

Aleksandra Domanović *Hotel Marina Lučica**Art Space Pythagorion, Samos 20 July – 10 October*

What story might you tell in an art space located at the edge of Europe? Ideally, perhaps, one about the continent itself, which we tend to think of as relatively safe, and how quickly communities there can nevertheless fall apart. Aleksandra Domanović has already lived through such an experience: born in 1981 in Novi Sad, then part of Yugoslavia, she witnessed that country's split, through civil war, into seven nations. Today Novi Sad is in Serbia. This story formed her and constitutes a central theme of her art. In the small port city of Pythagorion on the Greek island of Samos, this past seems still current. Visible from here, not two kilometres away, is the coast of Turkey: a gateway to Europe for a stream of refugees, and a way station for 15 combatants headed in the other direction. Samos's ancient past as an important commercial centre, as well as home to Epicurus and Pythagoras, seems as distant as an end to the Greek financial crisis.

Three years ago the Schwarz Foundation in Munich completed the conversion of a derelict, dictatorship-era hotel here into a white cube. In other hands this might have felt pretentious, and attracted streams of art-collectors' yachts. Instead, since the first exhibition, featuring Harun Farocki, the foundation has invited an artist each summer to engage politically with the location. Domanović uses the building to intertwine Europe's history with her own. She has converted Art Space back into a hotel, specifically the famed Hotel

Marina Lučica near the city of Split on the Croatian coast. Built in 1971 by the modernist architect Lovro Perković, the structure drew vacationers from Italy and Germany; guests could bathe nude, the hotel a pocket of openness where genuine socialism seemed to reign. Domanović summured there with her parents in 1990, just prior to civil war. When the conflict erupted, the Marina Lučica was transformed into lodging for soldiers and refugees, and subsequently remained empty, decaying and overrun with graffiti. Its ruins serve today as an address for a Hungarian mailbox company, a symbol of the former Yugoslavia's transformation into a neoliberal playground for investors.

On Samos, Domanović revived the old spirit of the hotel. She attached a replica of the Marina Lučica sign to the roof of Art Space (which the islanders still refer to as a hotel) and decorated the lobby with portraits of communist leader Tito, the likes of which had hung in public buildings throughout the former Yugoslavia. Her three versions, digitally processed, are conflated with memories of her primary school teacher – the dictator now bears slightly feminine features. The main space is arranged with potted plants, as is done in hotels and offices to create an exotic atmosphere; the result is rather dreary, and here things take a turn towards the absurd.

The videoworks presented here also embody an Eastern European aesthetic, for which

Domanović researched her mother country's media archives: *From you to me* (2013–14) traces the development of 'yu', the domain suffix of Yugoslavia. Starting in 1958 the country broadcast an evening news programme, whose musically accompanied intros Domanović, in *19:30* (2010–11), juxtaposes with clips of techno events celebrating the war's end. And finally, *Turbo Sculpture* (2010–13) shows the raising of monuments to Bruce Lee, Rocky Balboa and Tarzan in the former Yugoslavia. The effect is tragicomic, but feels a little too calculated in terms of subject matter and aesthetics. The entire exhibition is indeed astonishingly unemotional, despite the artist having lived through a war. However, Domanović does pose some questions: what exactly remains of an era shaped by ideology? What heroes can there be when brutal leaders ultimately prevail? And what role models is Europe currently producing? Particularly now, as Germany steps forward as an arbiter for a continent on which Greeks may, at the time of writing, withdraw only €60 per day from their bank accounts?

Domanović's exhibition revolves around a building where the degeneration of an entire society can be felt. Art Space, with its constructive political intent, is a countermodel: if only there were as many of these as there are collectors' yachts, perhaps Europe would not be sailing so close to the wind. *Gesine Borchardt*

Translated from the German by Jonathan Lutes

TANYA LEIGHTON

