ANDREJA KULUNČIĆ

ZAGREB: PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL VRAPČE
The visual artist Andreja Kulunčić studied at art academies in Novi Sad, Belgrade and Budapest. She is currently on the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb, assistant professor in the Animated film and new media department.

During her artistic career she has exhibited at the world’s biggest exhibitions and biennials, such as *Documenta11* in Kassel, *Manifeste4* in Frankfurt, the Istanbul Biennial, the Liverpool Biennial, the New Delhi Triennial and also in museums such as the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, PS1 in New York, Palais de Tokyo in Paris, the Carré d’Art in Nimes and museums of contemporary art in Tallinn, Budapest, Warsaw, Moscow, Ljubljana and Zagreb.

In 2013 she had two big solo shows in the Museum of Contemporary Art in Mexico City and in the Salon of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade. In 2014 her work was included at an exhibition in the French city of Nimes, among those of 15 artists chosen to represent the art scene of Zagreb since 1950. During 2015 she has shown her work at the Osage Gallery in Hong Kong and the Garage Museum in Moscow, and had a month-long residency in South Africa.

She has won a number of prizes, including the prize of the 10th Indian Triennial (New Delhi) and the Grand Prix in the New Media Category (in Split). Since 1994 she has put on a total of 22 solo shows and taken part in more than one hundred collective exhibitions.
The artistic work of Andreja Kulunčić is characterized by its examination of different aspects of social relations. Interested in socially critical themes, she has developed a distinctive research methodology for work in the domain of the visual arts, focusing on neuralgic points of different societies. Her works always involve interdisciplinary processes of collaboration and the joint creation of a work in especially constructed networks of professionals of various disciplines (sociology, philosophy, science, design, programming).

The works often demand the active involvement of the public, which is invited to „finish” the work. She works simultaneously inside and outside the art world, making use of gallery space and the institutional artistic framework as just one of the possible areas for an active consideration of social relations and practices.

In her works, Andreja Kulunčić takes issue with some of the symptoms of contemporary society, from xenophobia to depression, with a special emphasis on the burning problems of transitional and post-transitional settings. She often turns a gallery into a space for a workshop and for learning, a kind of social laboratory, the results of which are felt in everyday life.
„DESTIGMATISATION“

in association with the patients of the Vrapče Psychiatric Hospital
Zagreb, 2010 – 2014
From 2010 until 2014 a project, developed in association with the patients of the Vrapče Psychiatric Hospital and a team of assistants, was created. It deals with the problem of discrimination and prejudices about people who suffer from mental illnesses and disturbances.

It consists of three separate segments: „DESTIGMATISATION”, a video installation about schizophrenia, 2010

„WHITIN”, a video installation about depression, 2012

„VRAPČE PILLOWS”, actions and interventions in public space, Facebook and the web site, 2013 - 2014
I thought I would really be able to solve my problems by myself. There was even a moment in which that way of thinking.
Mom, what are you doing? God forbid something actually does happen to you after what happened with spasms in my stomach, I would brush my teeth and cry in the morning and think:

the first thing I remember is the day clinic. The first time I came - I completed two cycles of therapy.
The “VRAPČE PILLOWS” are made by patients with mental health problems in their endeavor to open up a dialogue about the problem of the stereotypes that became attached to them because of their conditions. The pillows are symbolic objects in which associations of the warmth and safety of home are brought together with their repugnance at the hospital ward.
The strategy of the project was to promote the pillows through a media campaign as public speech about the taboo theme of the psychiatric hospital, patients, and mental illnesses.
A large number of people got involved in the project, carrying pillows with them to the places they moved in, and putting photographs with pillows on the Facebook page of the project. After a few days they would send the pillow to a member of their family, a friend or a neighbor.
„WOMEN.INDEX“

interactive participatory project
The interactive, participatory project WOMEN.INDEX was developed in the period from 2007 to 2014. The project, which was set up again from the start in each city, was developed in collaboration with women, not only those who visited the exhibition, but – and above all, with passers-by, since the posters were set up in well frequented urban locations.
Calling on a freephone, the passers-by could answer the question: How do I feel?
They were asked to choose one of the answers on offer – satisfied, discriminated, abused.
The second part of the project consists of live-statistics, showing the percentages of choices at
the frequented locations in the city, on a video projection as part of the exhibition and on several
current web portals.
“CREATIVE STRATEGIES”

multidisciplinary research project
2010 – 2015 (ongoing)
From 2010, with a large group of associates, the artist has developed the multidisciplinary research project CREATIVE STRATEGIES, which is still ongoing.

The point of departure for the project is the fact that the institutional mechanisms that should be there to meet the needs of the citizens are frequently inappropriate or inadequate, which gives rise to daily efforts at coping, the development of personal and group strategies and inventions. Subsequently, such forms of self-organization have created rich and useful resources for the improvement of the conditions of life.

http://www.creative-strategies.info/
The first module of the project *Everyday Divergences* explores life in “the Mammoth”, a building in New Zagreb in which 1200 flats house 5,500 people. The artist explores the building and the park as a structured community that the inhabitants impact with new forms of sociality and spatial interventions. In the last phase of the project a prize-giving presentation of the activities of the inhabitants is organized, in which they choose the most interesting and creative models of taking part in the community.
The second module of the project entitled *Conquering and Constructing the Common* was developed at the invitation of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Mexico City 2013. The artist explored the most impoverished communities from the outskirts of Mexico City that functioned only thanks to forms of self-organisation through which they compensated for the shortcomings and dysfunctionality of institutional structures.
The artist invited self-organized communities into a Museum to talk of the examples of their practices, organizes workshops, invites experts, students and other guests and accordingly enables marginal groups to become visible in a space consecrated to the dominant culture. During the exhibition, the museum premises became a creative zone for learning and critical reflections.
The third modul of *Creative Strategies* was built on the same principles. This was *Toolkit for Joint Action*, created in 2014, as part of a solo exhibition in Zagreb’s Nova Gallery. The artist asked several activist groups to take part: Direct Democracy at School, the New Syndicate, BRID, the Women’s Front, FEM Front, ZMAG and Right to the City, with the idea of creating a portable educational and activist platform.
During 2015 the *Toolkit* travelled around cities in Croatia, the aim being to educate, inform, to raise awareness, to open up a public dialogue and activate the public, primarily the secondary school pupils it was meant for. Here art became a tool for the transmission of knowledge, offering an infrastructure for informal education and the creation of new creative strategies capable of responding to the concrete situations and conditions in society.
CREATIVE STRATEGIES, EXHIBITION VIEW OF ALL THREE MODULES, OSAGE GALERIJA HONG KONG, 2015

[Texts about the artist used in the presentation are written by Irena Bekic, Zoran Eric and Iva Rada Jankovic. Photos by: Nada Zgank, Ivo Martinovic, Vedran Metelko, Ivan Kuharic, Sasa Reljic, Martin Polak, Eduardo Lomas and Kwan SheungChi.]