

EXHIBITION OPENING

Galerija Pricipij, Rijeka, Croatia

On Saturday 14th of September 2019, Galerija Pricipij in Rijeka hosted the opening of two exhibitions, concerning the topics of conflict and violence organized by *Documenta* – Center for Dealing with the Past.



Venue of the exhibition

The exhibition was launched by the words of Borislav Božić, the owner of the gallery, and Ivan Šarar, head of the city department of culture.



From the left: Ivan Šarar, Roberta Bacic, Vesna Teršelič, Borislav Božić, and Saša Petejan at the opening speech.

"THE LAST TESTIMONIES"

The photographic exhibition entitled "The last testimonies" focuses on the remembrance of internment in the Italian fascist camps. The exhibition is a joint project of the Slovenian journalist Saša Petejan, of the photographer Mance Juvan and the historian Dr. Urška Strla.

The deadliest camp, among all those built by the Italian fascist regime across Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Ethiopia, Croatia, Italy, Macedonia and Serbia, was Kampor, on the island of Rab. The camp was active in the years 1942-43 and imprisoned around 10.000 civilians.

During the presentation, Herman Janež and Ivan Zbašnik were invited to speak about their experience in fascist concentration camps. Herman Janež was secluded in Kampor during his youth and later became a researcher on the topic, while Ivan Zbašnik was born there.



Ivan Zbašnik (on the left) and Herman Janež sr. reporting their experience: Ivan Zbašnik recalls how neither the Italian nor the Croatian authorities would issue him any birth certificate until the 1950s.

The exhibition is part of a larger remembrance project "The Guardians of the Spoon" <http://www.guardiansofthespoon.com/>.



Visitors taking a look at some of the pictures and stories of the survivors who lived in various Fascist Camps.

“TEXTILES OF RESISTANCE: WOMEN’S VOICES”

The second exhibition launched at the Gallery is entitled “Textiles of Resistance: Women’s voices” (<https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/conflicttextiles/search-quilts/fullevent/?id=206>) and showcases art pieces from the international collection “Conflict Textiles”, which includes hundreds of textiles from South America and other parts of the world, in particular the war-stricken ones. The curator of the exhibition is Roberta Bacic.



From the left: Vesna Teršelič, director of Documenta, and Roberta Bacic, curator.

The majority of the collection consists in textiles called *arpilleras*, mostly created by women, reporting and denouncing violations of human rights and repression in conflict areas. The pieces on display come from Argentina, Chile, Germany and UK.

The original nucleus of fabrics focuses on the events happened during the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile (1973-1990), which is where Roberta Bacic originally started working.

She decided to introduce this exhibition with a guided tour, explaining the origin and story of the pieces on display.



This *arpillera*, entitled "*Peace quilt – Common Loss*" by Irene MacWilliam is in remembrance of all the 3161 victims perished during "The troubles" in Northern Ireland between 1969 and 1994. Each and every red piece of cloth has not been cut but torn apart and represents one person, with the aim of physically showing the amount of losses and despair that the conflict has brought to the region.



This Chilean *arpillera* is entitled “*Homenaje a los caídos / Homage to the fallen ones*” and reflects upon the relentless struggle of the families of the fallen and displaced ones, who still don't know the fate of their beloved. The *arpillera* was used during three workshops organized by *Documenta* in Croatia in May 2019.



This piece remembers the victims of the 2008-2009 “Operation Cast Lead”. Each thread (more than 300) refers to a child or woman killed on the Palestinian territory during the ongoing occupation of Israel

In the afternoon, benefiting from the intimate space, the floor was left open for sharing good practices in working with teachers on the themes and issues displayed in the exhibition and feedback about the opening. Alice Straniero and Tena Banjeglav, both working at Documenta, presented a methodology developed for the teaching of high sensitive and war-related topics to high school students. Then, the participants reflected on different topics, such as the problem of dealing with the past of certain places which memorialization is not in the interest of the local population or government. Also, both Roberta Bacic and Saša Petejan reflected upon the importance of trying to find spaces of tolerance where the topic can be accepted and discussed.

Exhibitions are realized as part of a program line ‘Times of Power’ within the Rijeka 2020 – European Capital of Culture, with the support of *Stiftung EVZ* and *International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance*.

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