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Oct. 7 – Dec. 18, 2010:

**Marjetica Potrč**

The Making of New  
Territories and Communities

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**Audain Gallery**

SFU WOODWARD'S

# Artist Talk: October 6, 6pm

## Opening: October 6, 8pm

### Workshops with Marjetica Potrč

October 8

#### *From the Streets*

Urban textures and histories. A series of guided walks through Vancouver.

October 15

#### *New Territorializations*

An interdisciplinary discussion.

October 21

#### *Methods and Practices*

A workshop on artistic fieldwork and research as contemporary practice.

Named in honour of arts supporter Michael Audain, the Audain Gallery serves as a vital aspect of the Visual Arts program at Simon Fraser University's School for the Contemporary Arts.

The Audain Gallery's mission is to advance the aesthetic and discursive production and presentation of contemporary visual art in Vancouver and internationally through a responsive program of exhibitions in a flexible project space in support of an engaged pedagogy of art within the university and in the public sphere.

Exhibitions produced through the Audain Visual Artists in Residence Program and exhibitions by the BFA and MFA students at the School for the Contemporary Arts are central to the Audain Gallery's programming.

The Audain Gallery encourages conceptual and experimental projects that explore the dialogue between the social and the cultural in contemporary artistic practices. The Audain Gallery is curated by Sabine Bitter.

For more information, please contact [info@audaingallery.ca](mailto:info@audaingallery.ca)

### *The Making of New Territories and Communities*

Marjetica Potrč

Over the last several decades the work of Slovenian architect and artist Marjetica Potrč has focused on new forms of social practices within global changes in both urban and rural sites. Potrč is best known for her on-site projects using participatory design, her drawing series, and her architectural case studies. With her focus on community-based environmental projects and the tools and modes of self-organization, Potrč's practices give a vibrant account of how people and communities, in the words of geographer Cindi Katz, "produce and reproduce themselves as social, political, and economic subjects."<sup>1</sup> In working directly with the community to build projects to improve everyday life, and then transferring of these projects into an art context, whether by reconstructing buildings or by exhibiting particular utensils or existing tools, Potrč engages artistically with "...practices [that] work off of, and in response to one another, as much as in reaction to the changes imposed and engendered by 'global economic structuring' and its local manifestations."<sup>2</sup> Potrč's work portrays the dynamic processes of resilience, resistance, and reworking that Katz identifies at the heart of social reproduction within our present moment.

Covering a range of places and scales, the exhibition, *The Making of New Territories and Communities*, draws upon these global phenomena of urbanization, as well as the restructured relationship to the rural. The exhibition—which draws on work done in the Amazon region of Brazil and Tirana in Albania, as well as Detroit, Amsterdam, and Prishtina—resonates with the specific context and situation in Vancouver and Canada where conceptions of territory and citizenship are highly contested. Regarding those projects Potrč has written: "A forest region in the state of Acre in Amazonia and an art project site in the city of Amsterdam are very different places, but they both exemplify the fragmentation of territories in today's world."

Marjetica Potrč is the first artist to be hosted by the Audain Visual Artist in Residence Program.

—Sabine Bitter

1. Cindi Katz, *Growing Up Global: Economic Restructuring and Children's Everyday Lives*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004. 240.

2. Katz, 241.

WE SHALL DEFEND OUR ISLAND,  
WHATEVER THE COST MAY BE,



CHOOSE YOUR FIGHT!  
AN INDIVIDUAL IS THE SMALLEST STATE.

~ ROAD TO PRISHTINA ~

BUT AM I A CITIZEN?  
ARE WE A SOCIETY?

## Works

### *The Struggle for Spatial Justice*

*The Struggle for Spatial Justice* is a series of drawings that represent particular instances of the claims for spatial justice in New Belgrade, Prishtina, Tirana, Durres, Amsterdam, and Detroit. The term *special justice* arose from a geographic engagement with social justice issues in the early 1970s—particularly in the work of David Harvey—and has been grounded in a radical understanding of justice and in the conceptualization of space as a process. Building on this radical notion, Potrč's drawings mark both the sites where the calls for spatial justice have rung out, but also the slogans that have mobilized causes and communities. The text that runs along the top of each of these drawings is from Winston Churchill's address to the House of Commons on June 4, 1940, "We will never surrender." Potrč relates these famous words with contemporary spatial struggles: "Staking a claim to fertile land; the road to Tirana," "We shall never surrender; cultivating urban farms Detroit," and "We shall fight in the hills; negotiating infrastructure." This emphasis on infrastructure is key to Potrč's practice, particularly in the type of informal structures that have emerged through individual and

community initiatives in order to take the place of deteriorating urban and state infrastructure. Potrč has used the term *creative deregulation* to describe improvisational and temporary solutions that have become semi-legitimate in places like New Belgrade.<sup>1</sup> Following the shock therapy of capitalism, Potrč has paid sharp attention to the contradictions left in the wake of the social state. She describes her interest in the developments in the Western Balkans in this way: "Cities such as Belgrade, Prishtina, and Tirana not only attest to the dissolution of the social state, they also show the prevalence of derelict modernist architecture and degraded public space."<sup>2</sup> The overlapping of social justice and spatial justice that has emerged in spaces such as the Balkans and in deindustrialized Detroit are portrayed in this series.

