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Looking for a husband with a EU passport

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—2 TANJA OSTOJIĆ, YES... FROM *LOOKING FOR A HUSBAND WITH EU PASSPORT*, 2000–05, PARTICIPATORY WEB PROJECT / COMBINED MEDIA INSTALLATION, COURTESY: TANJA OSTOJIĆ, PHOTO-COLLAGES: G. KLEMENS

Please send your applications to [hottanja@hotmail.com](mailto:hottanja@hotmail.com)  
Do not hesitate to contact me with any further questions or details

—1

TANJA OSTOJIĆ

## CROSSING BORDERS

In August 2000, I started the project *Looking for a Husband with EU Passport*: ([www.scca.org.mk/capital/projects/tanja](http://www.scca.org.mk/capital/projects/tanja)). After publishing an ad with this title, I exchanged more than 500 letters with numerous applicants from around the world. After a correspondence of six months with a German man, Klemens G., I arranged our first meeting as a public performance in a field in front of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade in 2001. One month later, we were officially married

in New Belgrade. With the international marriage certificate and other required documents, I applied for a visa. After two months, I got a family unification visa, limited to a single entry for a three-month stay in Germany, so I moved to Düsseldorf, where, on the basis of my next visa, I lived officially for three and a half years. In spring of 2005, my three-year visa expired, and instead of granting me a permanent residence permit, the authorities only granted me a two-year visa. After that, K. G. and I got divorced, and on the occasion of the opening of my *Integration Project Office* installation at Project room, Gallery 35 in Berlin (1 July 2005), I organised *Divorce Party*.

In order to claim my own rights, which I had been deprived of under current EU law, I explicitly applied the strategy of tricking the law (as earlier with *Illegal Border Crossing*) to gain the right to move freely, and live and work in diverse loca-



-2

tions. Migrants are constantly abstracted by the media and discriminatory laws, and often treated as a single alienated group. The aspect of personal and direct speech, as opposed to abstract speech, is an important element throughout my work. I showed myself in that position, with my own story, as well as later collecting the individual stories of others whom I met, so that the audience would get a chance to understand the variety and depth of the matter, and identify with me, with them, with us.<sup>1</sup>

After Courbet<sup>2</sup> was supposed to be presented on rotating billboards in the EuroPart exhibition in public spaces in Vienna, from December 2005 to January 2006 on several rotating billboards. The work was removed after two days as a result of an enormous media scandal provoked by yellow

press at the point when Austria was about to take over the Presidency of the EU. Over one hundred articles, over a thousand readers' comments and a number of caricatures witnessed it in a very interesting and complex way. The poster, 3.5 x 4 metres in size, was re-mounted on the façade of exhibition venue Forum Stadt Park in Graz from January – March 2006.

In certain periods in history, nudity revolved in the public mirror, but taken for its symbolic value in society it frequently served as a carrier for other messages. Besides the composition and the reference to the title (*L'origine du monde – The Origin of the World*, by Gustav Courbet, 1866), beyond the image, my reference to Courbet directly addressed his position as an artist who was concerned with the class struggle during the time of the Paris Commune and who believed in the emancipatory role of art in society. His artworks

were banned from shows, and he was even arrested, primarily due to his political engagement. The painting *L'origine du monde* remained hidden for more than 120 years in private collections, but has been on display at the Musée d'Orsay in Paris since the 1980s.

In retrospect, I believe this interpretation of mine would not have provoked the mass media scandal if the blue underwear had not featured the EU flag on it at such a moment of Austrian political reality. In the tradition of my earlier works, like the *Crossing Borders* series and the *Integration Project 2000–05*, I continued my critical view of the politics of exclusion and the issues of biopolitics in the *fortress* EU. The body of the woman in the picture – my own – is the body of someone who did not belong to the EU territory, someone who speaks from the perspective of a migrant woman and who has been discriminated against be-

cause she is not a citizen of this elitist political and economic space.

As the European Union states sharpen control over non-citizens, the immigration police, for instance, continue the long-time practice of «checking-the-warmth-of-bed sheets» in intermarriages between EU- and non-EU partners.

The fact that my artworks were removed from the rotating billboards in Vienna caused much turmoil in art circles, in Austria in particular. Without a doubt, it is a form of censorship that represents a danger for the future of the arts in Austria – especially when it concerns art with political content, critical art, women artists and artists from outside the EU, public funding in the arts, and removing or covering serious political content from the public eye. The work became even more present in digital media and publications, which are a priori public spaces, and apparently



—3

some much more constructive and intellectual debates took place, beyond the mainstream reaction. Which brings us to the absurdity and hypocrisy of the removal for moralistic reasons, as that act only served as a manifestation of official political executive power, but failed in its purpose since it actually multiplied the content, taking it to the most remote corners of society.



