, met en vente des T-shirts, des pin's et des autocollants pour voiture qui se vendent comme des petits pains.

#### **Pour Darja Bajagić, une micro-histoire de l'ex-Yougoslavie**

A peu près au même moment où se fondait l'Eglise, Darja Bajagić voyait le jour. Née en 1990 au Monténégro, l'artiste doit fuir son pays dans le sillage des guerres de Yougoslavie. A l'âge de 9 ans, elle arrive aux Etats-Unis, grandit entre de sombres fanzines goth-gore, des séries de détectives à la télévision, la pornographie et les tchats des débuts d'internet, puis entre à la prestigieuse école d'art de Yale où elle étudie la peinture.

A la New Galerie à Paris, elle expose une série de nouvelles toiles qui prolongent le travail qui l'a fait connaître. A partir d'un répertoire d'images qu'elle extrait de leurs circuits de circulation, elle reproduit les motifs représentant des actrices porno (Dominno, actrice tchèque récurrente dans son travail) ou des portraits d'enfants disparus (ici, des enfants déportés lors de la Seconde Guerre mondiale). Ces motifs, elle les brouille en venant y adjoindre d'autres symboles iconographiques obscurs, à l'image de ceux d'une secte néognostique slave active au Moyen Age. S'y lit d'une certaine manière une micro-histoire de l'ex-Yougoslavie saisie par ses réseaux d'images informels, ceux dont la circulation est au final, encore une fois, la plus efficace.

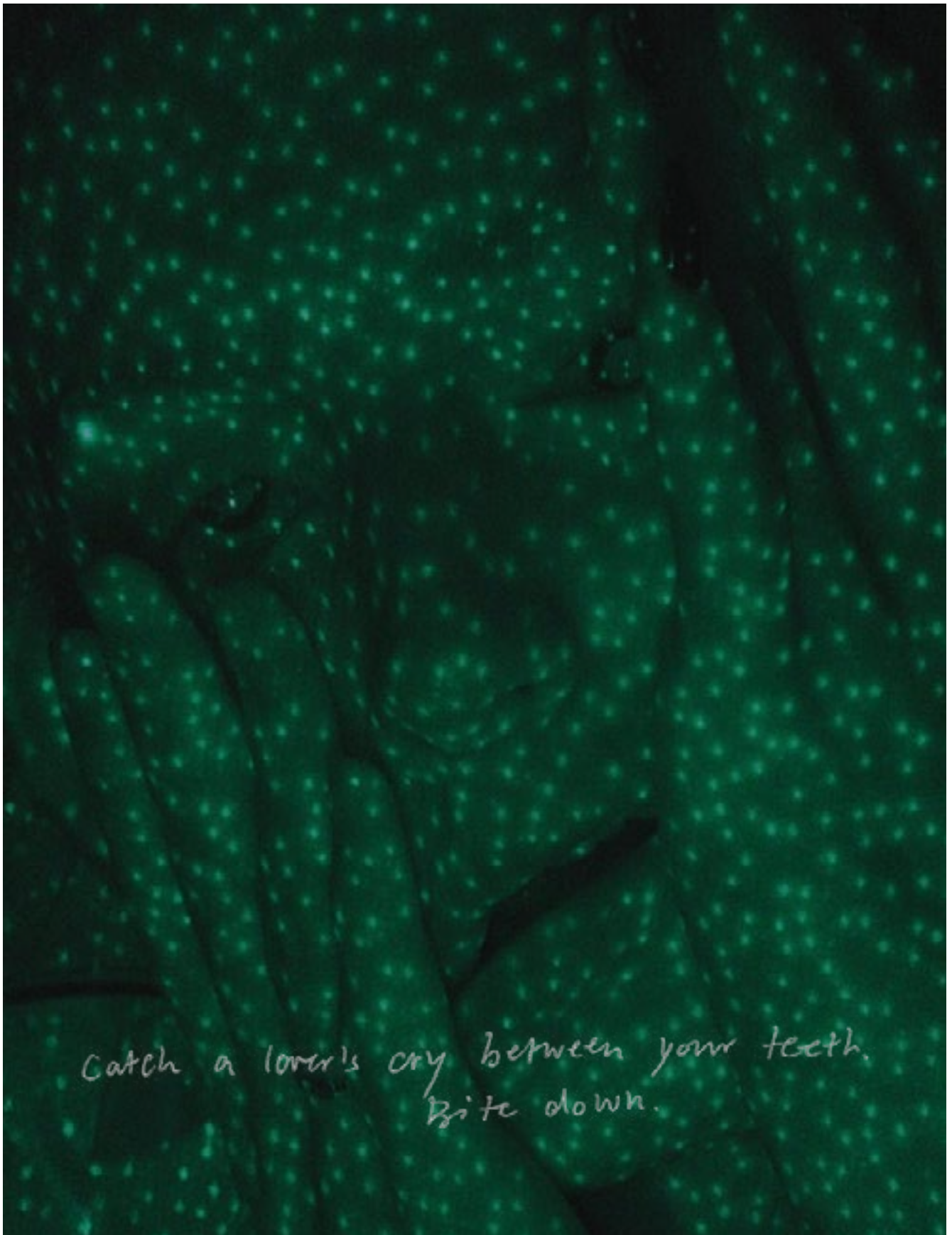
#### **Deux artistes qui récusent le dualisme de la morale**

Chris Korda et Darja Bajagić ne se connaissent pas. Ils ne sont pas de la même génération, et leurs modes opératoires diffèrent. Chez le premier, qui, à la ville, travaille comme programmeur informatique, l'infiltration totale de toutes les sphères de la réalité laisse planer le doute entre réalité et performance, militantisme et absurde – peu importent les intentions, le fait est que ça prend, l'Eglise compte des membres et reçoit des subventions de l'Etat.

Chez la seconde, il s'agit – et à en juger par ses dernières toiles, c'est de plus en plus le cas – d'une entreprise de peinture. Si les images sont prélevées et recontextualisées, elles le sont au sein d'un environnement qui les réintroduit dans le temps de la contemplation : l'artiste scanne ou rephotographie les images sources, prépare sa toile à l'acrylique et les réimprime par-dessus. Plutôt que de les lire à l'intérieur de leur environnement médiatique, nous les regardons dans toute leur ambiguïté rehaussée d'effets de trame, de pixellisation et de matière.

Tous deux récusent le dualisme de la morale. Tous deux réaffirment l'espace d'exposition comme l'espace du doute, des émotions contraires et, surtout, celui où s'expérimente l'apprentissage de réflexes critiques contre l'endormissement semé par les marchands de sable de la bien-pensance.

# Gruppe



## SCENE I

### THE NEW IS THE OLD IN DISTRESS

*Laurie Rojas & Julian-Jakob Kneer*

LAURIE ROJAS is an art critic and senior editor of *Spike* whose writings have appeared in various publications. She is committed to critical thinking, exploring ambivalence in artworks, art criticism after its eclipse, and the politics of social emancipation.

JULIAN-JAKOB KNEER is a Berlin-based artist who runs *Gruppe Expo*. His work often deals with culturally enforced symbols and allocation-systems: the exploration of the contingency and specificity of the lines demarking social territories of good and bad taste, beauty and ugliness, normalcy and pathology, object and abject, negation and affirmation.

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# Gruppe

## The New is the Old in Distress

Laurie Rojas & Julian-Jakob Kneer

### Laurie

We've tasked ourselves to have a conversation about taboos and morality in art. I think this is the most direct way to explore something that concerns us both: at present a kind of limitation is being imposed on art, especially with regards to so-called problematic artworks. I think talking about Darja Bajagić's work is a good place to start. She is an artist we have both discovered recently and she epitomizes a 'problematic' position in contemporary art. The work is morally complex and captivating, it has an element of ambivalence, a kind of disturbing attraction that draws you in with taboo subjects.

I first learned about Bajagić because of the big controversy last fall in New York when Greenspon Gallery organized a two-person show with Bajagić and Boyd Rice, who is a noise musician, one of the founders of the UNPOP Art Movement, and known for his neo-nazi sympathies (whether this is nihilistic provocation or actual personal politics is not clear to me). The show got 'cancelled' but was installed and shown privately. Bajagić, who studied painting at Yale and is no stranger to controversy, was criticized because she was willing to show with an artist that has claimed to support fascist politics. What interested me about Bajagić's work was the conservative response it usually engenders. But what's weird about the Greenspon case, is that the incendiary artist was Boyd Rice, whose works were just black and white abstract paintings and in themselves do not hold any readable fascist ideology. It was his personal politics that caused the stir.

### Julian-Jakob

Can we not enjoy good art if it comes from an asshole?

### Laurie

Assholes make the best art.

### Julian-Jakob

Can art be experienced without considering a person's biography or politics? Can we not just talk about the aesthetics, even a swastika, and acknowledge how it is objectively beautiful in the sense of classic aesthetic theory because it is made of simple geometric forms and it is symmetrical? Is an asshole, whether racist, murderer, pedophile et cetera, a bad artist?

Martin Heidegger concludes in his essay *The Origin of the Work of Art* (1950) that the artwork originates from the artist and vice versa. But does that mean that the artist always sympathizes with the content of their own artwork? Do we still have to speak of the *Motiv* (motive)? Roland Barthes's *The Death of the Author*, on the other hand, is an attack on traditional literary criticism that focuses too much on trying to retrace the author's intentions and original meaning in mind. Instead, Barthes asks us to adopt a more text-oriented approach that focuses on the interaction of the reader, not the writer, with the work.

### Laurie

Right, because the issue of experience, of the subjective experience of an artwork, has kind of been eclipsed. Sorrynotsorry to say, but I don't think artists are always the best representatives of their works, and they certainly don't have the last word: that kind of thinking—evangelized by conceptual art practices like *Art & Language*—have pretty much decimated art criticism. But to then only read artworks, literature, or even R. Kelly's *Ignition*, as indistinguishable from their makers, or even worse, to judge works on the basis of their makers' deeds, personality, or opinions, is to liquidate art.

### Julian-Jakob

Art and artists nowadays get so politicized. The capital *Other* in Lacan's psychoanalysis materializes the anonymous field of society, it is an implicit referential point in our thinking, reasoning, and acting. The capital *Other* represents the symbolic order, it represents the perspective out of which we gaze upon our own lives. In contemporary art the capital *Other* is more present than ever, art is not addressed to anonymous anymore, art is not *pour l'art*, it is pour the capital *Other* or even pour concrete politics, opinionated, and directed at something.

### Laurie

I have to disagree a bit here. The 'Other' is not that important with reference to how I understand the individual's relationship to society. Maybe it serves as the object of pathological projection when we cannot make sense of the anxieties and antagonisms our society creates. But, it does point to the theme of dissociation. The *Other* has become postmodernism's theoretical

*What do you think will happen after this is all over*

explanation of alienation from ourselves, from the products of our labor (including art), each other, and society. But I do agree that since 2016 most art has not been for its own sake: it has been demanded that art be political in order to be art, and this has produced boringly didactic propaganda for social justice warriors. But, the thing about the whole art pour l'art is that art is in a double bind, art is never truly and fully autonomous, it is always social, even the most abstract or taboo work cannot claim full autonomy.

