

# Fog

Fog



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The National Gallery of Kosovo  
17 May 2018 – 17 June 2018  
Curated by: Avi Lubin

Albert Allgaier  
Driton Selmani  
Fatmir Mustafa -  
Karlo  
Gazmend Ejupi  
Luan Bajraktari

When I was first invited to visit Kosovo, in January 2018, the plane could not land because of the thick fog. This set well with the joke I had for Kosovo - that it does not exist - which began when I found out that Israel does not recognize the sovereignty of Kosovo. What does it mean to be a partially recognized state as Kosovo is? What does it mean to be a territory under dispute?

I suggested curating an exhibition that doesn't exist, with artists that do not exist, in a gallery that doesn't exist. Funny enough I saw an older work by Driton Selmani, titled *Tell Me Where I Am From?* (2012). The work was made while Selmani was staying in a residency program in the UK where he asked nine of the residents, artists from different places in the world (Brazil, Poland, Portugal, Japan, Cyprus, Ireland, and the UK), to draw a map of Kosovo and its location in the world map. The answers were far from reality, including one that thought that Kosovo was an Island and another that named the state Kosobo. Alongside the nine different maps that the residents drew, Selmani's mom used, at his request, a needle embroidery on fabric to create an image of the world's map where Kosovo is missing, like a hole in the globe.

Yet the metaphor of "an exhibition that doesn't exist, with artists that do not exist, in a state that does not exist" asked to open a sphere of political imagination where anything is possible and anything can happen. Where one does not have to obey any rule or category of reality, not even gravity! It asked us to think about the National Gallery of Kosovo as a non-place or an ex-territory, a hallucinatory sphere that exists outside of the radar and can open new points of view and new ways of acting in our ambiguous reality.

At the entrance to the gallery, Albert Allgaier created *Hard Rock Cafe Pyöng Yang* (2018) - a souvenir shop with merchandise like mugs, buttons, and t-shirts with the logo of this fictitious North Korean branch of the international theme restaurant chain. The envision of a "Hard Rock Café" in the North Korean capital created a passage between the outside and the inside of the gallery and became a kind of buffer zone between the real world and the "non-space" or "ex-territory" that the gallery tried to offer. This "Very concrete poetry", a term Allgaier uses to talk about his practice, asked the visitors to forget what they know and ignore their previous biases. It functions as a mixture of a Utopian imagined future, as criticism of the lack of imagination in the West, and as a joke.

It seems that in a time of geopolitical stress, frustrations of the current political moment, and the resulting instability, one does not know what to expect and how to behave. It is not easy to detach the past and enter a sphere of political imagination, especially when the past is traumatic like in Kosovo. Gazmend Ejupi's films *Momentary Lapse of Reason 1* (2003), and *Momentary Lapse of Reason 2* (2017), are dealing with the relations between the collective history of Kosovo and his own biography. They are part of an ongoing project in which the artist documents his family while Kosovo's past and present are in the background. The first film was shot in 2001 when Ejupi came back to Kosovo from London for the first time after the war. He started filming his parents in their apartment's kitchen, sitting in the darkness caused by power cuts, together with his three sisters and cousin. Ejupi is pointing the camera at a table lamp next to his dad. The conversation focuses on everyday life, on food, or the question of how power cuts can break televisions.

They are whispering a habit from the war days. No one is talking about the conflict and it seems that the darkness caused by the power cuts is normal, like a routine. Most of the film happens in darkness. Every now and then the electricity is back on for a short moment and then it is out again. It ends when the lights are back on. Almost two decades later Ejupi filmed *Momentary Lapse of Reason 2*, focusing on a mud brick house that was built by his grandmother. The bricks were used a few years ago in another work - an installation that Ejupi titled *The Ground on Which I Stand*. The film is focusing on a bonfire where the family is burning the remaining furniture and old clothes, and the old and dilapidated house is in the background.