1. Marjetica Potrč, *Marjetica Potrč Next Stop, Kiosk: There is Strength in Movement*. Ljubljana: Moderna Galerija Ljubljana, 2003. 106.

2. Nataša Petrešin, "The Dynamic Balkans: A Working Model for the EU? An Interview with Kyong Park and Marjetica Potrč." *The Sarai Reader: 06 Turbulence*. [www.sarai.net/publications/readers/06-turbulence](http://www.sarai.net/publications/readers/06-turbulence)



Tirana: *Designs for a New Citizenship*, 2009, 2006, Wallpaper based on research from the *Lost Highway Expedition*. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Nordenhake, Berlin/Stockholm.

### ***Tirana: Designs for a New Citizenship***

With *Tirana: Designs for a New Citizenship*, Marjetica Potrč addresses the intense period of transition after the political changes in Tirana, the capital city of Albania, that occurred in the 1990s. A post-communist lack of structure and regulation lead to an explosion of informal buildings and self-organized construction. The present cityscape of Tirana is the result of the multitude of inventive and

informal societies that have emerged during this state of transition and flux.

During this period, Mayor and artist Edi Rama initiated an immense artistic intervention and participatory project of painting the city's building facades. For Rama, this project was not about the surface of the building. In Anri Sala's video, *Give Me Colors*, Rama says, "In a way, the colours here replace the organs. They are not part of the dress." Rather, Rama's project foregrounds the dismantling of previ-

ous social structures and articulates the desire for the emergence of new public values. In turn, Potrč investigates how these bright colours and patterns visibly express the radical changes that the city has experienced.

Potrč balances image and text in this project: written declarations of a new type of citizenship accompany her documentation of the city's colourful façades. In her intriguing drawings she describes the patterns that now cover much of the city's modernist

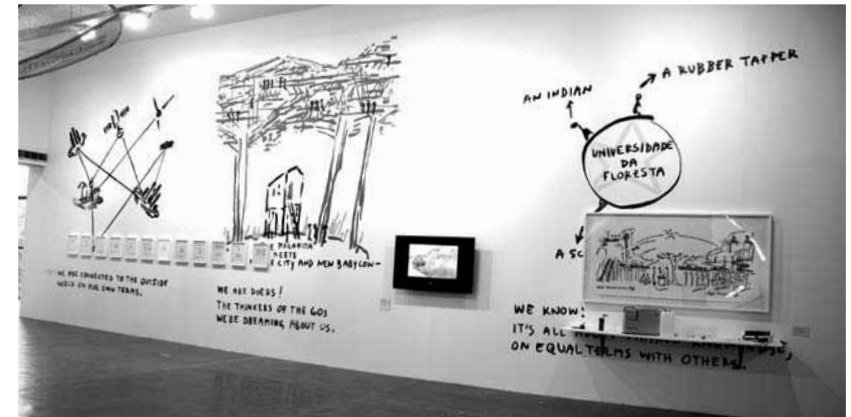
architecture, as "wild." This personalization of modernist architecture functions as a deconstruction of the failed modernist apartment block complexes and gives birth to the new citizenship.



COMPLEX KNOWLEDGE AND LINEAR  
THINKING NEED EACH OTHER.



LINA BO BARDI KNEW:  
— HOPE —  
IS WITH THE PEOPLE OF THE FOREST.



### Florestania

*Florestania* is a series of drawings that resulted from Potrč's research in the state of Acre in Brazil that she conducted for the Sao Paulo Biennial, entitled *How to Live Together*, in 2006. *Florestania* is the term used to describe the citizenship of Acreans—a new agreement for civil society in the state of Acre. Potrč's drawings map out a social model of self-organization that favours small-scale sustainable economies.