*Honestly no one knows*

**Julian-Jakob**

All art is political, especially 'unpolitical' art.

**Laurie**

Yes, just like anti-authoritarianism is the oldest form of authoritarianism. But it is the impulse towards freedom, to unchain art, that matters, because it is what keeps culture moving. This is why art that is for itself is both necessary but impossible. While, the demand to make politically or committed art now, or in the past, is nothing but the demand to aestheticize politics (a hallmark of fascism as Benjamin famously wrote in the *Work of Art* essay), and it runs the risk of liquidating art, and re-constituting the neoliberal status quo.

**Julian-Jakob**

Darja Bajagić to me is a good example to counteract these tendencies I was discussing. Her works incorporate such a large amount of symbols, which when experienced simultaneously, become incomprehensible. Each work becomes oversaturated with associations. The codes seem to eliminate each other, taboos collide with other taboos. This seems to me like a good strategy in order to empty the work of moralization, to ignore or maybe even provoke the capital Other. Finally, we can look at her work and actually talk about what we see, what it makes us feel, not just how we read into it—or the most boring thing—to argue over how it should be read.

**Laurie**

Yeah, it was her work and not Boyd Rice's politics that should have been discussed and reflected upon. Because her works explicitly appropriated taboo aesthetics—like the swastika, or shapes that allude to or represent ancient varieties of the swastika—and these

large collages from the Greenspon show, also include some quite innocent stuff, like the Pink Panther, but it too has become taboo because of its use by the NSU. I see how her work can be misread as sympathetic to right-wing ideology, but come on, experiencing her art is not going to make anyone a neo-nazi. What all the works share is a kind of looking glass into a dark side of humanity that provokes suspicion rather than reflection, because we often rather repress or not be confronted with this dark side—hence taboo, the unspeakable. The taboo is that which we do not want to understand. And she forces the viewer to confront that taboo, to become a voyeur, a kind of non-consensual voyeurism, which in the age of #MeToo, is absolutely unacceptable. Kind of like Vito Acconci masturbating in a gallery.

**Julian-Jakob**

Taboo is neither spoiled nor undefiled. No one touches taboo, it is pure. It can be argued that taboo is beautiful. I would like to bring up Laibach, the Slovenian art collective known for their music, and how Žižek famously dissected/explained their work as being subversive through overidentification: "What if [...] distance, far from posing any threat to the system, designates the supreme form of conformism, since the normal function of the system requires cynical distance? In this sense the strategy of Laibach appears in a new light: it frustrates the system (the ruling ideology) precisely insofar as it is not its ironic imitation, but overidentification with it—by bringing to light the obscene superego underside of the system, overidentification suspends its efficiency."

*Some of us are out there*

**Laurie**

Laibach's stuff is funny and it's not just because it's ironic. I guess Žižek has a point, that Laibach has the potential to undermine that which it overidentifies with. But notice that Žižek says 'suspends its efficiency'; it's a temporary reprieve, not a real, permanent, solution. So the point of Laibach is not a political one so much as an aesthetic one. Even if I am not sure what it means, I admit that I find the work enigmatic. I think because of the tension between something that is recognizable, not so new, but somehow feels new too, and hard to make sense of. It sits in a really ambiguous place of 'take me seriously, but don't take me that seriously'.

*You have leverage watching*

# Gruppe

## Julian-Jakob

Actually, their work can be understood as very political. They co-founded a state called the NSK (Neue Slowenische Kunst) in 1992, including their own currency, passports, and even embassies throughout Europe and online. Laibach also has their own political party called *Spector*.

*It's convenient too*

## Laurie

Do they affect politics directly? Are these parties running for elections, is the state in any way exchanging with other states? Politics would be about direct intervention in the world, in my view, but then most 'political art' doesn't fulfill that either. The thing is that there are many examples of artists starting their own state, but the aesthetics in Laibach are particular. Anyways, unresolved problems, either aesthetic or social, return often in new form if they were merely repressed, made taboo. But maybe it's the way that aesthetics and politics intermingle in Laibach that makes them enigmatic for me but morally dubious for others.

*even though everyone watching*

## Julian-Jakob

Faux identification with familiar forms. *Retroavantgarde* is Neue Slowenische Kunst's self-ascribed fundamental artistic approach. They describe it to be based on the premise that traumas of the past that affect the present and the future can only be cured by a return to the original, provoking conflicts. Laibach for example, follow this principle in a playful way of doing lots of coversongs, sometimes slightly altered. They refuse the term 'covers' and rather call them 'new originals'.

*If you look at it from out there*

## Laurie

Well that method seems terribly close to what used to be called immanent critique. Laibach is doing immanent critique of both the avantgarde and of (fascist) kitsch. Turning kitsch into avantgarde to show its progressive potential. What is more taboo than what Benjamin called the 'progressive character of fascism'? Taboo represents anxiety about aspects of ourselves in relation to society. Sex work, pornography, and fascism are some of the most taboo subjects. Simply because fascism was not done away with when the Red Army militarily defeated the Third Reich, or the US dropped several bombs on Japan, fascist tendencies are bound to re-emerge in new ways. Artists like Bajagić or Laibach, I could

*with us, being us, through us*

argue, have a way of exposing that as a taboo, to attempt to break, transform, or critique that taboo and render it harmless. The question is whether any work of art can render something like sexual taboos, or thought-taboos, harmless.

## Julian-Jakob

With regards to taboos, deviances, or immorality: they are necessary in art simply because they exist, they are an option. I once read this interview with Jordan Wolfson where he describes this very easily. He said: "Do I hate women? No, but I definitely have hated a specific woman and I can imagine to be someone who hates women. Have I ever masturbated publicly? Yes. Have I ever masturbated on a plane? Yes I did, just last week. And I had the paranoid fantasy that there was a camera, making the scene viewable to the whole plane." He is speaking about the capital Other here. "This paranoid imagination gave me a bad conscious considering my actions. But what I had done was harmless and pointed inwards. Have I ever dreamt of sleeping with my sister? Yes. But do I want this in reality? No, but imagining something is a way to decide if something is right or wrong." He keeps going on with more examples on pedophilia, racism, murder. He says, it is okay to have these thoughts as long as you are not committing yourself to them but using them to understand yourself and the world. "Walking through possibilities is not wrong but necessary to train our understanding of reality. Everyone who denies having these thoughts is a liar." Do I have to add something here?

## Laurie

Yes, it takes balls for an established white male artist to say something like that right now but does art need to be taboo or immoral? Not necessarily, but maybe it's desirable. Art is the ambassador of freedom, it carries with it the potential for change in an unfree world. Sometimes that means confronting unsavory and unfashionable truths.

## Julian-Jakob

Nothing outdoes truth, it is the most powerful weapon. But to paraphrase Christoph Schlingensiefel, there might be more truth in the accumulation of evil, absurd nonsense than in the accumulation of truth.

*Actually it isn't different*

*They think they know better but they don't*



# Gruppe

Triple A Busch Lite

you're only  
a poet when you  
have a fever. you  
know you're a poet when  
you can't get out of  
bed and you're covered  
in sweat, when there are  
things to be done but  
all of them seem less  
important than a memo-  
ry of something  
else.

When it came  
around to me the dog  
raised its head expecting  
something good. Nervous but not  
showing it, I said, "Hi I'm a Bush ...  
not the beer or the president, just a  
Bush ... pause ... and I'm an alcoholic. Nobody  
thought it was funny or even got it and the  
dog laid its head back down between its out-  
stretched forelegs and let out a sigh. I was  
thinking about a biblical burning bush, or a  
bush of pubic hair, or a shabby evergreen bush  
in a strip mall parking lot or a neglected  
front yard. I forgot all about being myself  
in a meeting and just sort of became a bush,  
several bushes, real bushes, bushes with  
strong multi-faceted basal cores that  
could be cut all the way down and  
regrown like an ancient olive tree  
out to the soil that will shoot  
up again from its thousand  
year old base.

Garrett Nelson

i dreamt that i  
was at an AA meeting on  
west 6th street and there was  
a dyke with a dog. a real glori-  
ous dyke, like i remember as a child,  
the ones my mom knew, the ones that made  
me want to be gay but not like that. back  
when america still made dykes out of dense old  
growth wood and leather boots, strong hands and  
a thick humorous honesty. they stopped making  
that model right about the time pick-up trucks  
started getting multiple front doors. this was a  
two door truck dyke. they stood up to introduce  
themselves and said, Hi I'm a Kennedy ... and I'm  
an alcoholic. I realised it was Eileen Myles and  
they weren't a Kennedy but they are an alcoh-  
olic, like me. They sat down again after their  
introduction and winked at me noticing that  
I had figured them out. figured them and  
their entire body of work out in that  
one line. The whole writer thing.  
The whole show.

We were having  
coffee, the whole group,  
when Eileen came up to me and  
asked, "Were you really a bush?".  
I said, "Yeah" playing it cool, "I actu-  
ally was a bush, for a while just now,  
spreading out close to the ground ... luring  
with blossoms ... defending with thorns, you  
know how it goes." We looked at each other,  
smiled, talked about things less real for a bit.  
something like an infection of your existence,  
you're only a kennedy when you have a fever but  
you're only a bush when you let the fever take  
over to become an urgency of synthesized recol-  
lection transferred to collective experience.  
that's what turns the whetstone of poetics.  
it's that space of making the personal into  
the collective so that it collides with  
experiences beyond being yourself. If we  
wanted to say it in plain terms, we  
would end every poem with the rhe-  
torical line, "Do you know  
that feeling?".

# i-D

## **DARJA BAJAGIĆ'S ART IS DIFFICULT TO LOOK AT AND DIFFICULT TO LOOK AWAY FROM**

By Felix Petty

Darja Bajagić's art will confront you. It's full of sex, death, violence, pornography, desire, fear, voyeurism. It is, in her own words, "difficult to look at and difficult to look away from". It's work of incredible emotional complexity and subtlety, and forces us acknowledge the darkness of life. Darja grew up between Montenegro and Egypt and settled in the US, in Michigan, then went to Yale to study art. Her tutors at art school were so shocked by what she started producing they offered to pay for her to get counselling. Her art is unsettling because it resists puritanical judgements and moralising. It's hard to place your emotional response (that's the whole point). Anger, disgust, sadness, pity, outrage -- the lack of obvious moral standpoint of the author complicates -- all at the heart of the whole of her practice.

### **You lived in a lot of different places growing up, right?**

I was born in Podgorica, Montenegro, but grew up in Cairo, Egypt. It was great. We lived in Zamalek, surrounded by the Nile. It was a very diverse part of the city. I went to an Irish kindergarten and a Pakistani primary school. My best friend was Kenyan. I had several birthday parties at McDonald's. Then we moved to East Lansing, Michigan, and that was pretty depressing. I thought we were going there on holiday but we never left. Growing up, people used to ask me if it was "weird" growing up in Cairo. No. It was a lot less "weird" than East Lansing.