Fatmir Mustafa-Karillo's *The Last Witness* (2018) is also deals with the recent history of Kosovo - the violence and the atrocities that were suffered during the conflict and remain since. In the center of the work stands an old wooden coffin, installed vertically. Fatmir-Karillo received it from the 15-year-old local mosque, "Xh. Fusha e Pajtimit", and bought a new one to replace it. This coffin was used for the burials of lots of people in post-war Kosovo, representing some suspicious deaths related to the war. Inside the coffin, he placed a sculpture - a silhouette of a human covered with a white sheet. This ghostly witness is bringing a new kind of testimony that is not looking at the past from the present, but rather bringing it to the present as an object.

Luan Bajraktari's *Vëllau i Milotit* (*Milot's Brother*) corresponds with a previous sculpture by the artist, *Milot*, that was also shown at the National Gallery of Kosovo a few years ago. Unlike *Milot* which was made of bronze, Bajraktari's current sculpture is made of gypsum, and thus not only challenges the conception of monuments but also enables the boy to be at one and the same -time an accuser, a spectator, and a witness.

In his new work, *YOU-GO* (2018) Gazmend Ejupi took a "Yugo" family car, cut its front, and installed it as if the car was crushed into the gallery's floor. Yugo, a front-engine, front-wheel drive automobile, was manufactured by a Yugoslav corporation. Inside the car Ejupi installed a speaker that plays an interview with the previous owner, telling the story of how he and his family of four made the vehicle their home for eight days during the war. On the wall Ejupi hung a copy of the car's logbook, emphasizing that the historical collective story is composed of personal stories. He succeeded in portraying the car as one of the most iconic objects and a reminder of what is left of ex-Yugoslavia. At the same time, he transforms the concrete car loaded with the owner's personal biography, into an object of art.

But this car also puts in mind a very famous car from the history of contemporary art Gustav Metzger's *Kill the Cars* from 1996. Metzger's car has been parked inside the Serpentine Gallery in London, where local technicians used sledgehammers to pound it until it resembled a crushed husk in a news photograph of a street demonstration Metzger once witnessed in Camden Town. In the photograph, two kids are standing on the roof of the smashed car. They were shouting, 'Kill the car, kill the car!', until they were exhausted. Metzger de- developed the concept of *Auto-Destructive Art* (ADA) by taking everyday objects and causing damage.

After World War II, he wanted to showcase the destruction created by the war through his artwork. Auto-Destructive Art asked to withdraw from mass production, commercialism, and manufacturing. Metzger even stated in his manifesto that “Auto-destructive art mirrors the compulsive perfectionism of arms manufacture - polishing to destruction point.”

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Another car in this exhibition is *The View* (2018), a work by Fatmir Mustafa-Karillo, which is installed outside the gallery. The artist placed a white car, a Volkswagen Golf, on the lawn near the entrance to the building. The smoke that is coming out from the car’s exhaust returns to the inner part of the car through a pipeline built by the artist, filling the car with smoke and turning it into a killing machine or a death machine. This image of a German Car filling with gas is a very strong image to begin the exhibition. The smoke, like the fog that prevented the airplane from landing, remains infused throughout. It serves as an invitation to think about the potential this misty reality has, and to reflect on the fact that lack of clarity can create new pathways for seeing.

Driton Selmani’s *The Raw and the Cooked* (2018), a sculpture that puts together barbed wire and red boxing gloves, borrows its title from an important essay by anthropologist and philosopher Claude Lévi-Strauss. In the well-known introduction to this book, Lévi-Strauss writes that “certain categorical opposites drawn from everyday experience with the most basic sorts of things — e.g. ‘raw’ and ‘cooked,’ ‘fresh’ and ‘rotten,’ ‘moist’ and ‘parched,’ and others — can serve a people as conceptual tools for the formation of abstract notions and for combining these into propositions.” In a similar move, though in a smaller scale, Selmani also shows *Untitled* (2018) – a small sculpture that is composed of a very large knife, made on the artist’s request in traditional techniques and a huge eraser on the other end, thus putting on the surface three related ideas: doing, undoing and redoing.

