

KLEMENS
CZURDA and
JUDITH MILZ:
VLADO Z.

KURATORSKI CIKEL: KONSTRUIRANE IDENTITETE

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CURATED SERIES: CONSTRUCTED IDENTITIES



Vlado Z. je oče, mož, ljubimec. Ima prijatelje in sovražnike, pozna ljudi, ki bi z njim radi poslovali, kot tudi take, ki bi ga želeli spraviti v zapor. Vlado Z. je morda preprodajalec ukradenih avtomobilov. Zlahka bi lahko bil tudi preprodajalec orožja, morda celo jugoslovanski vohun. V različnih avtomobilih ga njegovi skrivni posli vodijo po poteh med Nemčijo, Francijo in Hrvaško. Živi na mnogih naslovih in se včasih predstavlja kot Marko Krtinić, včasih kot Ivo Horvat. Vlado Z. je Jugoslovan, a kot pravi sam, zaradi svojih anti-komunističnih prepričanj nikoli ni bil sprejet kot Hrvat, in ker je bil rojen na napačnem koncu Hrvaške, nikoli kot Srb. Dopisuje si z Jürgenom Hippenstiel-Imhausenom, direktorjem podjetja Imhausen-Chemie, med drugim vpletenega v afero izdelave kemijskega orožja v Libiji, in Slobodanom Miloševićem, ki ga prijateljsko naslavlja Sloba. V njegovi zgodbi je mnogo vrzeli, njegova pričevanja so nezanesljiva in nemalokrat izmišljena. Z gotovostjo lahko trdimo le, da se je Vlado Z. v začetku devetdesetih let prejšnjega stoletja s svojim kovinsko srebrnim Audijem 80 S ustavil v mestu Karlsruhe ter tam preživel nekaj časa, za sabo pa pustil škatlo, polno dokumentov in pisem, naslovljenih na sodišča, revije in časopise, njegove prijatelje in družino.

Zbrani material, predstavljen na pričujoči razstavi, je poskus, vaja v pripovedovanju, kjer se realno meša s fiktivnim. Na podlagi naključno najdene zbirke dokumentov Klemens Czurda in Judith Milz poskušata izslediti in rekonstruirati zgodbo neznanca, medtem pa pod vprašaj postavljata status

Vlado Z. is a father, a husband, a lover. He has friends and enemies, there are people who want to do business with him and people who want to put him in jail. He might be a dealer of stolen cars. He could also easily have been an arms dealer, perhaps even a Yugoslav spy. In different cars, his secret affairs lead him on routes between Germany, France and Croatia. He lives at many addresses and sometimes introduces himself as Marko Krtinić, sometimes as Ivo Horvat. Vlado Z. is a Yugoslav, but, as he says himself, because of his anti-communist beliefs, he was never accepted as a Croat, and because he was born on the wrong end of Croatia, never as a Serb. He is in correspondence with Jürgen Hippenstiel-Imhausen, the director of Imhausen-Chemie, who was involved in the chemical weapons manufacturing scandal in Libya, among others, and Slobodan Milošević, whom he addresses familiarly as Sloba. There are many gaps in his story, his testimonies are unreliable and often fictional. One can only say with certainty that Vlado Z. stopped in Karlsruhe with his silver metallic Audi 80 S in the early 1990s and spent some time there, leaving behind a box full of documents and letters, addressed to the courts, to newspapers and magazines, to his friends and family.

The collected material, presented in this exhibition, is an experiment, an exercise in storytelling, where the real is mixed with the fictional. Based on an accidentally found collection of documents, Klemens Czurda and Judith Milz attempt to trace and reconstruct the story of a stranger while questioning the



dokumenta kot objektivnega dokaza. Kaj nam faktografsko podajanje dejstev zares pove o ljudeh in dogodkih, ki jih beležijo, in kakšno rekonstrukcijo preteklosti tovrstni zapisi sploh ponujajo? S pomočjo različnih pripovedniških sredstev umetnika prelivata dejstva dokumentov in dvomljive osebne zapise v nestabilno pripoved, ki namesto odgovorov ponuja nova vprašanja in nenehno spreminjajočo se, zmuzljivo identiteto protagonista. V kovinsko srebrnem Audiju 80, enakem tistemu, s katerim se je v Karlsruhe pripeljal Vlado Z., se v želji, da bi med sabo povezala dogodke, o katerih pričajo najdeni dokumenti, podata na pot v njegov rojstni kraj. Avto, ki je za mnoge migrantske delavce z Balkana še vedno ultimativni statusni simbol in pooseblja obljubo o boljšem življenju na Zahodu, ju popelje mimo pokrajin, ki jih je na svoji poti domov opazoval tudi Vlado Z., in na koncu pripelje v vas, kjer sta soočena s še ne zaceljenimi ranami in tišino, nezmožnostjo govorjenja o preteklosti.