On Tuesday November 8 from 13:40 I performed my *Misplaced Women?* at arrivals & departures terminal of Bergen international airport. In approximately 30 minutes time I took out the entire contents of my two suitcases, out of my handbag as well as out of my cosmetics and make-up bags. I took out each single item one by one, turning them inside out, and placing them all on the floor of the terminal on red SAS blanket that I have bor-

rowed from the airplane few minutes ago. Bergen airport security guy let me finish my performance after he asked if I needed help. Well, I said NO. – ‘So, what are you doing here?’ – he asked. – ‘I’m looking for something that I need for my performance on the University on Thursday. Hope I did not forgot it.’ – Was my answer – while taking out every single item from my cosmetic bag that I turned inside out, as well as all my tights, socks, underwear, pullovers... I landed to the Bergen’s mist and fog well, after connected flight from Berlin over Copenhagen. The purpose of my visit here was to take part in MIGRATION, GLOBALIZATION AND NEW SOCIAL FORMATIONS – IMER – International Migration and Ethnic Relations Research Unit Bergen conference<sup>3</sup>.

• Tanja Ostojic





—5

1 From an essay by Tanja Ostojic, in: *Integration Impossible: The Politics of Migration in the Artwork of Tanja Ostojic*, Grižinic & Ostojic eds., Berlin: Argobooks, 2009.

2 This is an excerpt from an essay by Tanja Ostojic that was first published in the book *New Feminism: Worlds of Feminism, Queer and Networking Conditions*. Marina Grzinic and Rosa Reitsamer (eds.), Vienna: Löcker Verlag, 2008.

3 [http://org.uib.no/imer/seminars/IMER%20Bergen%2015%20year%20conference\\_9-11%20November%202011.htmlaspx?ID=239&page=0](http://org.uib.no/imer/seminars/IMER%20Bergen%2015%20year%20conference_9-11%20November%202011.htmlaspx?ID=239&page=0)

### TANJA OSTOJIĆ – GRENZEN ÜBERSCHREITEN

Tanja Ostojics künstlerische Arbeiten kreisen um eine Vielfalt politischer Themen, denen sie sich analytisch annimmt, um die Sichtweise von Minderheiten aufzuzeigen. Für ihr Projekt *Looking for a husband with EU Passport* schaltete sie eine Partnerschaftsanzeige und wählte aus der vielfältigen Korrespondenz mit der Bewerberschar den deutschen Klemens G. Das erste Treffen vor dem Muse-

*um of Contemporary Art* in Belgrad wurde eine öffentliche Performance, einen Monat später waren sie offiziell verheiratet und zwei Monate später reiste sie mit einem gültigen Visum in die EU.

Ihre Arbeit *After Courbet* – eine Fotografie von Tanja Ostojic in der Pose von Gustave Courbets *L'origine du monde* (1866), bekleidet mit einem Slip, der an die EU – Flagge erinnert – löste einen Skandal aus, als sie 2005 auf öffentlichen Plakatwänden in Wien gezeigt wurde.

Ihre Performance *Misplaced Women?* fand im Terminal des Internationalen Flughafens von Bergen statt. Ostojic öffnete ihr Gepäck und breitete den Inhalt sorgfältig auf dem Boden vor sich aus, Gegenstand für Gegenstand unter den wachsamen Augen der Security. Die Aktion war Teil der MIGRATION, GLOBALIZATION AND NEW SOCIAL FORMATIONS – IMER-Konferenz in Bergen.

• Alex Meszmer



39

—6

### TANJA OSTOJIĆ – FRANCHIR LES FRONTIÈRES

Les travaux artistiques de Tanja Ostojic abordent par l'analyse une foule de questions politiques diverses, afin de mettre en évidence le point de vue des minorités. Pour son projet *Looking for a husband with EU Passport*, elle a placé une annonce de partenariat et a choisi l'allemand Klemens G parmi les auteurs de la multiple correspondance avec les nombreux candidats. La première rencontre devant le *Museum of Contemporary Art* à Belgrade est devenue une performance publique, un mois plus tard ils étaient mariés officiellement et deux mois plus tard elle entrait dans l'UE avec un visa en règle.

Son travail *After Courbet* – une photographie de Tanja Ostojic dans la pose de *L'origine du monde* de Gustave Courbet (1866), habillée d'un slip qui rappelle le drapeau de l'UE – a fait scandale à Vienne en 2005 sur les murs d'affiches publics.

Sa performance *Misplaced Women?* a eu lieu au terminal de l'aéroport international de Bergen. Ostojic a ouvert son bagage et en a soigneusement étalé le contenu sur le sol devant elle, un objet après l'autre, sous les yeux vigilants des agents de la sécurité. L'action faisait partie de la conférence IMER MIGRATION, GLOBALIZATION AND NEW SOCIAL FORMATIONS à Bergen.

• Alex Meszmer



Jean-Daniel Berclaz, Kit de vernissage de point de vue, 2007.  
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