

HAND JOB: What we know about contemporary non-traditional embroidery

7.11 - 26.11.2022.

Exhibition curator: Amalija Stojsavljević

Artists: Mia Arsenijević (SRB), Nina Babić (BIH), Saša Bezjak (SL), Milica Dukić (SRB-ISR), Mirjana Đotunović Mustra (AT-SRB), NONpractical Women (SRB), Mojca Senegačnik (SL)

The exhibition called HAND JOB is a research project aimed at mapping, contextualization and critical analysis of the use of embroidery as an artistic medium in the art scenes of our region. Who are the authors who actively work in embroidery as an artistic medium and why in it, what kind of visual expression is enabled by the embroidery technique, is there a political / emancipatory / feminist potential of works created in this technique, etc. are some of the questions that would be answered by the exhibition. By selecting six artists and one collective—Mia Arsenijević (SRB), Nina Babić (BIH), Saša Bezjak (SL), Milica Dukić (SRB-ISR), Mirjana Đotunović Mustra (AT-SRB), NONpractical Women (SRB), Mojca Senegačnik (SL)—in one place it would gather and present the variety of topics and techniques that accompany this medium.

In our region, embroidery was a mandatory female job and was learned from the earliest childhood. It was an indicator of social and material status, age, regional and national affiliation. At the end of the 19th century, it became part of the primary education of female children, and later secondary, high school and vocational education. After the Second World War, handicrafts, i.e. knowledge of embroidery, were reduced to a household. However, a deeper analysis of this medium, its performative aspects, the context in which it is created and the motives / themes it depicts, reveals completely new strata of its meaning and cultural interpretation.

Reading the graphic novel by Iranian-French author Marjana Satrapi called *Embroideries*¹, as well as some of Svetlana Slapšak's articles such as *Woman and Employment*², we get the impression that embroidery is not just a physical threading through the canvas / leather, but it creates various a different discursive dimensions such as femininity and feminism, resistance, the value of informal conversation, parallel histories, etc. The power of embroidery lies in its ability to combine culturally contradictory concepts, such as private-public, pleasure-imposed work, deft hands-smart head, patriarchy-female emancipation, old-fashioned-modern, individual-collective, art-craft, etc. In addition to having a therapeutic effect, its essential characteristic is that it can also serve as a kind of historical archive of marginalized groups, i.e. a representative of unheard voices.³ Starting from the claim of Rozsika Parker that a woman who embroiders is not seen as someone who creates art, but rather as an expression of femininity,⁴ with this exhibition we want to abolish prejudices against the medium itself as traditional, repetitive and backward, while on the other hand we would present the discursive potential it carries.

¹ Marjana Satrapi, *Embroideries*, Pantheon Graphic Library, 2003.

² Svetlana Slapšak, *Žene i zapošljivost*, Peščanik, 2018. <https://pecscanik.net/zene-i-zaposljivost/>

³ Ria van der Merwe, *From a silent past to a spoken future. Black women's voices in the archival process*, Archive and Records, Vol.40, 2019, P. 239-258.

⁴ Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the making of the feminine*, Routledge, 1986, str. 19.

BIOGRAPHIES:

MIA ARSENIJEVIĆ

Dr. Mia Arsenijević (Lukovac) was born in 1985 in Kragujevac. She graduated in 2007 from the Academy of Arts in Novi Sad, painting department, in the class of professor Jovan Rakidžić. She completed her master's studies in painting in 2010 in the class of the same professor. She received her Phd in 2015 at the University of Arts in Belgrade, Department of Theory of Art and Media. She is employed at the Faculty of Pedagogical Sciences of the University of Kragujevac as an assistant professor in the field of Fine Arts with teaching methodology. Member of ULUS since 2008. She is actively engaged in artistic, curatorial and scientific work. She had 19 solo- and over 40 collective exhibitions in the country and abroad. She was awarded three times for her work.

NINA BABIĆ

Nina Babić (1983, Banja Luka) graduated from the Academy of Arts in Banja Luka, after which she went to Athens, where she also graduated from the Academy of Arts with a focus on costume design and scenography. The years she dedicated to creativity enriched her biography with numerous solo and collective exhibitions, and her works had the opportunity to be introduced to the artistic public in America, Germany, Greece, Serbia, Macedonia, Croatia, Republic of Srpska and Bosnia and Herzegovina. As an engaged artist who listens to the situation in her environment, she understands art and her own work as a means of pointing out the problems in contemporary society. Often, her works are directly related to the position of women in today's society. As a female artist, she reflects on the problems of contemporary women, but also on patterns that have influenced the image of women today in our region. As an artist living and creating in the 21st century, she needs to preserve traditional expression while following contemporary trends. She is the winner of two awards from the Academy of Arts in Banja Luka and employed at the Technological School in Banja Luka as a professor of art subjects.

SAŠA BEZJAK

Saša Bezjak, born in Maribor in 1971, graduated in Sculpture from the Faculty of Education in Maribor in 1999 under the supervision of Prof. Darko Golija, and in 2001 in Painting from the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Ljubljana under the supervision of Prof. Metka Krašovec and Prof. Nadja Zgonik. At the same institution, she also completed a master's degree in Sculpture under the supervision of Prof. Lujo Vodopivec. Since 2002, she has been working as a freelance artist accredited by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia. In 2013, she was awarded the title Expert Adviser for the field Special Didactics by the University of Maribor. For the past two decades, she has been mentoring youth and adults through her art workshops. Her pedagogical activities take place mainly in the rural environment of the Štajerska, Prlekija and Prekmurje regions. Since 2013, she has been active in the Museum of Madness in Trate, where she helps people who are often denied the opportunity to creatively engage with art due to prejudices and stereotypes about disabled people, to gain this life experience.