### **Can you remember your earliest experiences of art?**

Watching my mother paint. Her paintings covered all of our walls, alongside Orthodox icons.

### **What drew you to the subject matter of your work?**

Even in my earliest artworks -- the minimalist paintings -- my goal was to make objects that prompted us to engage with things as they are and not as they appear to us -- to confront reality. Entering graduate school, I was making minimalist paintings, alongside digital paintings and zines that I hardly shared, exploring my other obsessions. I quickly realised that my two "worlds" were not dissimilar.

**Studying at Yale I found all of the technical conversations about painting entirely vacuous and boring. I understood that I wanted more from art, and from my commitment to it. I wanted to implicate myself in reality in all of its extremes.**

### **Does minimalism still inform the work?**

Yes, I'm a minimalist at heart. I still apply many of the same principles. Before anything else, this is a result of my process -- before I paste any images onto the surface, the "body" is treated as a monochrome painting.

### **How do often do you get negative reactions to the subject matter of the work? Do you expect it? Understand it?**

I hear about negative reactions secondhand, but hardly direct. For those that take offence to my artwork, yes, I understand -- that is, that it is, often, a fault of their hypersensitivity, which is encouraged nowadays. What is in fact obscene, offensive and oppressive is this hypersensitivity, imposing morality. But, as an empathetic person, I am able to feel pity for those who have, perhaps unknowingly, succumbed to becoming sensitised and sanitised -- may their lost souls, who have forsaken truth and forfeited freedom, R.I.P.

**That lack of judgement, the ambiguity, the refusal to dumb down or moralise or sanitise -- to me this is the most important part of your practice. It creates space for the viewer to actually think about what they're seeing. It's rare, there's so much rush to judge and condemn at the moment. The experience, then, of coming across your work is so varied; tenderness, sadness, shock, outrage, disgust... strange and conflicting emotions.**

It's necessary to complicate binary readings of morality, and it's unnecessary to moralise. As an artist, I want to see everything. Whatever negative feelings my research may elicit I welcome. It's a small sacrifice in pursuit of truth. Violent images matter. We must force ourselves to see. We are not bloodless. Violent images are not dangerous, but what is is the overwhelming effort to sanitise, delete our access to an unvarnished reality. For the "righteous," sinking in denial and their perverse wish to protect their untarnished eyes and minds, how can you refuse to acknowledge a mere re-presentation of a horrific event while others are forced to live through the horrific event itself?

[...]



# Numéro

## POURQUOI EST-IL TEMPS DE S'INTÉRESSER AUX ARTISTES DES BALKANS ?

Par Thibaut Wychowanok

[...]

Certains artistes n'ont pas attendu. Darja Bajagic (née en 1990 au Monténégro) a suivi depuis longtemps un parcours international. Après des études à Portland et un diplôme obtenu à la Yale University School of Art, elle sera exposée au Luma Westbau à Zurich, au musée d'Art moderne de Varsovie et à New York où elle s'est installée. Bajagic s'est rapidement fait une renommée dans le milieu de l'art à coups d'œuvres qui mêlent efficacement sexe, meurtre et violence. On connaît sa passion pour l'imagerie pornographique du Net ou pour celle des serial killers, qui fait de ses pièces de bons résumés de notre époque obsessionnelle où les images les plus choquantes sont sans cesse l'objet de réappropriations. Lors de la dernière édition de la FIAC, la New Galerie, qui représente l'artiste, proposait ainsi un lot de haches recouvertes d'images trouvées au hasard de ses recherches sur le Net (tapez "axes and girls" sur Google...). À Belgrade, celle qui, selon la légende, s'est fait traiter de folle par l'historien de l'art Robert Storr – toujours un bon point pour un artiste – proposait une pièce inspirée du film WR: Mysteries of the Organism (1971) de Dusan Makavejev. Dans la satire du cinéaste yougoslave, une jeune prolétaire séduit un célèbre patineur sur glace évoquant Joseph Staline... jusqu'à ce qu'on retrouve la tête de la jeune femme décapitée par un patin. Dans son tableau, Darja Bajagic propose une version actualisée de la figure féminine en sang, issue cette fois-ci des images de la guerre des années 90 qu'elle se souvient d'avoir vues en ligne plus jeune. L'artiste construit ainsi habilement un pont entre les drames des années 70 et ceux plus récents.

[...]



WR: Mysteries of the Organism (1971) de Dusan Makavejev

# KALEIDOSCOPE

D A R J A

B A J A G I Ć

INTERVIEW  
PHOTOGRAPHY

BY  
BY

BEATRIX  
DANKO

RUF  
STEINER

# KALEIDOSCOPE

## DIGEST

Situated at the intersection of Minimalism and digital appropriation, the paintings of the Montenegrin-born, New York-based artist address subjects as controversial as sex and violence, challenging the viewer's perspective and complicating binary notions of morality.

BR In *Artforum's* "Best of 2016," Keren Cytter wrote with regard to your work that "such brave and loving representation of murder, sex, death, and abuse is rare in the cloud of careful referential choices in contemporary art." In her description, there is a striking contradiction, and an underlying question: What is your intention in confronting us with this very strong, explicit imagery you use? I understand that you collect it from the Internet and have been doing that for a very long time.

DB Yeah, it would depend on the series, but I often try to present both extremes of any story in some way. What I aim for is to create a space where the viewers can be confronted with this resulting ambiguity, its complex realities, to engage with things as they are and not as they appear to us. I never supply any "answers"—it's more about *showing*. I don't believe that art should ask anything of us, other than to see and then to re-see. The diptych that Karen wrote of, exhibited as a part of my solo show at Künstlerhaus Graz, was centered on two characters, Manuela Ruda and Sophie Lancaster. Manuela is a self-proclaimed Satanic murderess who together with her husband stabbed his mild-mannered workmate who loved The Beatles sixty-six times at the Dark Lord's bidding in Witten, Germany (the couple would later say that they'd chosen him as their sacrificial victim because he was "so funny and would be the perfect court jester for Satan"); by contrast, Sophie was a twenty-year-old Lancashire, England native who was fatally beaten in 2007 by five teenage boys, inexplicably enraged by her and her boyfriend's "goth" appearance. However, upon first glance, they're more similar than they are different—they're both of the goth subculture; the composition of the images is near identical. Your initial impression may be that they're not unlike each other, but in reality, they have totally different stories and endings.

BR The subject of murdered girls is a common thread in your work, and you have mentioned several times that it is okay for a woman to feel okay with these images. In the wake of the political turmoil we are facing in the Trump era, suddenly you see a lot of activism coming up, including women's activism. From this perspective, it would be great to hear your bit about activism in general and feminism.

DB This came up a lot when I was in graduate school: the question of female representation in my practice, where I stand on things. To

be honest, that is not my interest, nor my starting position. There are other themes that I am more inspired by than the question of female representation and feminism; or more importantly, I find it to be indivisible from the question of my moral obligation, and it's not my place to moralize.

BR So where does your work start from?

DB In a sense, it's always broadly centered around the status of the image, and, more recently, focused on the duality of good versus evil, and our perspectives of it, how wavering it is or can be, and unsteady—and fortunately so, as it complicates binary readings of morality. For example, over the past year, I've been collaborating with Joseph (Joe) Druce, a former child abuse victim and anti-pedophilia campaigner who murdered John J. Geoghan, a convicted pedophile priest, in a vigilante attack while serving a prison sentence for another killing. I was struck by Joe and his artwork after seeing a drawing in which he depicted Geoghan with the text "stole the innocence of 147 children: 8–10 years" alongside a self-portrait with the text "stole the life of one pedophile: life w/o parole," with a headline reading "JUSTICE?!? no/yes no/yes no/yes." One of the first projects resulting from the collaboration was a series of paintings focusing on both victims and perpetrators of murders of a pedophilic intent, incorporating Joe's slogans—such as "Save A Child, Kill A Pedophile," or "God Bless Innocence"—as text banners. These paintings also featured images of Dominno—a now-retired pornographic actress famous for her busty, curvaceous figure—in provocative near-nude as well as nude poses, always directly looking into the eye of the camera, confronting the spectator(s) with a shameless, expressionless face. There's obviously this added tension of having her present, her highly sexualized body amongst the ephemeral photographic remnants of victimized children. Her purpose here is of a caryatid of sorts, but more importantly, what her story adds is that regardless of having a stereotypically "womanly" figure, she was consistently dressed in too-small children's clothing (with hand-drawn marker drawings of butterflies on her shoes, or cartoon characters such as Snoopy on her spaghetti-strapped tank top) and posed in a manner that alluded to her being babyish.

BR What are your plans for your upcoming exhibition at KALEIDOSCOPE's exhibition space

# KALEIDOSCOPE



These blurry, fragmented images by photographer Darko Steiner portray Darja in her Brooklyn apartment, filled with goth paraphernalia. Both Steiner and Bajagić have lived in New York for many years but are originally from the Balkans, Croatia and Montenegro respectively.

**DARJA BAJAGIĆ**  
NEW GALERIE

# KALEIDOSCOPE

NEW RADICALS



*Brittane Drexel ft. Pierrot (Stuck-Out Tongue)* (2017) is part of a new series of UV-printed, acrylic-painted, aluminum-framed canvases presented by Bajagić in her upcoming solo exhibition “*Damnatio Memoriae*” at KALEIDOSCOPE’s new space in Milan, from 11 October–25 November 2017.

in Milan? How do you want to make people feel uncomfortable in a constructive way?

DB [*Laughs*] The series is focused on Brittane Drexel, a teenage girl who was abducted and repeatedly gang-raped in a “stash house.” She was murdered after her disappearance had generated “too much media attention.” There will be four paintings, each using an image of Brittane and her friends disseminated on various news media sources upon her disappearance. In an effort to retain her family and friends’ privacy, all faces except Brittane’s were concealed with black censor bars. Sometimes, to cover a large group of friends, the bars were multiplied to create awkward black shapes. So, they’re very strange, sad, and eerie images, of Brittane smiling and looking to be having fun, essentially alone. Each image was then painted over and printed with various faces of Pierrot—the naïve, ever-trusting, tragic clown—disrupting and burying whatever’s left of Brittane’s alienated face. They’re more quietly ominous than they are “in your face,” I’d say. There is also the framing element, which is important—these gated door frames that will cover various lengths of the canvases, existing as additional partial-barriers, or entryways, depending on how you see [it].

BR Your earlier, flap paintings referred very clearly to minimalism. Can you talk about the con-

flicting relationship between formalism and content, and how you’re using it in your work?

DB I do think I am a minimalist at heart, you know? For the early paintings, a lot of the “layouts” were borrowed from the structure of magazines, flipping through pages, as well as Web pages, scrolling, clicking. And, as a teenager and through graduate school, I had a serious obsession with Ad Reinhardt’s “black paintings,” together with his dry sense of humor—the cartoons and the texts.

BR You mentioned the word “borrowing,” and of course the term “appropriation” has also been used several times in relationship to how you use images and text drawn from the Internet. I’m wondering, how do you decide what to borrow? And are you happy with the word “appropriation” when it comes to the practice of a younger generation of artists, and their changed behaviors in relationship to the accessibility of images and information as the Internet provides it?

