

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

Reading  
Art  
(History)  
as a  
Feminist

MICROPOLITICS 2023



Iva Čukelj, *Sewing Machines*,  
sewed pillows with embroidered details, 2022



## IMPRESSUM

### Reading Art (History) as a Feminist – Micropolitics 2023

Seminar,  
31 May 2023, Zagreb

**Location:**  
Croatian Architects' Association,  
Ban Jelačić Square 3/1

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The Micropolitics 2023 program Reading Art (History) as a Feminist is a one-day international discursive seminar, which will attempt to shed light on local and international processes and the achievements of feminist strategies in the visual arts, as well as in art history.

In the Croatian context, visual arts are often interpreted exclusively at a formal-stylistic level and analysed as an ahistorical, autonomous practice. In this constellation, feminist readings of art (history) are systematically marginalized and discredited due to, among other things, methodologies that find their bases in interdisciplinary, horizontal and decolonial approaches.

This program will therefore try to shed light on the processes, challenges and achievements of feminist epistemology through different local and international case studies. Its goal is to produce new knowledge and insights as a step towards replacing the shortcomings of the curriculum of public educational institutions, with the ambition of creating a counterpoint to the reproduction of anachronisms and discriminatory, imperialist narratives.

The one-day international discursive seminar consists of nine lectures by artists, curators, researchers, experts and scientists, who will address the aforementioned issues in three thematic sessions entitled Feminist Readings: Educational policies – methodologies – case studies.

Petra Šarin, guest editor

## INTRODUCTION

Petra Šarin is a PhD candidate in Art History at the FCSH, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa, Portugal. Her fully-financed research deals with the representation of women workers and the conceptualization of “female labour” in works of Portuguese and Croatian art from the 1930s to the 1950s. She is the member of the Instituto de História da Arte (IHA) and the member of the Organizing Committee of the IHA Doctoral Forum, as well as the assistant editor at the *RIHA Journal* Local Editorial Team – Portugal. Šarin works as an independent curator and culture writer on the topics of visual arts and gender politics. In 2021 she developed and organized a free education program entitled *How to Think About Urbanism and Public Space?* in collaboration with the Croatian portal *Vizkultura*. In 2022 she published a book chapter on the Agitprop and the underground printing services in Zagreb during the Second World War, in the open-access book *Cartography of Resistance: Zagreb 1941-1945* (ed. Jagić and Kostanić).

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# PROGRAM

31 May 2023  
Wednesday

Venue:  
Croatian Architects' Association (UHA),  
Jelačić Square 3/1, Zagreb

9:30–10:00

Registration & coffee

SESSION 1  
IN CROATIAN

FEMINIST READINGS:  
EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

10:00–12:00

**Ljiljana Kolečnik**, PhD  
Institute of Art History,  
Zagreb

The State of Feminist Art  
History and Feminist Art  
Criticism in the Context  
of Local and Regional  
Practices of Writing  
on Art

**Leopold Rupnik**  
Independent  
researcher,  
Croatia

An Analysis and  
Interpretation of the  
Croatian Visual Arts  
Curricula and Textbooks  
from the Perspective of  
Gender Equality

**Iva Čukelj**  
Art teacher and  
visual artist, Croatia

Matrilineal Storytelling:  
On Craft

12:00–12:15

Coffee break

SESSION 2  
IN ENGLISH

FEMINIST READINGS:  
METHODOLOGIES

12:15–14:15

**Filipa Lowndes  
Vicente**, PhD  
Institute of Social  
Sciences, University of  
Lisbon (ICS-ULisboa)

Group Exhibitions  
of Women Artists:  
An Historical Survey  
(19th and 20th Centuries)  
– ONLINE