She has presented herself in many group and solo exhibitions in Slovenia and beyond. Her works are part of many Slovenian art collections (Maribor Art Gallery; PAC Pomurje Academic Club; Museum of

Modern and Contemporary Art Koroška; Kibla Multimedia Centre; Murska Sobota Gallery) and abroad (Imago Mundi, Luciano Benetton Collection, Italy; Fondazione Pasquale Batista, Italy).

In 2020, she received a working grant from the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia, while the project Symposium Madness and Creativity? (2015) and Open Studio (2017) are also worth mentioning. In 2014, the Dr. Anton Trstenjak Foundation supported the publication of her monograph entitled Saša Bezjak, Works. In 2016, her work The Art Actions of Saša Bezjak was published in the TOX collection of the KIBLA Association for Culture and Education. In 2021, she again received support from the Dr Anton Trstenjak Foundation, the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia and the Municipality of Gornja Radgona, which enabled her to publish a monograph entitled Risbe/Drawings with the publishing house Umetniški kabinet Primož Premzl. In 2021, she was awarded the title of Assistant Professor of Fine Arts at the University of Maribor. She is a freelance collaborator at the Department of Early Childhood Education at the Faculty of Pedagogy in Maribor.

She has lived and worked in Gornja Radgona since 2006.

Web: [Sasa Bezjak – Akademska slikarka in pedagoginja](#)

MILICA DUKIĆ

Milica Dukić (1989, Kraljevo) graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Novi Sad with Bachelor and Master degree in painting as well as Master degree in drawing. As a member of SULUV (The Association of Fine Artists of Vojvodina) with the status of Independent visual artist as of 2018 she became a member of the Presidency of the Association in 2022. Milica has also been a part of the collective Šok zadruga (MMC LED ART) since 2013, where she gained valuable experience of working as a gallerist and participating in various programs (Total Art Sale, Never Finished Drawings...). In her solo exhibitions (14) and in more than 90 collective art projects, Milica has mainly explored the embroidery technique in combination with photography and textile. She also has a keen interest in inclusive art practices and volunteer work. She volunteered as an art instructor at the center of the school Milan Petrović for persons with special needs on a number of occasions (latest project: Textile Newspapers). Milica had a unique experience of living one year in Switzerland as an artist-in-residence at the Ecole d'Humanité (2017/18) where she had an opportunity to teach several art courses (Drawing, Embroidery and Textile Art...). She is based in Novi Sad. At the moment, Milica lives in Jerusalem where she takes part in a long-term voluntary service program at organization Akim-Jerusalem and she works with children and elderly with intellectual disabilities and parallel she is developing her art practice.

Web : milicadukic.wordpress.com

IG: [dukic.milica](#)

MIRJANA ĐOTUNOVIĆ MUSTRA

Mirjana Đotunović Mustra (1978) lives and works in Vienna at the intersection of visual art, performance and fashion. The focus of her artistic projects is on feminism, women's rights, gender, capitalism and migration, as well as activist practices. Her artistic position is characterized by the experiences of women, migrant workers and Gastarbeiter. Since 2016, she has been studying at the

Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, where she broadened her interest in queer, feminist, anti-racist, intersectional topics. She began experimenting with the idea of collective action such as knitting and cooking as an activist practice and exploring the potential for empowerment and political activation in everyday life.

Web: www.mustra.art

NONPRACTICAL WOMEN

KUVARICE by the collective NONPRACTICAL WOMEN is based on traditional Serbian decorations with embroidered pictures and texts that were found in the kitchen and other rooms of the house. The texts were instructive - at least according to the guidelines of the time - and dealt with all sorts of situations, from religious beliefs to family relationships. The collective, however, appropriates the method, but the tradition is not repeated passively, but rather by reflecting own experiences and observations of the women from the collective they redefine it, with the aim, to use KUVARICE as an emancipatory tool.

Members and others: Lenka Zelenović, Brigita Međo, Sanja Stamenković, Pava Martinović, Vesna Nenadov, Skart, Vladan Nikolić and many others.

MOJCA SENEGAČNIK

Born 21. 4. 1971 in Celju, Slovenia. Education: School for design and photography (SŠOF) in Ljubljana 1986 - 1990; Academy for Fine Arts and design (ALUO), University of Ljubljana, department for painting and graphic, 1990 - 1995. In 1994 she won Prešeren university student's prize, and in 1995 graduated in ALOU in prof. Emerik Bernard's class. self-employed and fully active in the art and cultural field between Karst region and hometown Celje from 1996. She is active in various civil and local organizations presenting art education for adults, youth alternative movements, occasional producer and co-worker for art festivals, art fairs etc. Working independently and also in art collectives and movements such as KunstHaus Production, Vstop Prost/Admission Free, Hiša na hribu/House on the Hill and Konstruktk3. Member of Slovenian association of Fine Arts societies and Celje Fine Arts society.

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