Med samim postopkom odkrivanja kdo Vlado Z. je, se pred njima razgrinja večplastna zgodba malega gastarbajterskega kriminalca. Tako kot sta se umetnika zapletla v štrene te mestoma meglene in nejasne zgodbe, tudi gledalcu ne ponujata jasne linearne pripovedi, temveč mu prepuščata proste roke, da sam konstruira zgodbo z več možnimi zaključki. Kot do danes ostajajo brezimne mnogotere žrtve, storilci in zločini vojne, ki se je odvila na teritoriju bivše Jugoslavije, se poimenovanju in zaključku spretno izmika tudi Vladova zgodba.

status of a document as objective evidence. What does the factual presentation of documents really tell us about the people and events they record, and what kind of reconstruction of the past do such records offer at all? Through various narrative means, the artists pour the documented facts and the dubious personal notes into an unstable narrative that offers new questions instead of answers, as well as the constantly changing, elusive identity of its protagonist. In a silver metallic Audi 80, same as the one that Vlado Z. drove to Karlsruhe, they set out for his birthplace in order to connect the events recorded in the found documents. The car, which is still the ultimate status symbol for many migrant workers from the Balkans and embodies the promise of a better life in the West, takes them past the provinces that Vlado observed on his way home, finally bringing them to a village where they are faced with not yet healed wounds and silence, an inability to talk about the past.

During the process of finding out who Vlado Z. is, a multi-layered story about a petty criminal unfolds before them. Just as the artists themselves are entangled in the twists and turns of this sometimes vague and unclear story, they do not offer the viewer a clear linear narrative, but leave him free to construct a story with several possible conclusions on his own. Just like many victims, perpetrators and crimes of the war that took place on the territory of the former Yugoslavia remain nameless to this day, Vlado's story skillfully eludes both names and conclusions.



Na tem projektu s premori delata od leta 2013, ko sta našla škatlo v zabojniku. Zakaj sta se odločila slediti Vladovi zgodbi? Kako pristopata do novo odkritih informacij in kako jih vključita v obstoječo pripoved?

Judith:

Preden sva naletela na to odkritje, nisem poznala zapletov in kaosa jugoslovanskih vojn, a me je fascinirala ideja najdbe dokumentov, ki že na prvi pogled izgledajo kot nekaj. Z vsakim kosom papirja se je v nemščini, francoščini, angleščini in hrvaščini razpirala zgodba Vlada Z. Razprla se je v jasno sliko, ki jo je bilo potrebno – takoj, ko je bila določena – spet revidirati. Ker gre za njegove dokumente, ki jih je napisal ali prejel on, bi lahko domnevali, da bo slika introspektivna. Vendar pa zgodbo, ki jo poskuša povedati v teh dokumentih, konstruira funkcija dokazovanja njegove nedolžnosti in izpusta iz zapora. Kako dejansko predstaviti ta brezizhoden položaj oziroma kaj lahko v teh okoliščinah iskreno rečemo o Vladu Z.? Usoda Vlada Z. je bila v devetdesetih letih prejšnjega stoletja morda zelo vsakdanja – preprodaja avtomobilov, mali kriminalci, ljudje, ki bežijo iz nekdanje Jugoslavije, starajoči se Hrvat, ujet v Karlsruheju –, a po 30 letih in še vedno nerazrešeni pripovedi o jugoslovanskih vojnah njegova zgodba postane nosilec enega od možnih narativov, ki vodi nazaj k tistim dogodkom in se nadaljuje v sedanjost.

Klemens:

Spomnim se prvotnega vala navdušenja, ko sva odkrila, da zabojnik, na katerega sva naletela, vsebuje toliko več kot samo stran vržene odpadke. Ko sva začela, sem menil, da bo najino delo pomenilo, da vzameva vse

You have been working on this project on and off since 2013. What was the reason you decided to follow Vlado's story? How do you approach newly discovered information and how do you incorporate it into an existing narrative?

Judith:

I was unfamiliar with the entanglements and turmoil of the Yugoslav wars before stumbling into this discovery, but I was fascinated by the idea of having found documents that looked like something from first glance. With every piece of paper, Vlado Z.'s story unfolded in German, French, English and Croatian. It unfolded into a clear picture that – as soon as it was established – had to be revised again. As they are his documents, written or received by him, one might think it's introspective. Yet the story he tries to tell in these documents is constructed by the function of proving his innocence and getting him out of jail. How can this double bind scenario actually be told, or rather, under these circumstances, what could be said about Vlado Z. sincerely? Vlado Z.'s fate might have been a very mundane story in the 1990s – car dealing, petty criminals, people fleeing ex-Yugoslavia, an ageing Croat stuck in Karlsruhe –, yet after 30 years and the still unsolved retelling of the Yugoslav wars, his story becomes the carrier of one possible narrative that leads back to those events and continues into the present.