**Agata Jakubowska**, PhD  
Warsaw University

The Politics of  
All-Women Exhibitions  
– ONLINE



**Iva Kovač**  
City of Women –  
Association for the  
Promotion of Women  
in Culture

The How (and the What)  
of Feminist Curating,  
but Mainly the How

14:15–15:30

Lunch break

SESSION 3  
IN ENGLISH

FEMINIST READINGS:  
CASE STUDIES

15:30–17:30

**Sanja Horvatinčić**, PhD  
Institute of Art History,  
Zagreb

A Gendered Perspective  
on War Memory and  
Memorial Production in  
Socialist Yugoslavia

**Jasmina Tumbas**, PhD  
University at Buffalo

Legacies of Queer and  
Feminist Performance  
in Socialist Yugoslavia  
and its Diasporas Today  
– ONLINE



**Glorija Lizde**  
Visual artist, Croatia

Reinterpreted:  
Myths on Femininity  
– ONLINE



## THE STATE OF FEMINIST ART HISTORY AND FEMINIST ART CRITICISM IN THE CONTEXT OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL PRACTICES OF WRITING ON ART

Ljiljana Kolečnik, PhD

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The analysis of the scientific and professional output of art history in the last twenty years shows global exponential growth in the number of books, articles, thematic issues of journals, exhibitions, doctorates and research projects dedicated to feminist topics. Despite this extensive production, the effects of feminist intervention in art history, in terms of dissolving the patriarchal power structures that configure the discipline and its narratives, are quite limited in some communities, and much more visible in curatorial practice and art criticism than in scientific discourse. The topic of this contribution to the Seminar are the questions of why this is so, to what extent the Western discourse on feminist art history is applicable in social surroundings with different historical and political experiences, as well as the question of whether the chronology of female emancipation based on the trope of the wave is useful for understanding local and regional specificities, and for bringing them to light in the discourse of feminist art history.

Ljiljana Kolečnik is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Art History in Zagreb, focusing her interest on the comparative research of post-war modern art in Central and South-East Europe. She is the author and editor of several books (*French Artistic Culture and Central-East European Modern Art*, 2017, *Modern and Contemporary Artists' Networks. The Examples of Digital Tools Application in History of Art and Architecture*, 2018, etc.) and a number of articles. She is the founder of the Regional Centre for Art, Culture and New Media at the Institute of Art History in Zagreb, as well as the art history curricula at the Centre for Women's studies in Zagreb.

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## AN ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE CROATIAN VISUAL ARTS CURRICULA AND TEXTBOOKS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF GENDER EQUALITY

Leopold Rupnik

Independent researcher, Croatia  
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The presentation focuses on the research of gender sensitivity in Croatian art history textbook texts, teaching programs and curricula for the secondary school subject Visual Arts, and furthermore shows the differences in the degree of gender awareness in newer and older textbooks, programs and curricula. The aim of the presentation is to show how the aforementioned textbooks and official educational documents communicate issues of gender and women's issues. At the end of the presentation, a few examples of gender-sensitive didactic materials will be given to demonstrate how art history textbook texts can be turned into materials that critically approach women's issues and gender issues.

Leopold Rupnik holds a degree in Art History and German Studies from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb. In 2016, he successfully completed the Women's Studies educational program at the Zagreb Centre for Women's Studies. He has received Rector's Awards for his projects *Deutsch-römisches Brevier: 500 years – 400 copies – 1 anniversary* and *Kulturflux*, a web portal dedicated to visual art and

culture. He has contributed as a writer of forewords to exhibitions at the CEKAO Gallery and the f8 Gallery in Zagreb. In 2018, he served as the author of one of the texts for the International Student Biennial at the Academia Moderna Gallery. He has previously held the position of editor at the cultural and artistic portal *Kulturflux*. In 2023 he joined the *LEXART skladište* gallery in Zagreb as a curatorial assistant. He has published several scientific papers, essays and articles, and held presentations at public conferences. Notably, his works have been published in renowned Croatian journals such as *Treća* and *Narodna umjetnost*.