DB I prefer “borrowing,” because it’s more accurate to me. I feel as though I am “temporarily” using materials to tell or retell stories in my own way, always retaining and referring to the original context, as it’s crucial to my practice. When I was at Yale, I went to a Thomas Hirschhorn talk, as he’s someone I really look up to and admire. It resulted in one of the most awkward and uncomfortable Q&As. A

# KALEIDOSCOPE

THERE'S A SUBVERSIVE POWER IN PORNOGRAPHY—SIMULTANEOUS DESIRE, FEAR. I'D ARGUE THE SAME FOR VIOLENT IMAGES.



Installation view of *She's more obsessed than Dahmer, she's more calculated than Bundy, and certainly more faceless than Batman and The Girl Who Wouldn't Die*, starring Brittane Drexel, both 2017, as part of the exhibition "89Plus: Americans 2017" at LUMA Westbau, Zurich.

student stood up to ask him where his images came from—did he know, did he care? It was clear that she had already made up her mind, that he didn't have a responsibility to his materials, and that that was revolting to her. His reaction was to laugh at us and shame us for being privileged Ivy League students, and then to angrily condemn us for believing that knowing anything about the images, including where they came from, somehow makes them more acceptable.

BR Well it's interesting how you pair Thomas Hirschhorn and Ad Reinhardt as your influences. That's sort of reflected in your work—there is a merging of overabundance and minimalism, you know?

DB Yeah, there is. You know, I think that I have pretty tacky tastes, too. Since moving to the

States, my dad became a truck driver. He looks like a Hells Angel—he looks insane, in the best way. All of those patches I used in my early paintings were ones he'd gifted me before I even began integrating them into artworks. "Thanks for looking," for example. It's tongue-in-cheek in the context of a painting. So, there's definitely this Americana tackiness thing present in my work on various levels.

BR Going back to the notion of radicality, which provides the frame for this interview, do you see a subversive potential in working with these materials? When you choose to borrow these particular materials, do you think about the impact of art on societal conditions? You once said that pornography for you is a signifier for subversion and transgression, and of course there is a lot of potential there



# KALEIDOSCOPE

in terms of... emancipation is definitely the wrong word, but maybe of resistance.

DB Yeah, I wouldn't say pornography is my focus, but it's definitely present. One thing that interests me about pornography is its potential to possess as well as estrange. There's a subversive power in that—simultaneous desire, fear. I'd argue the same for "violent" images.

filling Chloë's role. She shows nothing but the showing itself. Like Chloë—who can be seen looking brazenly into the camera whilst getting double-penetrated and petting a cat—Dominno doesn't simulate any pleasure, nor does she affect any complicity with the viewers. But it's this nullification that "opens" her—she's emancipated her-

NEW RADICALS



*Dominno's Playground*, 2017, acrylic paint, ink, inkjet prints and tape on paper. This and similar collages taken out from the artist's private sketchbooks, dating from 2014 to today, have been collected by KALEIDOSCOPE in a new artist book released on the occasion of the Milan show.

BR Well, you refer to a very philosophical approach, even someone like Agamben, in defining pornography as a place of subversion.

DB Yes, Agamben wrote about that '90s French pornographic actress, Chloë des Lysses (who also happens to be a photographer)—her absolutely inexpressive and indifferent display, and how it rendered the whole apparatus of the pornographic image inoperative, inviting new, freer uses for the eroticism otherwise captured. *Profanations* deeply affected me. I'd say that Dominno's appearance in the Joe collaboration is ful-

self from a relation to an end.

BR Both characters seem to talk about a detachment from individuality, or replacement of individuality.

DB Yes, it's true. It's something I think about in relationship to the images of the victims and perpetrators I use, and their "facelessness" in news media. There is always an insatiable hunger for more. In the end, they're [treated as] neither generic nor individual. We've been reduced to images. It is only in unraveling the image that we can free it and ourselves. **K**

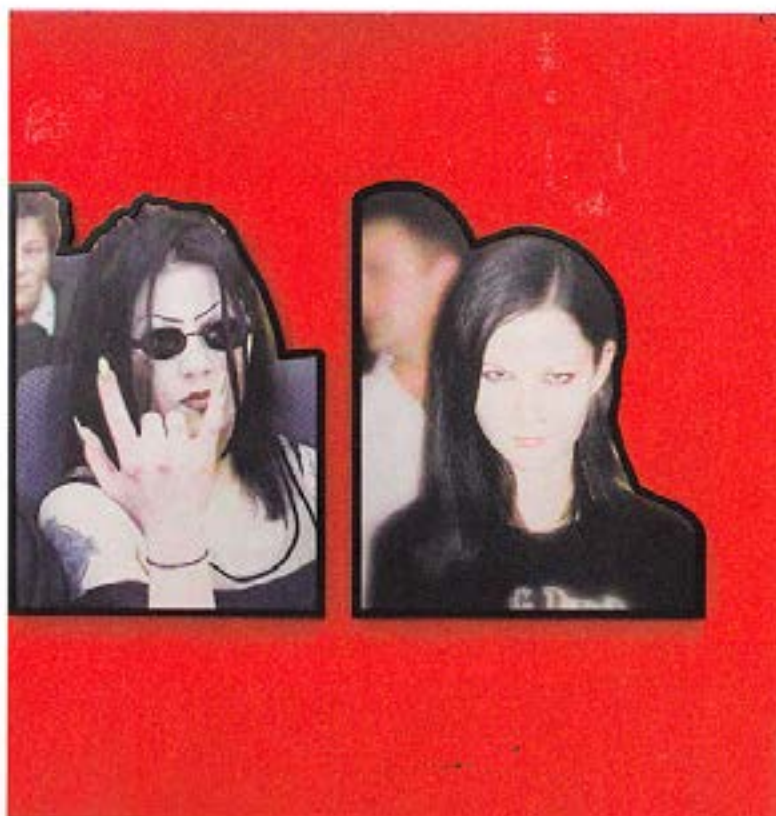
Darja Bajagić (b. 1990, Montenegro) lives and works in New York. Beatrix Ruf is Director of the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. Images courtesy of the artist; Carlos/Ishikawa, London; and New Galerie, Paris.

# ARTFORUM

ARTISTS' ARTISTS BEST OF 2016

## KEREN CYTTER

**"Darja Bajagić: Unlimited Hate"**  
(Künstlerhaus Halle für Kunst & Medien, Graz, Austria) Darja Bajagić's sculptures in "Unlimited Hate" consisted of found images of women printed on light boxes, with thin streams of blood running from top to bottom, operated by hidden pumps. *Manuela Ruda & Sophie Lancaster*, 2016, for example, a diptych displaying found photographs of Ruda and Lancaster in kitschy frames curved around their figures, mixes hardcore gore with adolescent romanticism that shifts from porn to poetry. Ruda was a satanic murderess who together with her husband stabbed his workmate sixty-six times. Lancaster was attacked and murdered by five teenage boys because she was dressed as a goth. Bajagić's campy approach borders on religious iconography in her unlimited fascination with magic, fiction, and goth. Such brave and loving representation of murder, sex, death, and abuse is rare in the cloud of careful referential choices in contemporary art.



Darja Bajagić, *Manuela Ruda & Sophie Lancaster (detail)*, 2016, UV-printed, brushed-aluminum Dibond, MDF frame, acrylic paint, canvas, overall 120 x 120". Photo: Markus Krottendorfer.



# DARJA BAJAGIĆ

## by Franklin Melendez

**F**ollow the links long enough and things are bound to get weird. Darja Bajagić knows this well – in fact, that might be how she stumbled onto the website, ‘maniacnanny.com,’ though at this point who can really say? You can visit it if you like. Click and be greeted by a nicely legible header in a cheerful shade of pink – it boasts “The Best Serial Killers, The Best Gore, The Best Crime Scene Photos.” True to the billing the site scrolls down to reveal a hearty assortment of real-life carnage – crime photos (contemporary and historical), police mug shots, murder scene documentation, victim forensics and so forth. Each image is carefully indexed with an extensive catalog of tags (‘spree killing’, ‘racist’, ‘perverted sex practices’, and so on and so forth). Interspersed among some of the entries are long blocks of texts all in caps – detailed accounts of gruesome acts that unexpectedly morph into descriptions of foods being craved by the editor at that particular moment in time.

Depending on your temperament, Maniac Nanny’s tasty idiosyncrasies will likely elicit a queasy mixture of fascination and revulsion, together with an indescribable something else. Therein lies the rub for Bajagić, whose practice has always been attuned to those impulses that lurk at the fringes. Niche porn, fetish sites, murderabilia outlets and its neighboring nether regions have provided prime fodder for a widely varied output that to date encompasses zines, collages, videos, sculptures

and assemblages of painted and printed canvas that stand in for paintings.

In all of these, the specter of violence hovers diffusely yet is omnipresent. At times, it can be coyly suggestive as in the mall Goth motifs that punctuate many of the compositions (*Untitled Collage (goths have more fun ...)*, 2015). At others, it hones in on more specialized fare, such as a group of hatchets printed with images lifted from a women-with-weapons fetish site – the resulting customized mementos implicating the viewer in all the fun (*Ex Axes - Sword*, 2015). Even darker still, there are the stage blood splatters on *Untitled Collage (Blutengel ft. Cathy Torrez)*, 2015, whose cryptic title, when subjected to a simple Google search, yields up its tragic real-life tale; then, there’s the crudely rendered pin-up drawing preserved in a plastic sleeve embedded in a framed collage (*Dacha: Robert Bardo 8x11 ink drawing of porn star ‘Gauge’*, 2014). Follow the clues and you’ll discover its origins in a controversial e-commerce site specializing in art keepsakes from killers on death row.

Neither sensationalist nor banal (or perhaps a little both?), these images have been described by Bajagić as ‘blanks.’ This is clearly not some claim to neutrality, for each is voluptuously laden with its own content and history. Perhaps she is simply acknowledging her own predilections: a willingness to leave things undigested, vulnerable and open to their own missed connections and random encounters.



**DARJA BAJAGIĆ**  
NEW GALERIE



Amazing girls. With wonderful personalities. There saints. Talk to them about life. Love. Politics. (still), 2015. Video 10' 24" opposite page: Please Find My Amy, 2015, acrylic-latex, canvas, UV prints 152,4 x 114,3 cm previous pages: Studio and studio office snapshots, 2015 (p. 169) All images Courtesy: the artist and New Galerie, Paris



It's a dangerous game to be sure – stripped of parameters, reliant on contingency and staunchly resistant to the usual art historical points of orientation. Bataille, Oleg Kulik, Carol Clover, Laibach, Thomas Hirschhorn (to name just a few) are all equivalents in a field littered with fan art, clippings from gore-enthusiast mags, *Hellraiser* memorabilia... I could go on. Far from a fixed endpoint, each fragment hovers before you as a volatile link, a seductive lure into the murky terrain where hidden fantasies and unspoken desires bleed into things still inchoate and unnamed. Seasoned surfers of porn will be familiar with that sensation: a curious click inadvertently eliciting endless pop-ups – windows upon windows, beckoning onto pleasures untold. There's a thrill, followed by instinctual fear – perhaps for uncovering personal cravings once thought unimaginable.