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Luan Bajraktari's *Loja* (2018) is a soccer field with three white goals and green grass drawn with white lines that resemble those of a soccer field, which serves as a kind of reflection or metaphor for conflicts. On the one hand, Bajraktari asks how political conflicts between two sides could be conducted if the sides confronted each other directly without mediators and third parties, like a sports game. On the other hand, it raises the opposite question about the ability to propose a third view, maybe a middle way that can break the binary of two-sided conflicts.

*Hard Working* (2017) is a sculpture of a homeless/corpse lying on the floor, a small house made of snot on its finger. This project by Fatmir Mustafa-Karillo was conceived over a two-year process while living homeless in Helsinki, exploring new materials, and dreaming of a house. In his MFA thesis, Karillo writes about this project: "I used my blanket as evidence, my hand as a base, and the snot as a material". Albert Allgaier's *The Average Height of an Arbitrary Number of People at a Given Moment in Time and Space* (2018) is composed of five different colored lines taped onto the wall. Each line represents the average height of an arbitrary group of people, including the female population of The Republic of Kosovo (Census 2017), the male population of The Republic of Kosovo (Census 2017), the people involved in the exhibition *Fog* at The National Gallery of Kosovo, members of the band "The Spice Girls" and crew members of the space mission "Apollo 13". Allgaier mixes official statistics and fictive data, thus implanting bugs in the "objective" database and playing with the tendency of people to compare themselves to the statistics. Another work by Driton Selmani is *Untitled Union* (2012) – a red flag which is in fact a collage textile cut of flags from ex-Yugoslavia countries. This huge red flag is not only challenging the relations between the concepts of identity and belonging but also points to the meaning of colors within collective memory.

Albert Allgaier's *The Hole is in Your Head* (2016) was an outcome of two periods he spent as a resident at Nida Art Colony of Vilnius Academy of Arts (in 2014 and 2016). Allgaier created a golf course, albeit without any holes. In an interview he gave to curator Sophie Lapalu, Allgaier explains: "I think golf and golf courses are symbols of our time. A way to privatize land. I like the story of how Castro and Guevara played a round of golf to make fun of Eisenhower. When I first moved to Yokohama in Japan I was checking my address on Google Maps and I saw a lot of green and I thought, wow, so many parks. After moving there I found out most of them are golf courses, I was really disappointed... Somehow the project was to liberate this simple act, hitting a ball with a stick, from all this symbolic baggage, re-installing the liberty of the individual to take something serious or not.

FOG

# Exhibition Views

The National Gallery of Kosovo  
17 May 2018 – 17 June 2018  
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*Fog*