Klemens:

I remember the initial wave of excitement when we realized that the container we stumbled upon contained so much more than discarded waste. When we started out, I felt like our work would mean that we take



OTKUP METALA
PAPIRA I KARTONA

OTKUP ME
PAPIRA I KAR
KORUŠCE META



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te koščke in dele osebne zgodovine ter jih združiva znotraj širšega okvira zgodovinskih dogodkov, ki so oblikovali nedavno zgodovino Evrope – torej razpad Jugoslavije ob koncu hladne vojne. Na najinih potovanjih pa sva odkrivala vedno več fragmentov in zgodb, ne poveznega tkiva Vladove pripovedi. Na nek način najino delo in vsi dokumenti ter osebe, ki sva jih našla in srečala, kraji, ki sva jih videla, stvari, ki sva jih izkusila, kličejo po ponovnem premisleku o tem, kako pripovedujemo zgodbe – ne le individualne, kot na primer tista o študentih umetnosti, ki so poskušali prodati avto, ali o malem kriminalcu z Balkana – temveč tudi večje, kot so vojna, izgradnja države in organizirani kriminal. Lepota se skriva v poljubni poti, po kateri nas pelje življenje, v čudovitih fragmentih posamezne usode, v liminalnih dejanjih in v tistem navidezno banalnem, ne pa v linearnem narativu, v katerega nas pogosto prisilijo verjeti. Meni je ravno to privlačnost najinega dela z Vladom. Naučila sva se tako veliko, a hkrati je še veliko več za odkriti in toliko veliko načinov videnja naše preteklosti, tako individualno kot kolektivno.

Kaj so po vašem mnenju podobnosti med postopkoma arhiviranja in pripovedovanja zgodb? Kdaj se posamezno zabeleženi podatki združijo v zgodbi?

Judith:

Najbolj pomembno se mi zdi, da te dokumenti in arhivski material, s katerim se ukvarjaš, seveda pritegnejo, in včasih se vtisneš v tisto, kar raziskuješ. Ukvarjati se z arhivi na tak način pomeni sčasoma tudi postati del arhiva samega. A na profesio-

all these bits and pieces of a personal story and put them together, backed by a bigger framework of historical events that shaped the recent history of Europe – namely the dissolution of Yugoslavia amidst the end of the Cold War. On our journeys, we kept finding more and more fragments and stories, rather than the connecting tissue for Vlado's narrative. In a sense, our work and all the documents and people we have found and met, the places we have seen, the things we have experienced, call for a rethinking of how we tell stories – not only individual ones, such as the one about art students trying to sell a car, or the one about a petty crook from the Balkans – but also the bigger ones, those about war, nation-building and organized crime. Beauty lies in the arbitrary path that life takes us on, the pretty fragments of individual fate, the liminal actions and the seemingly banal, rather than in the linear narration we are often made to believe in. To me, this is the appeal of our work with Vlado. We have learned so much and yet there is so much more to discover, and so many ways of seeing our past, both individually and collectively.

In your opinion, what are the similarities between the processes of archiving and storytelling? When do individual recorded facts come together in a story?

Judith:

What strikes me as most important is that when dealing with documents and archival material, you, of course, engage with it, and sometimes you end up inscribing yourself in what you are researching. Dealing with archives in this respect also means eventu-





nalni ravni je dejanje arhiviranja nekaj, kjer ugibanja, preference in vrednotenja nimajo nobene vloge. Ali ne bi pri delu na zgodbi, osnovani na malo verjetnem materialu, nadaljnja domišljija, fikcija in pripovedništvo bili še najbližje temu, o čemer bi material Vlada Z. dejansko lahko govoril? Individualno zabeležena dejstva se očitno združijo v zgodbo, kadarkoli nekdo začne čutiti, da bi bil tisti, ki jo pove.

Klemens

Po mojem mnenju sta arhiviranje in pripovedovanje zgodb skoraj sopomenki. Zame je bistveno vprašanje, kdo ima priložnost povedati zgodbo. Kdo se odloči, kateri del zgodbe je vreden pripovedi in katerega se arhivira? Kaj se lahko izpusti in kaj se mora ohraniti? Kot tujcu v odnosu do nedavne zgodovine "Jugosfere" mi je edinstveno privlačno, da ni videti, da bi obstajal nek univerzalen arhiv, določen konsenz ali objektivnost. Pri Vladu se zdi, da je bil zloglasen lažnivec, ki je za lastne cilje razblinjal meje med tistim, kar bi lahko bilo videno kot dejstvo, in tistim, kar je fikcija. A verjetno je v tem več resnice, kot je videti. V svojih mislih imam zelo živo predstavo, kdo je bil Vlado – ne le ena oseba, temveč množica osebnosti, ki si delijo skupne lastnosti.

ally becoming part of the archive itself. Yet, at a professional level, the act of archiving is something where speculation, preferences and evaluations have no say. Working on a story based on implausible material, wouldn't further imagination, fiction and storytelling come closest to what Vlado Z.'s material really could be about? I guess individually recorded facts come together in a story whenever someone begins to feel like being the one to tell it.

Klemens

In my view, archiving and storytelling are almost synonyms. Who gets to tell a story is the core question here for me. Who decides which part of a story is worth telling and which is to be archived? What can be left out and what needs to be preserved? As an outsider in relation to the recent history of the "Yugosphere", the unique appeal for me is that there seems to be no universal archive, no stipulated consensus or objectivity. With Vlado, it seems that he was a notorious liar, dissolving the boundaries between what can be seen as a fact and what is fiction for his own goals. Yet there is probably more truth in it than we might see. I have a very vivid idea in my mind of who Vlado was – not just one person, but a multitude of personalities that share common traits.

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