For this reason, Bajagić might be less interested in the accountability of images than the driving need to make them so. It is a philosophical questioning undertaken as intimate work, poetic and awkward for all its

proximity. The recent video, *Amazing girls. With wonderful personalities. There saints. Talk to them about life. Love. Politics.*, 2015, speaks to this with a series of short interviews conducted at the now-defunct Chicago goth club, Neo. Each snippet is structured by four brief questions: 'what did you eat today?', 'What is a happy story?', 'What is a sad/scary story?', 'Parting words?'

The answers range from the mundane (cereal for dinner, a fortune cookie, orange chicken a bit dry) to the humorous (my rescue cat got fat) to the poignant (long distance partings, self inflicted wounds, a parent's death). It is an odd mix that never congeals into a single confessional, but rather lingers as morsels of information left unresolved. In that sense, this is never satisfying – perhaps in the same way that cereal for dinner can never be satisfying, even if it's sustenance for the world we inhabit. There's a small kind of pleasure to be derived from that knowledge, but one – as Bajagić aptly notes – you might be a little ashamed to admit to yourself.

**HOT!**

**DARJA BAJAGIĆ**  
NEW GALERIE

# Flash Art

## **DARJA BAJAGIĆ, BED STUY LOVE AFFAIR / NEW YORK**

By Sam Korman

Amy Fitzpatrick has been missing since New Year's Day 2008. Over the last several years, her story has grown more lurid: she may have been involved with an Irish hit man, an investigating lawyer's dossiers were stolen, her brother was stabbed to death in an incident that involved their mother's boyfriend, and her mother recently published a book on the entire experience.

With eyes wide open and lips pursed — the profile-picture-pose duckface — Fitzpatrick appears on the flyer for Darja Bajagić's solo exhibition with Bed Stuy Love Affair. The missing person wears a trashy branded tank top, the inspiration for the show's title: "Diesel."

Exhibitions at Bed Stuy Love Affair often feel intertwined with their context, but Bajagić's inhabits the matte-black RV's cheap rolled-out linoleum floors and walls seamlessly — it belongs to the tidy creepiness of floral-print sheets neatly tucked in with 3mm poly overlaid on the bed. Rows of regularly sized half-page collages line the bedroom gallery, culled together from Bajagić's archive of grainy murderabilia, gore, Blog del Narco stories, Instagram selfies, memorial photographs, porn, missing-persons reports, erotic cartoons, etc. One demi-melodrama seems to depict a teen-girl hangout, careful to never reveal an actual killer. TV crime shows typically redeem their content through narratives that restore a sense of elemental justice, but Bajagić's wavy papers appear like pages from an unapologetic diary of life in an attention economy. It's an old story about power; an image's



moral ambiguity is as liquid as cash.

Does Bajagić accrue some debt of responsibility by using these images? In noir films, women tend to be strong and willful if somewhat damned by the power struggles of men. With the video *Amazing girls. With wonderful personalities. There saints. Talk to them about life. Love. Politics....*, 2015, Bajagić unrepentantly takes us through and beyond this authorial dichotomy. She asks several women to recount the same personal details outside of a goth bar. One woman describes her sushi dinner before awkwardly recounting the tragic story of her father's death. Her parting words? No regrets.

It is perhaps this nostalgia, built into the web's ethos, that compels us to share, no matter how dumb and meaningless it can make us seem. Power saw the same potential. However, in shades of humor both dark and absurd, Bajagić keeps these ubiquitous and traumatic images from resolving into the fully irreconcilable darkness built into human affairs.

**DARJA BAJAGIĆ**  
NEW GALERIE

## CONTRARY TO WHAT YOU MAY HAVE HEARD, DARJA BAJAGIĆ IS NOT CRAZY

By Scott Indirisek

It turns out that it's not always easy to transform overnight from an ultra-minimalist painter into something entirely different — say, a Conceptual artist with a penchant for mixing layered, monochromatic swaths of canvas with laser-cut icons and found imagery pulled from fetish sites catering to aficionados of naked-girls-wielding-baseball-bats. For Darja Bajagic, recently graduated from Yale's M.F.A. painting program and opening her debut solo show in New York with Room East this Sunday, it was somewhat of a rocky road. The 24 year old had entered the acclaimed program with a portfolio of beyond-subtle works — the barest ripples of white-on-white, for instance, or canvases lightly inscribed with geometric graphite marks mirroring the outlines of a tennis court. At the same time she'd also been avidly making zines, many of them compiling found pornographic stills and other images, which she distributed to friends and online. That more incendiary portion of her oeuvre wasn't part of her application; when Bajagic finally decided to combine her two interests, she found that Yale's faculty wasn't all that appreciative.

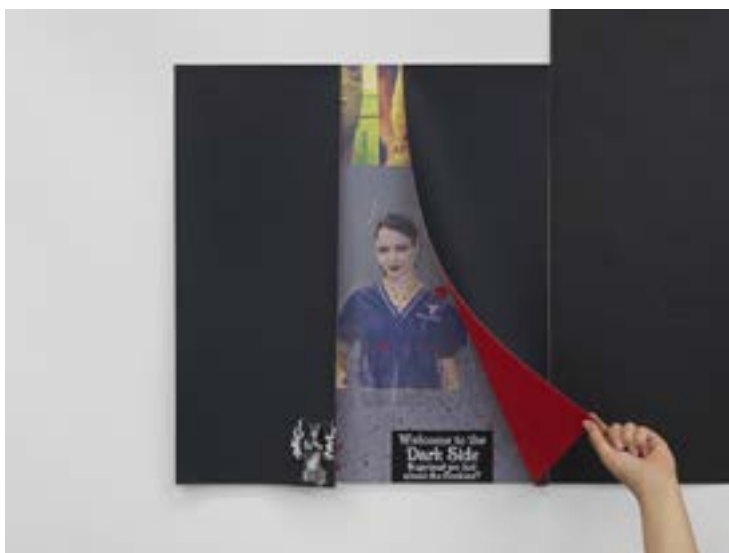
"I met with Robert Storr, the head of the department, and he literally told me I was crazy," the artist recalled. "And that Yale would pay for all of my counseling and therapy during a leave of absence to seek help for my obsessive-compulsive behavioral habits of collecting images of girls and porn... that I should look deep inside of myself to figure out what are the problems I have with myself, as a woman, for being O.K. with these kinds of images even existing in the world, let alone propelling them in paintings and in the gallery system." Bajagic countered that she was already achieving some degree of recognition for the work, outside of the academic program: "Of course," she remembered him saying. "Sex sells."

Far from dissuading her, the resistance Bajagic experienced at Yale confirmed her own interest in the kind of loaded imagery that she'd been collecting and appropriating. She was also reluctant to cave in to an easy reading. "They wanted me to take a position of being anti-porn, but I wasn't," she said. "A lot of the conversation was about my stance, and how I could use porn, as a woman — my responsibilities to all women, everywhere. They [asked], 'What's at stake? What are you doing other than re-presenting things as they are?' Even if I was just re-presenting things as they are, which is true to some extent, why is that so problematic? These images are more complex than people give them credit for."

Many of those images are taken from Eastern European porn and niche fetish sites. (Bajagic, who was born in Montenegro and raised in Egypt, came to the States with her family when she was around 9 — but she says it's more the unique aesthetic of the erotic work that appeals to her, rather than any focus on which country it came from.) She often rephotographs or scans the originals, printing them on pieces of canvas that are then incorporated into larger compositions, augmented with flaps, eBay-purchased patches depicting "She-Devil" women, laser-cut numbers, and clip art culled from Photoshop. They're a strange hybrid: Bajagic's earlier, coolly aloof Minimalism married to the visual language of the Internet and its more esoteric and perverse nooks.

One painting includes both a scanned-and-defaced postcard image of a young Natalie Portman with a photo taken from a rubber-fetish magazine. Another compiles several images taken from a website for those titillated by lesbians wearing denim jeans; Bajagic selected a series of shots in which the models are giving the middle finger to the photographer. (She has a thing for the oddities of the genre — the "pre-explicit narrative shot of just the girl looking into the camera smiling or making a funny face.") The works, she said, have several facets — the layered flaps, the odd, unexplained inclusion of what could be page numbers — that tie them to her earlier zine experiments. Her Room East show will also include two patches re-envisioned as large sculptures printed on metal; one, of an angel-woman sitting back-to-back with her devilish counterpart, will hang in the gallery's front window on Orchard Street.

The exhibition will also feature new work that will do little to convince Robert Storr of Bajagic's mental health: Prints that appropriate imagery from letters and drawings made by serial killers on death row, and include the actual ephemera (purchased from sites like Redrum Autographs) encased in a folder and framed with the print itself. "The idea of not having access to the full thing is always interesting to me," Bajagic said — perhaps an apt way to approach her curiously compelling output thus far, which is equally tantalizing and maddening, sensual and austere, legible and yet ultimately elusive.



# KALEIDOSCOPE

## FUTURA 89+

### Hans Ulrich Obrist and Simon Castets interview young artist DARJA BAJAGIĆ

THE  
FUTURA  
89+ SERIES  
FEATURES  
INTERVIEWS  
WITH ARTISTS, WRITERS,  
ACTIVISTS, ARCHITECTS,  
FILMMAKERS, SCIENTISTS AND  
ENTREPRENEURS WHO WERE  
BORN IN OR AFTER 1989.



In a recent tweet you said, “There are people who believe that things that shouldn’t be there mustn’t be shown.” Do you believe that pornography shouldn’t be there? And if it is there, that it must be shown?

A conservative estimate would be that 80% of my tweets are sourced from elsewhere; that one was taken from a *New York Times* article, “Messy Humanity, Warts, Dreams and All,” on Ulrich Seidl’s *Paradise* trilogy. At fuller length, it reads: “Speaking of a scene in *Dog Days* in which two men torment a woman, Mr. Seidl, 60, said by phone from Vienna, “There are people who believe that things that shouldn’t be there mustn’t be shown.” I believe pornography has





# KALEIDOSCOPE

## FUTURA 89+



a place in this world, as does everything else. I appreciate its subversiveness.

**You started collecting, and working with, these kinds of images as a teenager, eventually using them for zines. What compelled you to start collecting them?**

One of my earliest memories—at six years of age—is of taking photographs of a television screen at my uncle Boris's house, on which my cousin

The image search and collection process is like hunting.

Raško and I were watching a pornographic film. Later, as a pre-teenager, I was collecting images—both pornographic and not—of girls on the Internet to use as aliases on various social networking websites. I would habitually browse, looking at images of girls—first out of boredom, then curiosity—in my father's Playboys, and via WebTV cha-

Previous page:  
*A00*, 2014

Left:  
*Devil Girl Stamp*, 2014

Below:  
*Come to the Dark Side We Have Cookies!!!*, 2014

Right:  
*Kill Bill: After*, 2014

trooms and forums. This was not an art project—I was just socially awkward. Those images were my friends.