Installation view: The National Gallery of Kosovo

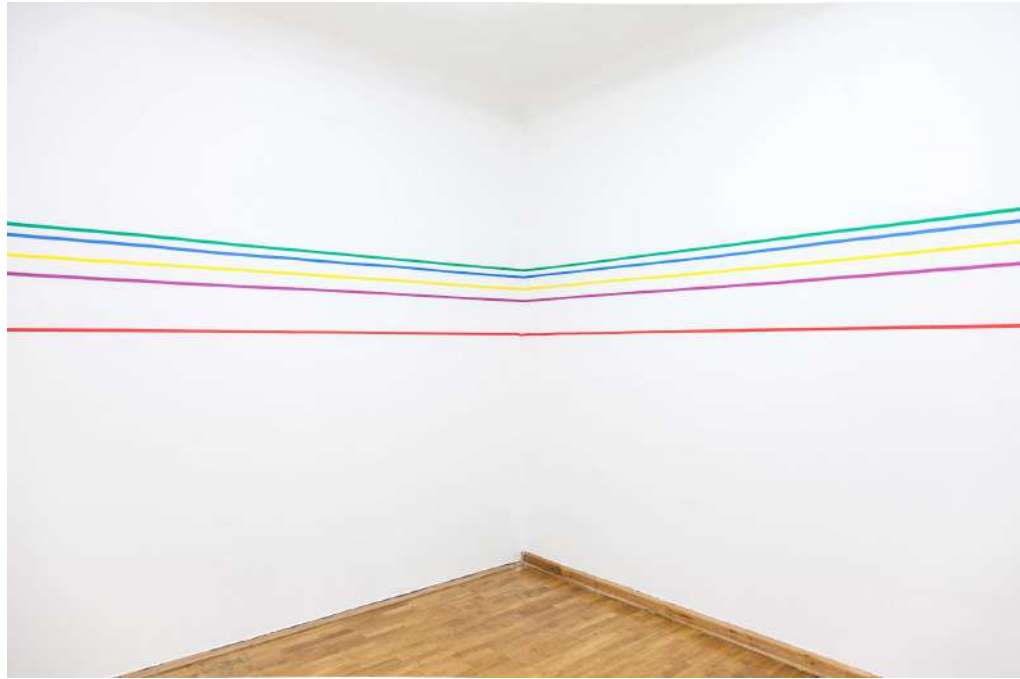
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Photo by Majlinda Hoxha



Albert Allgaier — *The Hole is in Your Head*, 2016  
C - print on Aluminum, golf ball  
Dimensions variable



Albert Allgaier — *The Average Height of an Arbitrary Number of People at a Given Moment in Time and Space*, 2018  
Five different colored lines tapes  
Dimensions variable





Albert Allgaier — *Hard Rock Cafe Pyöng Yang*, 2018  
Souvenir shop, mugs, buttons, t-shirts, wall clocks  
Dimensions variable



Driton Selmani — *The Raw and the Cooked*, 2018  
Boxing gloves, barbed wire, 300 x 250 x 200 cm



Luan Bajraktari — *Vëllau i Milotit*, 2017  
Gypsum cast sculpture , 100 x 30 x 20 cm



Fatmir Mustafa - Karlo - *The View*, 2018  
VW Golf, custom made exhaust, CO<sup>2</sup>  
Dimensions: 300 x 200 x 150 cm





Fatmir Mustafa — Karlo - *Last Witness*, 2018  
wood coffin, coil springs, textile  
Dimensions: 250 x 100 x 40 cm





Fatmir Mustafa — Karlo - *Hard Working*, 2017  
Human snot, blanket, gypsum  
Dimensions: 250 x 150 x 40 cm





Driton Selmani — *Tell me where I am from?*, 2012  
Embroidery on textile. Dimensions: 90×60 cm framed map



Driton Selmani — *Tell me where I am from?*, 2012  
Variable mixed media drawings on paper





Driton Selmani — *Untitled*, 2018  
handmade knife, eraser  
21 x 5 x 6 cm



Driton Selmani — *Untitled Union*, 2012  
Collage textile cut from flags, handcrafted scythe tale  
Dimensions: 400 x 250 cm



Gazmend Ejupi - *YOU-GO*, 2018  
Family car, sound Instalation  
Dimensions: 350 x 200 x 300 cm



Gazmend Ejupi — *Momentary Lapse of Reason 2*, 2017  
Single channel video 30 sec. Loop





Luan Bajraktari — *Loja*, 2018  
Soccer field, white goals, green grass  
600 x 600 x 100 cm

Luan Bajraktari — *Loja*, 2018  
Soccer field, white goals, green grass  
600 x 600 x 100 cm



Albert Allgaier  
Driton Selmani  
Fatmir Mustafa -  
Karlo  
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Curated by:  
Avi Lubin

Participating artists:

Albert Allgaier, Driton Selmani, Fatmir Mustafa-Karilo,  
Gazmend Ejupi/Luan Bajraktari

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