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## MATRILINEAL STORYTELLING: ON CRAFT

Iva Čukelj

Art teacher and  
visual artist, Croatia  
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Iva's artistic practice centers around exploring the question of craft and its position within the art world. By engaging in dialogue with the women in her family, she documents and observes their perspectives on this matter. Through collecting memories, personal stories and historical artifacts, she transforms these elements into new and unique sewn objects that aim to capture a moment in a tangible form. By gathering works from her mother, aunt and grandmother and displaying them publicly, she creates a new context for their creations, which they may not have even considered as art. In doing so, she elevates these objects to a new level of appreciation and understanding,

highlighting their value and significance in a new and meaningful way. The installations consist of objects made through different techniques of handicraft - sewing, embroidery and crocheting. All of the works were created through a series of three exhibitions (*4 Faces of Handwork*, *Dollhouse*, and *Ljubica*), born out of exhaustive exploration and questioning of the same theme. Ultimately, the exhibitions serve as a response to their own inquiry and a way of finally bringing the intimate, traditionally feminine art of handwork that was never considered to be art out of the privacy of their homes and into the public eye. We will examine the thesis and narrative through these featured works.

Iva Čukelj (Zagreb, 1993) is a visual artist who focuses on textiles, handicrafts, and heritage in her work, specifically through the medium of installation. She received a degree in Art Education as well as in New Media from the Graduate Study of Animated Film and New Media at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb. In her artistic practice, she explores the position of handicrafts in contemporary art and reflects on the topics of memory, inheritance, tradition and the woman question. She lives and works in Zagreb as a primary school art teacher.

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## GROUP EXHIBITIONS OF WOMEN ARTISTS: AN HISTORICAL SURVEY (19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES)

Filipa Lowndes  
Vicente, PhD

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University of Lisbon  
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In the last two decades, but mostly in the last five years, many prestigious museums and galleries worldwide have organised exhibitions where "Women Artists" are the main criteria - even if what unites them may differ. They may belong to the same country, to the same artistic movement or style, to the same historical period, or work with a specific visual or artistic media - photography or sculpture, for example. Even if this trend has become more visible in recent years, the typology is not new. How has this exhibition model evolved through time and space since its first examples in the 19th century? From the mid-19th century, women artists have been discussing and disagreeing on the possible strategies to subvert and counter the discrimination they felt within

the art world. With more than a hundred years of history of women artists choosing or being chosen to be exhibited in a space where gender is the limit, several questions can be addressed. Why exhibit separately from men? From those that do not need to be called male artists or men artists, but simply "artists"? Should women artists choose to occupy the dominant art world, that which had no gender and was, therefore, dominated by men? Or, should they choose self-segregation as a strategy to occupy public and visible spaces of display? How can we think of gender and art, in 2023? Is this still a question?

Filipa Lowndes Vicente (Lisbon, 1972) is a historian and researcher at the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon (ICS-ULisboa). In 2000, she completed her PhD at the University of London (Goldsmiths College). In 2015, she was a visiting professor at King's College London and in 2016 at Brown University, in the USA. Vicente's work on women artists and feminist art history resulted in several articles and in the book *Art without History. Women and Artistic Culture (XVI-XX)* (Lisbon: Athena, 2012). She has also edited the catalogue of the exhibition she curated in 2016 on a nineteenth-century Portuguese woman painter, *Aurélia de Sousa, Woman artist, 1866-1922* (Lisbon: Tinta da China, 2016).

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## THE POLITICS OF ALL-WOMEN EXHIBITIONS

Agata Jakubowska,  
PhD

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The talk will present a currently running research project titled *Globalising the History of All-Women Exhibitions*. All-women exhibitions are a global phenomenon, yet this fact has so far been demonstrated only by juxtapositions of similar phenomena taking place at the same time, in different parts of the world (e.g. Jakubowska and Deepwell 2018, Alkema and Dossin 2019). This project is a study of international all-women exhibitions that were organised in the last one hundred years. It aims at analysing the transnational circulation of women artists and ideas concerning women. During the talk, I will concentrate on one aspect of this circulation – how it has been embedded both in women’s (emancipatory/feminist) politics and in the geopolitical order of the (art) world. This issue will be presented by discussing exhibitions organised between 1960 and 1980, with a special emphasis on two moments: 1960 (the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of International Women’s Day) and 1975 (UN’s International Women’s Year).