The beginning of including these kinds of images into an art practice, it took the form of cut-up, deconstructed collages: juxtaposing a bruised thigh with a pattern from a blanket. I then started recreating the “collages”



# KALEIDOSCOPE

## REGULARS

I was collecting online—"collages" as in everything, ranging from book covers to website layouts, disparaging celebrity photographs with text overlays from forums—to be juxtaposed with those original "collages" from the printed zines. I would liken the search and collection to hunting.

**Your earlier works were very minimalist paintings. Many of your current works still carry through that minimalist, monochrome aesthetic, but overall, your work has changed quite drastically. What prompted this change? How did the transition unfold?**

I do not see them as so different, ultimately—rather, only at a surface level. The black paintings were commenced at Yale, during my very last month in the graduate program. They stemmed from my desire to combine images from my collection with new forms; I'd done the same thing earlier with videos.

In the gray paintings, the images had been scattered about, often nearly concealed. The images in the black paintings are more available—partially obscured at times by flaps, but still, more available.

During the process, I thought a lot about Ad Reinhardt—his "ultimate" paintings, his satirical cartoons—and Thomas Hirschhorn—his collages, and his texts about his collages. I like that they are always suspicious, are not taken seriously, resist information and facts, are unprofessional, create a truth of their own....

**You have said that you want to present the images as "blank images," by "forcing the viewer to come to terms with all of that baggage and then ignoring it simultaneously" in order to see the images on a formal level. When you ignore that baggage, what do you see in the images?**

I don't think a surface reading of any one thing is an efficient one. By ignoring the primary reading—the first impact, the "baggage"—one becomes more open to exploring other perspectives and comes to terms with assumptions and beliefs. This is an act of neutralization, or desexualization: it occurs not only in the works' imagery employed, but in the viewer as well.

Seeing the images on a formal level is one way of beginning to set aside, the "baggage" to and see the images from a different perspective. For example, you might consider a prop you'd missed: 1) "a girl is sitting on a bed, simultaneously rubbing herself and reading a book" versus 2) "a girl is sitting on

a bed, simultaneously rubbing herself and reading *The Fermata* by Nicholson Baker" (see *Sample XXX Puzzle-Pin-up Land™ Cum-centration*, 2013, at 6:20). It's emancipatory.

**There are several recurring motifs, in your work: chess boards, puzzle pieces and crosswords. What is the significance of these images for you?**

Chess signifies a back-and-forth between things. The board's pattern has associations of duality, polarity—ideas still relevant to me. Puzzle pieces signify parts of a greater, unknown "whole." Crosswords signify that there are spaces to fill—they are left empty: you have to figure it out yourself.

89plus is a long-term, international, multi-platform research project co-founded by Simon Castets and Hans Ulrich Obrist, investigating the generation of innovators born in or after 1989 through conferences, books, periodicals, residencies and exhibitions.  
89plus.com



# KALEIDOSCOPE

## REGULARS

**Your recent work also appropriates material such as serial killers' letters and drawings. How do you see this content relating to the other content? Are this and pornography both representations of "evil"?**

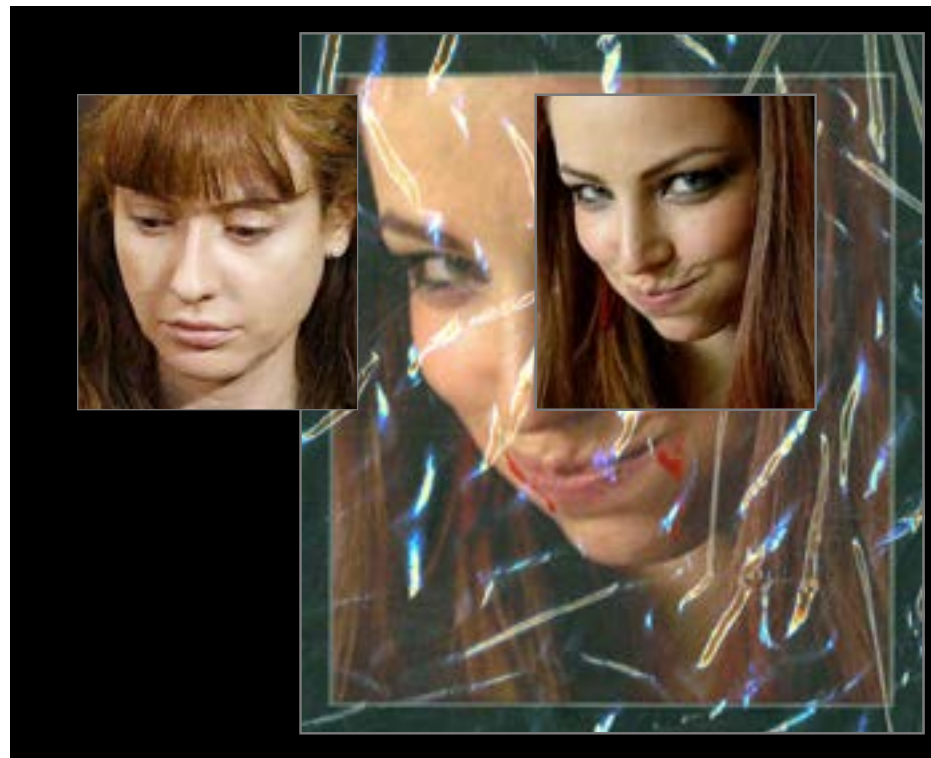
No, they are not representations of "evil" because—to quote Alain Badiou—"Evil does not exist except as a judgment made."

I collect serial killers' ephemera that depict she-devils, pornographic actresses, and other representations of women. It relates to the pornographic images—they both raise questions about conceptions of "good" and "evil" and are forms of collective self-expression—pure, profane, free.

**You've said you "don't think that women need to be saved." Can you explain what you mean by this?**

This was in response to a question about my "refusal to be an activist about my subject." I do not want to rehabilitate anyone, or not to rehabilitate anyone. That is not my job.

**You avoid being photographed and in the past have reported any tagged photos of you on Facebook. What is it about**



**your own image being captured and shared that you don't like?**

I prefer the focus to be placed on the artworks, including the girls in the artworks—their faces, their gazes. Somehow, they seem more representative of me. There is more of me to see in them than in me.

**What kind of social media do you use / not use and why?**

I use Instagram, Tumblr and Twitter. I use Instagram to share my own images; Tumblr for news and updates; Twitter

Above: *Lost Girls (Ft. Ice Cream Killer)*, 2014  
for words. I do not use Facebook—it feels too personal and invasive.

All images courtesy of the artist.

**Would you follow yourself on Instagram?**

I mostly post pictures of awkward, amusing texts ("Call Me! / I'll Whip Your Ass Purple!"), or semi-gore images from B-horror movie reviews, or cute animals. I am into all this stuff, so yes, I would follow myself!

**We are interested in compiling a book of interviews based on banal security questions asked when one sets up an online account. In what year was your father born?**

1954.

**What is your mother's maiden name?**

Radović.

I appreciate the subversiveness of pornography.

# KALEIDOSCOPE

## REGULARS

**What was the name of your elementary school?**

Pakistan International School, and Donley Elementary School.

**What is your oldest sibling's birthday month and year?**

I have one sibling, and his name is Filip; his birthday month is November and year is 1978.

**What is your favorite color?**

Gray.

**For the 89plus Marathon in 2013, you participated digitally through your work *The A Project*, in which you checked out a book from your university's library and marked out every appearance of the letter A, keeping a tal-**

**ly along the way. Where does a project like this sit in your oeuvre?**

The book was *Elogio della menzogna* (ed.: Salvatore S. Nigro)—Italian, of 154 marked pages. Online, its “subjects” are listed as “Truthfulness and Falsehood” and “Deception— Early works to 1800.” The cover of the book features the painting *Portrait of a Woman of the Hofer Family*, dated about 1470 and belong-

ing to the collection of the National Gallery, London; the artist remains unknown, as does the sitter. The de-

I don't think a surface reading of any one thing is an efficient one.

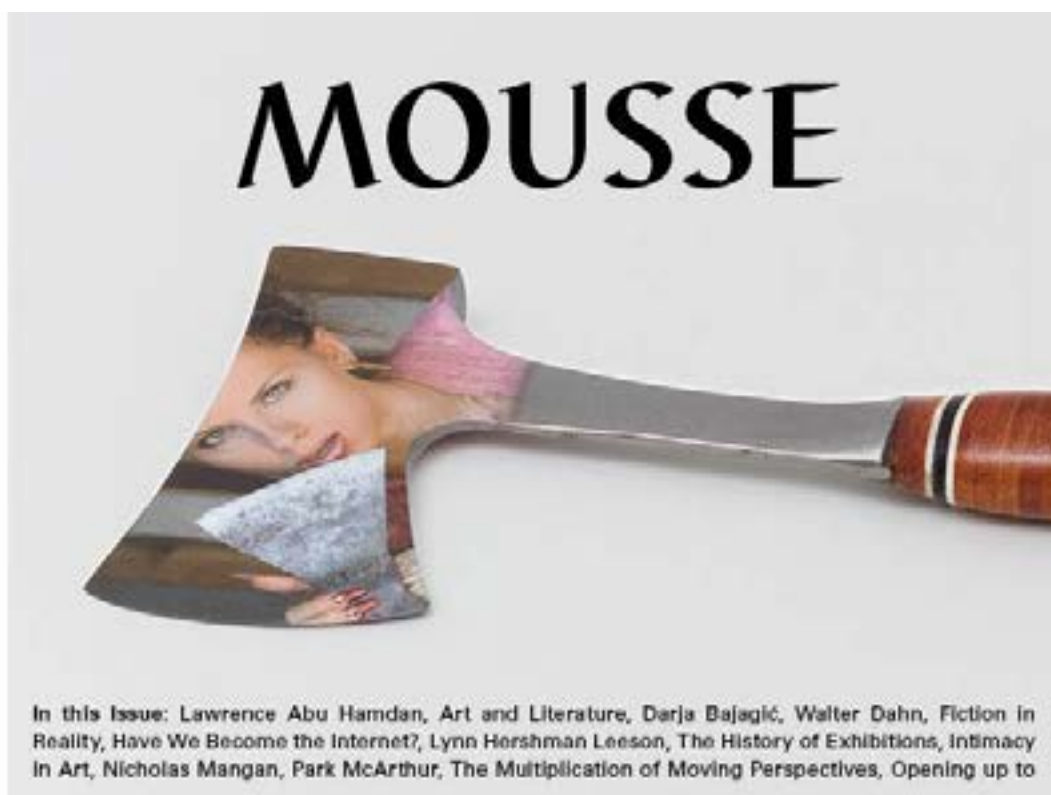
Darja Bajagić (Montenegrin, b. 1990) is an artist who lives and works in New York. She is represented by Room East, New York.

scription of the painting on the National Gallery's website reads, “On her headdress is a fly, either a symbol of mortality or a reminder of the artist's skills of illusion.”

