

ARTFORUM



Nemanja Cvijanović, Jeste li za Valcer? (Drvo Guernice) (Are You for Waltz? [Guernica Wood]), 2014, ceramics, acrylic, iron, straw, fabric, 15".



"Without Anesthesia"

54TH ZAGREB SALON: WITHOUT ANESTHESIA

Trg .rtava fa.izma 16 HDLU

March 26–May 5

The Me.trovi ć Pavilion has not had a good year. To residents' outrage, the city administration uprooted the beautiful park that surrounded the modernist landmark, supposedly in tribute to architect Ivan Me.trovi ć's "original" concept (though more likely to benefit the mayor's inner circle). When the call for the Fifty-Fourth Zagreb Salon went out, the application stipulated that participating artists could not publicly criticize the Artist Union or the venue it calls home—a gesture that stirred up its own protests.

This tension made "Without Anesthesia," the exhibition put together by curators Branka Benčić and Tev. Logar, all the more cunningly relevant. The title conjures an ad hoc surgical procedure, an apt metaphor for both the crude aesthetic overhaul of the pavilion and, more generally, the dissolution of Yugoslavia. The legacy of the latter looms large within the works gathered, from Igor Grubić's installation *Study of Abandoned Knowledge*, 2019, which recoups jettisoned textbooks from the now-defunct Communist Party school, to Renata Poljak's video *Yet Another Departure*, 2018, which captures the 2016 sinking of the naval flagship *Vis*. The storied setting for the 1956 meeting that would lay the foundation for the Non-Aligned Movement, the warship was intentionally scuttled off the coast of the Brijuni islands and turned into a diving attraction after failing to lure clients as a luxury rental.

With its streamlined selection of artists, including Jasmina Cibic, Tina Gverović, Sini.a Ilić, Marko Tadić, and Nora Turato, this year's salon felt distinctly uncluttered, allowing motifs to emerge. In particular, the color red wound through the pavilion, whether in the filters posed in front of Viktor Popović's photographs; the fragmented forms of Igor E.kinja's collages; or the silk shorts of the MMA fighter in Damir Očko's video *Dicta II: Safewords*, 2018, which pairs footage of two men wrestling with a list of words used to signal that one has had enough. With or without anesthesia, the curators showed there was still fight left in the salon.

— Kate Sutton

<https://www.artforum.com/picks/without-anesthesia-79314>