Agata Jakubowska is an art historian working at Warsaw University. She is an author and the editor of numerous publications on women’s art, e.g. *All-Women Art Spaces in Europe in the Long 1970s* (ed. with Katy Deepwell, 2018), *Zofia Kulik: Methodology, My Love* (ed., 2019), and *Art and the Emancipation of Women in Socialist Poland: The Case of Maria Pinińska-Bereś* (in Polish, 2022). She is currently conducting research into the transnational history of all-women exhibitions, financed by the Polish National Science Centre. Together with Andrea Giunta, she runs the project *Narrating Art and Feminism: Eastern Europe and Latin America* (within the framework of the Getty Foundation Connecting Art Histories initiative).

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## THE HOW (AND THE WHAT) OF FEMINIST CURATING, BUT MAINLY THE HOW

Iva Kovač

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Promotion of Women in Culture  
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City of Women is an organisation in Ljubljana that has been running an international festival with the same name since 1995. With its focus on women,\* the association has brought together interdisciplinary art and theoretical approaches, and built networks between people and organisations locally and internationally. Building on a nearly thirty-year-old legacy of feminist curating, City of Women has been incorporating feminist politics while delivering numerous artistic programs. Practicing situated solidarity, the Association has been working with communities, building and nurturing regional and international artistic platforms, building and maintaining advocacy campaigns, and participating in the Ljubljana independent art scene as an integral part of the organisation’s mission to support women in the arts and promote intersectional feminist politics.

\*The term *women* and other words written in the feminine grammatical gender are used inclusively and address anyone who identifies with the female gender, as well as non-binary, trans-, a-, and intergender people

Iva Kovač is a curator and visual artist. Since 2021, she has been the programming director of the Association for the Promotion of Women in Culture – City of Women. And, since 2012, a member of the *Fokus Grupa* art collective. Between 2010 and 2012, she was the head of the PM and *Prsten* galleries of the Croatian Association of Fine Artists in Zagreb. From 2013 to 2015, she curated and led the program of the SIZ gallery in Rijeka. From 2017 to 2020, she was the program selector and organiser of activities of the art organisation GSG in Rijeka, where she founded *GSG – Magazine for Contemporary Art and Social Issues* in 2018. In her recent work, she focuses on the remnants of colonialism and colonality in SE Europe.

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## A GENDERED PERSPECTIVE ON WAR MEMORY AND MEMORIAL PRODUCTION IN SOCIALIST YUGOSLAVIA

Sanja Horvatinčić, PhD

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Given that the dominant cultural memory informing memorial production in socialist Yugoslavia was that of the People's Liberation War and the socialist revolution, and since war narratives are one of the most markedly male-dominated domains of cultural memory, we need to pay special attention to the gendered hierarchies present in the formation of these narratives, as well as to the hierarchies that conditioned or legitimized women's entrance into the field of memorial production. Although after WW2 women had easier access to art education, and entered the art system in greater numbers, the post-war professionalization of memorial production went hand in hand with the restoration of high-modernist notions of artistic individualism, an ideology that perpetuated the myth of "artist

genius" and a normative definition of the male artist. This and other – sociocultural and economic – reasons perpetuated women's exclusion from certain fields of public and cultural practices. The Croatian Marxist feminist philosopher Blaženka Despot, extrapolating from Marx, claimed that "the ruling ideas of an epoch are not only that of the ruling class, but also of the ruling gender" (Despot, 1987:8). Following the assumption that the ideas pertaining to the ruling *politics of memory* in an epoch is thus similarly defined by the ruling gender, this lecture will address and discuss various modes of women's involvement in the production of memory in Yugoslavia, from the process of heritization of women's wartime legacy, through the failed effort of establishing the central monument to the "woman fighter", to the participation of women artists in the field of memorial production.