I was drawn to this indecipherability, the sense of mystery. The project began as a passive, then active nihilistic endeavor—and a questioning of meaningfulness. I dwelled on this idea: “Thinking is an arbitrary fiction, the false sign of an equally false inner experience.” ☹

# MOUSSE

Mousse Magazine



In this Issue: Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Art and Literature, Darja Bajagić, Walter Dahn, Fiction in Reality, Have We Become the Internet?, Lynn Hershman Leeson, The History of Exhibitions, Intimacy in Art, Nicholas Mangan, Park McArthur, The Multiplication of Moving Perspectives, Opening up to

N° 47

the Unexpected, Philippe Parreno and Paul B. Preclado, Systems Prosthetics, Time as Material, The Withdrawal of the Artist, Betty Woodman, Steina and Woody Vasulka.

February - March 2015



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The Artist as Curator #6  
(International edition only)



# MOUSSE

## LIVING YOUR UNLIVED LIFE

The work of Darja Bajagić recontextualizes saucy images seen as stereotypes by Western eyes—the clever Slavic fox, the Russian web-matched wife—granting them a sort of liberating ambiguity. In this conversation with Natalia Sielewicz she talks about her work, Agamben and porn.

As she recalls in a recent interview, artist **Darja Bajagić** – who recently graduated from Yale’s MFA painting program – once had a meeting with Robert Storr, Dean of the Yale School of Art: “he literally told me I was crazy and that Yale would pay for all of my counseling and therapy during a leave of absence to seek help for my obsessive-compulsive behavioral habits of collecting images of girls and porn.” Bajagić’s practice is indeed concerned with the ways in which female sexuality is depicted and its various means of web-based distribution. By incorporating pornographic imagery her works address current issues such as power struggles between the sexes, censorship, authorship, and the digital landscape. Bajagić was born in Montenegro and emigrated to the US; she is fascinated with notions of concealment and misdirection, and with the forms in which taboo content is privatized and made accessible on the internet.

## Darja Bajagić

**NATALIA SIELEWICZ** Before and after the fall of the Berlin Wall subversive affirmation and over-identification were at the forefront of neo-avant-garde practices in Eastern Europe, among artists who sought resistance through apparent appropriation of prevailing ideologies. I am thinking in particular about the Slovenian group Laibach and Moscow Conceptualism employing the totalitarian aesthetic, or Oleg Kulik performing the stereotypes of the Eastern European Other in *I Bite America and America Bites Me*. In your work you appropriate sexual imagery found online and meticulously arrange it in formal compositions. In the past you also constructed various identities and started relationships with men on social media using the likenesses of sexy Eastern European women. Do you believe that porn can be a vehicle for subversion and transgression?

### DARJA BAJAGIĆ

I love Laibach—one of my favorite t-shirts (and images) is theirs, and it reads: “Freedom of Speech Go to Hell!” And, yes, in the past, as a pre-teenager, I was collecting images—both pornographic and not—of girls on the Internet to use as aliases on various social networking websites. This was not an art project—I was just socially awkward. I do believe that pornography can be and is a vehicle for subversion and transgression. Its power rests in its contemporary, neutralized state or in its potential to be so: inoperative, deactivated in its “old” or “original” use, and unrestricted to “new” or “translated” uses.

The surface reading of a pornographic image (or anything, really) is not efficient. There is more to see (or never to see) than one sees, usually. Consider this: 1) “a girl is sitting on a bed, simultaneously rubbing herself, and reading a book,” versus 2) “a girl is sitting on a bed, simultaneously rubbing herself, and reading *The Fermata* by Nicholson Baker” (see *Sample XXX Puzzle--Pin-up Land™ Cum-centraion*, 2013 at 6’20”). Noticing the book opens up your view of the image. This is liberating. The image is desexualized, neutralized at once.

This neutralization is primary.

I have been influenced by Agamben. My favorite parts are his dissections of Chloë des Lysses in *Profanations*, considering pornography as a place that allows for the overcoming of all social sep-



arations, not as a global phenomenon to be castigated or praised, censored or saved. **NS**

Since you brought up Agamben, let’s talk about the ethics of appropriation. The women depicted in your canvases stare back at the viewer with penetrating judgement and confidence rather than vulnerability, as if they do not intend to comply with spectators and their desire. Is this example of an indifferent expression a decisive factor in your selection process of images? **DB**

Yes. I often reread Agamben’s texts, especially those on Chloë des Lysses. He writes of her display of indifference, her inexpressivity, rendering inoperative the apparatus of pornography: her face, thus, appears as a “pure means.” (My favorite photograph of her is one in which she is petting a cat and being anally penetrated at the same time.)

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LIVING YOUR UNLIVED LIFE  
N. SIELEWICZ



Left - *Untitled (JeansLesbians)*, 2014  
Right - *I'm Invisible Just Assholes Can See Me*, 2014

All images - Courtesy: the artist and Room East, New York



Left - *Evil*, 2014  
Right, Top - "C6ld c6mf6rt" installation view at Room East, New York, 2014  
Right, Bottom - "Abnormcore" installation views at Room East, New York, 2014

**DARJA BAJAGIĆ**  
NEW GALERIE

# MOUSSE

The gaze of the girls in most of my images, staring back at the viewer, is also liberating. It is an entryway of a different sort into the image. Albeit briefly, it deactivates the event, the subject, and activates a new perspective. It is almost like a new life, really. I also like to think of it as saying: “The joke’s on you.”

**NS**

Speaking of recontextualization and deactivation of the imagery you encounter online and later use in your work, it made me think of the text “Further Materials Toward the Theory of a Hot Babe” by Hannah Black, where she describes the Babe as “the embodiment of the flatness and emptiness of the image,” almost a traceless non-subjectivity. Could you talk about the flatness of the images you use and the flatness of your paintings as framing devices?

**DB**

The flatness of my images rests on the belief that they will mean something else than—or in addition to—what they appear to mean: “pure, profane, free” (Agamben). Their deactivation occurs through a recontextualization as things on mostly monochrome backgrounds, leveling panels of canvas. I am led by the designs of Internet, magazine pages—display methods that generate particular seriality, understandings. Then I think about what would happen if the texts were emptied from those pages, or if they were subtly replaced by other texts, filled with misspellings perhaps, or incorrect translations. **NS**

Considering being lost in translation, there is an interesting case to be made about the particular socio-political and geographic context where we were born (Poland, Montenegro) in relation to import/export of porn from the region. I am talking here about the political backlash in former socialist states who entered free market in the nineties, having to deal with old traditionalist values on the one hand and the new social order of Turbocapitalism on the other. What I find interesting about your work is how it humorously infantilizes the Western fantasy surrounding Eastern European sexuality and desire—the wild Slavic vixen ready for all with her exuberant *jouissance*, the Russian mail-order bride, charming as long as she doesn’t bite back. I wonder if we can perceive your approach as a strategy that destabilizes or frustrates the Western male gaze? Could you elaborate on how it manifests itself in your work and perhaps why this is important to you in relation to Montenegro? **DB**

I do not dwell on conceptions of the “male” gaze, but on the “Western” gaze, perhaps.

Though I was born in Montenegro, I have a distant, strange relationship to that place, since I have not spent more than a single year there, all told. It was through ephemera and individuals that I became connected. So it is safe to say that my own gaze is a combination of both East and West.

I distinctly recall an event to which I could perhaps attribute the beginning of my real fascination with the East: meeting several beautiful Balkan girls in a girls’ bathroom, in ninth grade, who were shocked to hear that I was not aware of any of their favorite “turbo-folk” singers (such as Ceca Ražnatović, for example).

I was only able to caricaturize things from the homeland, mostly via Internet, confirming or disproving my fantasies with my mother.

In my own practice, those caricatures of the wild, Slavic vixen, and the Russian mail-order bride are presented as simultaneously false and true: it is this teetering that destabilizes and frustrates, since it is ultimately unfulfilling; it is available and there, but it is also neither of those things. An example is *Untitled (УМЕТОСТ НЕ ЗНА ЗА ГАРАНЦИЈЕ (ART does not know WARRANTY))*, 2014, (included in “Private Settings” at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw): one of the images in the painting is a headshot of a well-circulated yet nonexistent Russian mail-order bride—one of the girls outed on the very helpful, informative Russian Detective website.

The existence of this possibility of a dual reading is vital. There is never a single perspective anyway. **NS**

We live in an era of radical self-expression, an attention economy in which we continuously obliterate the lines between act and authenticity. Browsing your Twitter account I noticed posts where you declare “Don’t call me babe, call me bitch” or “Angel by Day, Devil by Nighth” made me think of the provocative titles of your works, such as *How Badly Do You Want To See Me Hold My Pigtails Up?* What is the relationship between language and self-design in your work and your online persona? **DB**

I use Twitter for found sentences, words, and images (a conservative estimate would be that 80% of my tweets are sourced from elsewhere) that are usually representative of current themes. I do not necessarily think of my account as embodying a persona, though if I did, it would embody the persona of one of the girls in my images, or their collective identity.

A lot of my titles reflect my Twitter posts: “Angel By Day, Devil By Nighth” was taken from a misspelled iron-on patch I purchased online, and now it is also the title of a painting. The patch itself was included in the painting, too. (Other titles come from the filenames of images included in works, as they were found.) Text patches in the paintings read: “I’m Invisible Just Assholes Can See Me,” or “Enjoy Me I May Never Pass This Way Again.” I find it humorous to imagine the paintings as being the personified narrators of those lines, or the lines as new mottos for the girls, with the patches stuck next to them. Then there is the dry, cringing “Thanks For Looking”—is it sarcastic or sincere?