Sanja Horvatinčić is a Research Associate at the Institute of Art History in Zagreb, Croatia. Her research focuses on the production of monuments and remembrance culture in socialist Yugoslavia, as well as on heritage and memory politics in the post-socialist context. She took part in a number of research and exhibition projects dealing with the social and feminist (art) history of socialist Yugoslavia and South-Eastern Europe. Her recent work is embedded in the interdisciplinary and community-based approach to heritage in the context of current political and social crises.

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## LEGACIES OF QUEER AND FEMINIST PERFORMANCE IN SOCIALIST YUGOSLAVIA AND ITS DIASPORAS TODAY

Jasmina Tumbas, PhD

Department of Global Gender and Sexuality Studies, University at Buffalo  
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This talk will focus on feminist and queer performance in the former Yugoslav region. Drawing on the research for her book, *"I Am Jugoslovenka!" Feminist Performance Politics During & After Yugoslav Socialism* (MUP, 2022), as well as her current book project, *Queer and Feminist Yugoslav Diaspora: Art of Resistance Beyond Nationhood*, Dr. Tumbas will discuss diverse forms of resistance practiced by artists, collectives, and activists during Yugoslav socialism and after its disintegration, including feminist and queer works by ex-Yugoslav immigrants now dispersed in diasporas.

Jasmina Tumbas (PhD, Art History, Duke University) is an Associate Professor of Contemporary Art History & Performance Studies in the Department of Global Gender and Sexuality Studies at the University at Buffalo. She is the author of *"I Am*

*Jugoslovenka!" Feminist Performance Politics during & after Yugoslav Socialism* (Manchester University Press, 2022). Tumbas is currently working on a second manuscript, *Queer and Feminist Yugoslav Diaspora: Art of Resistance Beyond Nationhood* and serves as the volume editor for the multivolume project *Cultural History of the Avant-Garde in Eastern, and South-Eastern Europe IV: 1990s and after* (Brill). She is also co-editing the anthology, *Yugoslav Hauntologies: Case Studies in Post-Yugoslav Art*. Her research has appeared in *ArtMargins*, *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies*, *Art Monthly*, *Art in America*, *ASAP Journal*, and *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*.

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## REINTERPRETED: MYTHS ON FEMININITY

### Glorija Lizde

Visual artist, Croatia  
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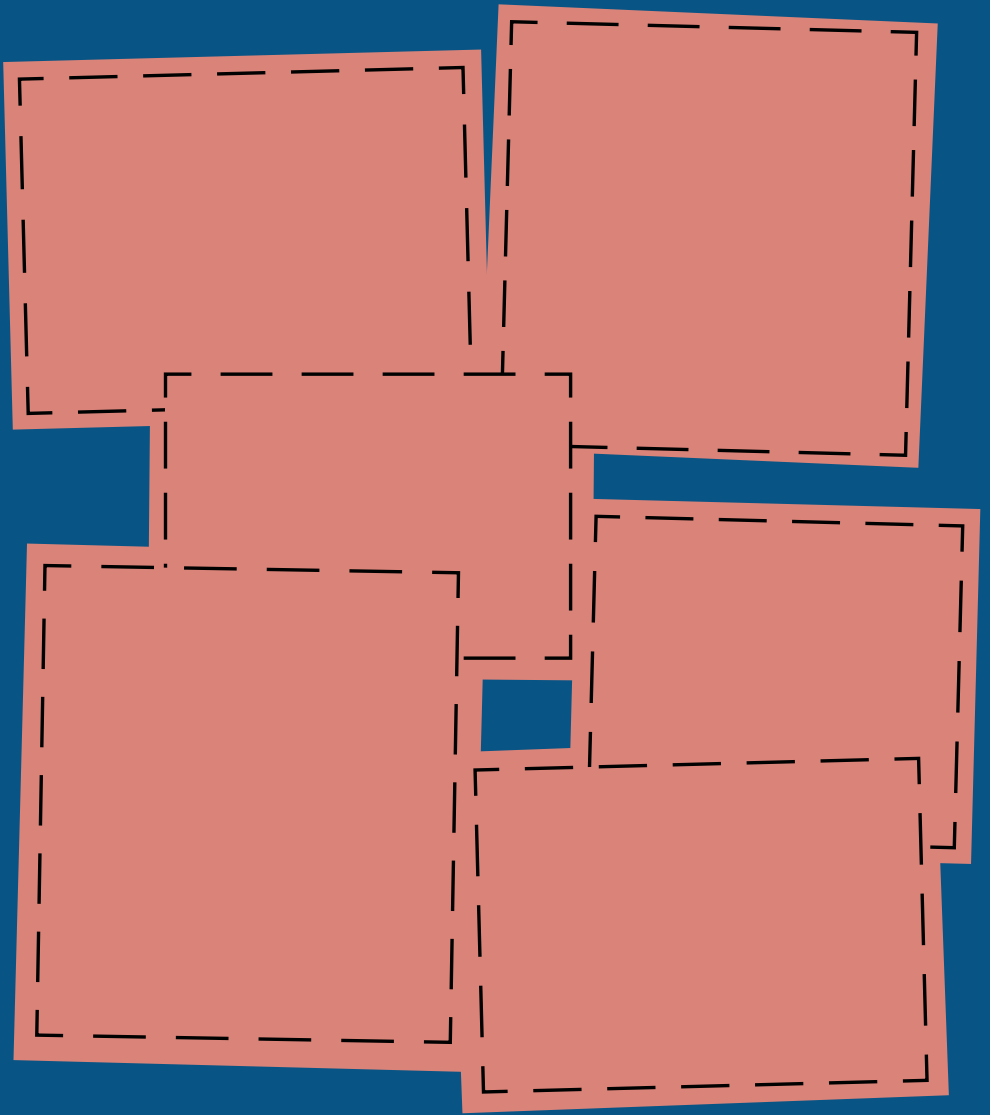
Glorija Lizde's artistic practice questions the concepts of (non) belonging, genealogy and memory using staged photography, textiles and archival materials. Intertwining personal and collective histories and experiences, the artist seeks to examine the relationship between the private and the public. Lizde will present a selection of her projects in which she interprets the concepts of femininity and female representation by using her personal experience as a starting point. The work *Becoming: Myths on Femininity* explores and reinterprets myths and legends surrounding the female experience. This research-based work highlights the need for constant reinterpretation of Simone de Beauvoir's maxim: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman." The second work which will be presented is *A Family Portrait*, a textile piece in the form of a memory quilt, which examines the traditional role of women as the gatherers of family photographs and keepers of family heritage. Both works reflect on the concept of nature and nurture or how female identity is constructed and culturally or socially conditioned.

Glorija Lizde (b. 1991, Croatia) is an artist working with staged photography whose practice questions the concepts of belonging, genealogy and memory. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Film and Video (Arts Academy of University of Split) and a Master's degree in Photography (Academy of Dramatic Art, Zagreb). Lizde's works were shown in both solo and group exhibitions. Her works are a part of private and public collections. Lizde participated in the 1st and 4th cycle of PARALLEL - European Photo Based Platform. She is the recipient of the 2022 Dr. Éva Kahán Foundation artist in residency programme. Lizde was awarded the 2022 Radoslav Putar Award for young visual artists in Croatia.





Glorija Lizde, *Untitled*,  
archival pigment print, 2022.



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