You are not sure whether to laugh or to cry.

by Natalia Sielewicz



# VULTURE

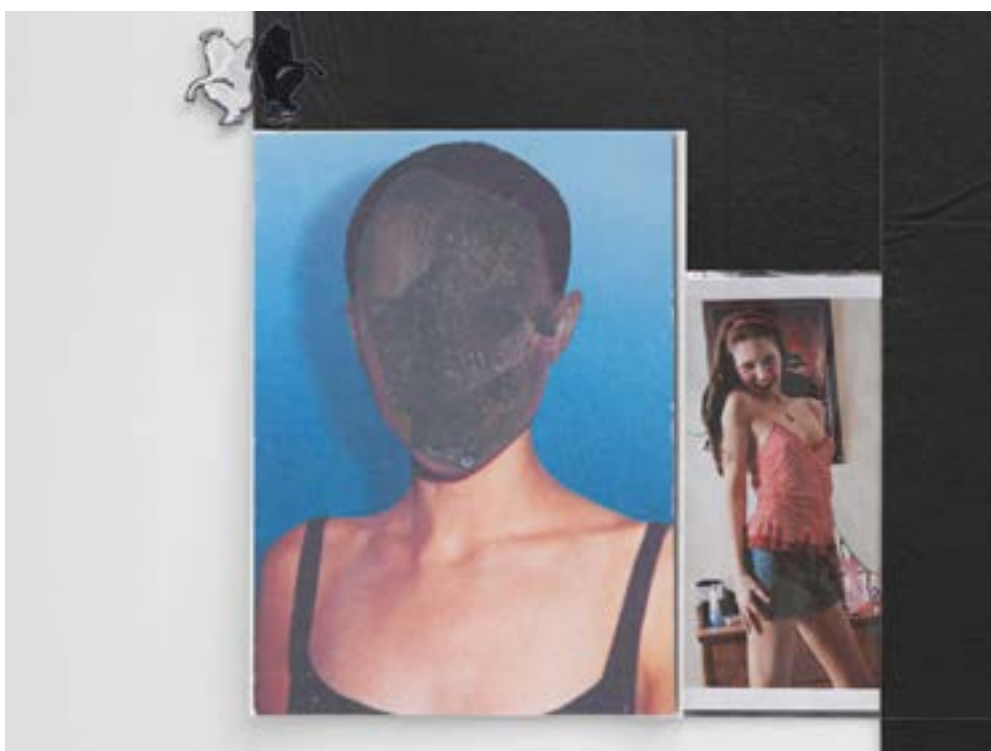
Excerpt from

## THE 19 BEST ART SHOWS OF 2014

by Jerry Saltz

### 6. Darja Bajagic, “C6ld C6mf6rt,” at Room East

This debut solo show is by an artist who says the dean of the Yale School of Art called her “crazy” and claimed that she was sick for “being okay, as a woman, with these kinds of images even existing in the world, let alone propelling them in paintings and in the gallery system.” Bajagic harnessed dark forces in paintings and shadowy collages that bring together sex, violence, loneliness, fantasy, and imagination, and in one show, she joined the artists Elaine Cameron-Weir, Andra Ursuta, Dawn Kasper, Lucy Dodd, and others in a strain of feminism that takes no prisoners and is thankfully and unapologetically upon us.



# ARTILLERY

## DARJA BAJAGIĆ, ROOM EAST / NEW YORK

by Bansie Vasvani

Showcasing appropriated images of young girls alongside pornography from niche fetish websites in her daring mixed-media works, Darja Bajagić's solo exhibition offers "Cold Comfort," as the show's title so aptly indicates. The recent Yale MFA grad stirred controversy in the halls of that venerated school for her work's seemingly apolitical stance on this taboo. Accused of irresponsibly promulgating pornography instead of steering away from it, Bajagić compels the viewer to confront the societal proscription of her subject matter.

In *You Should Hear the Names the Voices In My Head Are Calling You* (2014), a picture of a young girl, her mouth wide open, stares mockingly at the viewer. Diagonally opposite, a smaller porn image of a topless woman holding a dildo between her breasts looks on seductively. The word "brat," which refers to a '90s zine that voiced a critical youth perspective on politics and culture, emblazons the asymmetrical black canvas panels affixed with these lurid images of youth and the sex trade and upends our assumptions about female sexuality.

Similarly, in *Come To The Dark Side We Have Cookies* (2014), a provocative picture of a woman is mostly concealed behind black canvas flaps that can be raised to reveal the entire image. This element of furtiveness, derived from the flaps, recalls the secrecy of peep shows in the '70s and suggests the forbidding and darker side of the sex trade, just as much as the invisible faces covered by a black scarf and ski mask hint at danger and violence in *I'm Invisible Just Assholes Can See Me* (2014). These images of sexual innuendo are juxtaposed with pictures of debonair young girls in camisoles reminiscent of an underaged Nabokovian Lolita. Bajagić's deliberate combination of innocence and carnal allure points to her larger concern about the objectification of the female body.



Yet her union of spare black canvases with sensational female images removed from their original context highlights Bajagić's strategy to neutralize and desexualize pornography. Empowered by their ability to look the viewer in the eye, these commodified women are presented in a new light. Their gaze is directed at the perpetrator, whose prurient interest is met from a position of refusal and mockery. By entering a previously male domain, Bajagić situates her work outside the voyeuristic concern. And by employing shocking and unsettling captions, she allows the viewer to accept the severity of the imagery and cue its interpretation.

Unlike the painter Sue Williams, whose cartoonish imagery often subdued the sexual violence she was confronting, Bajagić's female figures bring our attention closer to the discomfort of her mission. Not always aesthetically pleasing or easily acceptable, her work has the strength of creating a new place for the ostracized other, and chips away at preconceived notions of taboo.

Ultimately, Bajagić's own experience as the outsider—from her birth in Montenegro, upbringing in Egypt, and emigration to the U.S. at the age of nine—places her in a strong position to rebut instead of accept social alienation for herself as much as for the deprecated women she champions.

## WHY DARJA BAJAGIĆ APPROPRIATES PORN AND SERIAL KILLER ART

By Christie Chu

Hot on the heels of her graduation from Yale's painting MFA program, her first solo show on the Lower East Side at ROOM EAST, an upcoming group show at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, and a rave review from New York magazine's Jerry Saltz, Darja Bajagić is without question an emerging artist to watch out for. Just 24 years old, the Montenegro-born, New York-based artist has been a nomad since childhood, living in cities including Cairo and Chicago. Her work, which incorporates pornographic imagery and serial killer "murderabilia," seems to be the beginning of a career that will surely garner a lot of the attention from the art world and the Internet.

Even before graduating, Bajagić was already whipping up controversy within the Yale MFA department, albeit unintentionally. The head of the department, art historian Robert Storr, had such a problem with her use of pornography that he called her crazy and suggested she go to therapy on Yale's budget. Her interest in pornography, Bajagić says, is primarily cultural. She recalls her earlier works as being stylistically minimal, but she eventually sought to merge the conventions of painting and porn. By employing certain compositional strategies she wants to prod viewers into deconstructing her images, rather than simply seeing pornographic photos laden with gendered meaning, or focusing on why a female artist would be interested in pornography in the first place.

Her artwork opens up conversations on complex issues such as power struggles between the sexes, censorship, authorship, and the digital landscape. Her work elicits a broad spectrum of reactions and reviews that range from cautiously positive to harshly negative. But to say of her work's success that "sex sells" or "it's for shock value" would be reductive.

Growing up antisocial and with access to Web TV (an almost ancient way of accessing the Internet), there were only a few things to do: watch game shows and sports, or go on chat rooms. As a girl in her early teens, living in a very protective household, the artist made up several profiles of characters she would play online. Thus began her interest in collecting sexy or raunchy images of women. Her fascination with concealment and misdirection, something that is easily achieved through the Internet, is a common theme permeating her work. Bajagić's more recent, multi-layered flap paintings flanked with laser cut-outs and patches purchased on eBay, as well as her serial killer art pieces (some of which contain information no one can see without altering the piece's composition), speak to this idea.

But again, why does she want to incorporate serial killer art? The artist says that after the adversity she encountered at Yale, she felt it wasn't anyone's place to say what kind of art a person should make. In fact, the department's consistent negative critique of her practice helped fuel her appetite for making this type of work. One of her series juxtaposes the memorabilia she buys online at sites like Serialkillersink.net (a very controversial website) with images of a former Soviet surveillance agency director's country home—where he kept his stash of illegal pornography. Such pieces question whether authority figures (let alone laypeople) should be given the power to pass judgement on who can and cannot make art.

Bajagić follows the generation of contemporary artists who first appropriated others' imagery to make it their own—Richard Prince immediately comes to mind—but her work most certainly isn't something you've seen before. It isn't safe or pretty, and it forces viewers to face the most taboo, perverse, trashy, and fetishistic parts of our culture, an alternate world seemingly so distant, but lurking just a click away. While not many people want to aesthetically and conceptually engage with her work—perhaps because they can't relate to porn stars and inmates, or simply from fear of things outside their comfort zone—the dialogue it creates will endure when most art simply aims to please.

What's next for the rising artist? Besides working on her art, she will be collaborating with Oliver Vereker on the artwork for the second release from his experimental, noise-techno label, Endangered Species, slated for November. The music is his own, while the image set to accompany Vereker's music is of Natalie Portman's scratched out face, taken from Bajagić's piece I'm Invisible Just Assholes Can See Me. Between his sonic tendencies and her artwork's satanic references, the pairing evokes a scene like the opening club sequence in Stephen Norrington's vampiric cult classic, *Blade* (1998)—minus the blood shower.



# VULTURE

Excerpt from

## **JERRY SALTZ DIVES INTO THE LOWER EAST SIDE ART SCENE AND EMERGES OPTIMISTIC**

by Jerry Saltz

Last week on the Lower East Side, the art galleries opened the 2014-2015 season in a bigger, more viable, and better place. New arrivals have landed; start-ups of the past few years have taken wonderful root; artists are sticking with their galleries rather than going to the burly shores of megagalleries. At this stage in its development, the 1980s DIY East Village scene saw mass artist defections to Soho powerhouses, and galleries decamping there as well. But here in the Lower East Side, shows and spaces have improved in the past year or so.

This may have less to do with the art getting better than that the type of work shown here has started influencing taste and ideas across the map — indeed, one of the most annoying recent trends, the muted abstract look-alike painting I've been calling zombie formalism, got a start in this hothouse. This phenomenon tells us that the Lower East Side is now far more than just not Chelsea. Art isn't better here than everywhere else; the neighborhood isn't purer; in fact, the rents are higher on the Lower East Side than on the Upper East Side. Still, the clouds of commerce don't feel as portentous here. And yet two days ago, standing outside his Broome Street gallery, Canada, Phil Grauer mused, "Can we keep going? Is this phase over? When will everyone start hating this scene?" Snickering, I said, "We've already starting hating you. Which tells you that you all must be doing something right."

...

Hands down, the most promising young artist I saw last Sunday was 25-year-old Darja Bajagic at Room East. We get shaped asymmetrical assemblages that use painted and printed canvas, letters of prisoners who write to young women who write to them, and clipped images from *Brat* magazine that cater to men who fetishize pubescent girls and the girls who want to be fetishized. There's a drawing from a serial killer and decals of busty she-devils firing guns and buxom angels who only hold them. It's hellfire voodooed beautiful and a delve into the cursed and excommunicated who still live in society looking for ways to express their yearnings. These yearnings can rub people raw or the wrong way, as Bajagic knows. In a recent interview, she said that after meeting with Robert Storr, dean of the Yale Art School, "he literally told me I was crazy ... that Yale would pay for all of my counseling and therapy ... to seek help for my obsessive-compulsive behavioral habits of collecting images of girls and porn ... that I should look deep inside of myself to figure out what are the problems I have with myself, as a woman, for being O.K. with these kinds of images even existing in the world, let alone propelling them in paintings and in the gallery system."

Storr was right in one respect: Bajagic is harnessing a dark force that is with us all the time, an image world never more than a click away, one that shadows everything we do, a world of predator, prey, the haunted, transformative forces of sex, violence, loneliness, fantasy, and imaginations that can't formulate spaces not threatening. With this show, Bajagic is joining fellow female artists Cameron-Weir, Andra Ursuta, Dawn Kasper, Lucy Dodd, and others too numerous to mention; a beautiful strain of feminism that takes no prisoners is upon us.