During Potrč's stay in Acre, she visited the Croa River Community, a community that, despite being accessible by river throughout the year, is accessible by road for only half of the year. This constant flux of the land determines both access and the community's necessity and ability to adapt. Potrč describes Acre's "pixilation" in her essay "New Territories in Acre and Why They Matter." This pixilation refers to the way that the state is redefining its geography in terms of extraction reserves, indigenous territories, and the choice of the small communities to remain relatively isolated in order to have a degree of

self-control of their connection to the world.

In Acre, borders are negotiated with neighbours rather than imposed by the Brazilian national government. The way of life that is portrayed in Potrč's complex drawings is in a constant state of transition. While this necessitates a negotiation of these changes, it leaves room for the forms of adaptation that the land and the people require.

Potrč articulates the balance of isolation and connectivity that the pixelated territories of Acre exemplify. Because of their remote locations, the communities can maintain a certain autonomy and define a degree of connectivity that allows them to maintain a cultural identity.

Above: *How to Live Together*, 27th Sao Paulo Biennial, Sao Paulo, Brazil. Acrylic paint on wall, wall drawings from original drawings No. 5, 6 and 10 from *Florestania*, 2006. Photo by Wolfgang Traeger. Courtesy the artist and Max Protetch Gallery, New York.

Opposite: Drawing No. 10 from *Florestania*, 2006. Courtesy the artist and Max Protetch Gallery, New York.



## Power Tools

*Power Tools* is an ongoing project, initiated in 2001, based on a series of functional prototypes. Potrč's interest in these utilitarian objects is as much about their particular design as it is about the (individual) initiative to produce the capability of self-reliance.

Potrč's projects often express an excitement about the way that communities initiate and develop resourceful methods and mechanisms for energy supply and communication. Potrč appropriates these "tools" that she has witnessed in use within communities and brings them into a gallery environment as a sort of celebratory gesture regarding the resourcefulness of the design. The creation of tools for self-sustainability create an impact that extends from an individual, to their family and to the community. What becomes apparent in these resourceful yet simple solutions and objects is the use of low-tech solutions to widespread problems, such as access to energy, in challenging rural conditions.

The Hippo Water Roller, which won the Design for Development Award in South Africa in 1997, makes the transport of large amounts of water easier for women and children in rural areas. Not only does the design of the roller eliminate the need to carry heavy containers of water, as the drum can be rolled much like a push lawn mower, but the drum also functions as storage for the daily water supply. An unplanned feature of the device is potentially lifesaving. In Angola, it was discovered that the drum has the capacity to greatly reduce the impact of hidden landmines that the person pushing the roller must negotiate.

Potrč's selection of prototypes articulates her appreciation for adaptability of the level of the individual and further expresses her long-standing interest in the development of bottom-up community based initiatives.

"Hippo Water Roller," *Power Tools*, experimental prototypes and utilitarian objects, 2001-2005, utilitarian object and video. Courtesy the Hippo Water Roller Project, South Africa.

## Biography

Marjetica Potrč is internationally recognized for her community-based work, her drawing series as well as her architectural case studies. Her work focuses on new forms of social practices within urban changes, citizenship as well as community-based environmental projects. Potrč studied architecture and art at the University of Ljubljana and has taught at numerous institutions in Europe and North America. She was born in Ljubljana, Slovenia where she lives and works.

### Selected Individual Exhibitions

2010 / *The Making of New Territories and Communities*, Audain Gallery SFU Woodward's, Vancouver; *Venice Case Study*, Mac Protetch Gallery, New York; *Burning Man: Tensegrity Structure and Waterboy*, Galerie Nordenhake, Stockholm  
 2009 / *New Citizenships*, Kunsthalle Lingen, Germany  
 2008 / *Future Talk: The Great Republic of New Orleans*, Mac Protetch Gallery, New York  
 2007 / *Forest Rising*, The Curve, Barbican Art Galleries, London, UK; *The Great City of Medellin: Period of Education*, Centro Colombo Americano Gallery, Medellin, Colombia  
 2006 / *Marjetica Potrč and Tomas Saraceno: Personal States / Infinite Actives*, Portikus, Frankfurt/Main  
 2005 / *Barefoot College: Field Center*, Nicolas Krupp Gallery, Basel  
 2004 / *Urban Growings*, De Appel Foundation for Contemporary Art, Amsterdam; *Summer House*, Balkan Trilogiy, Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Kassel; *Caracas: Dry Toilet*, Nordenhake Gallery, Stockholm  
 2003 / *Marjetica Potrč: Urgent Architecture*, PBICA, Lake Worth, FL; traveled to MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, USA 2004; *Next Stop, Kiosk*, Museum of Modern Art Ljubljana; *Permanently Unfinished House with Cell Phone Tree*, Salzburger Kunstverein, Salzburg  
 2002 / *Extreme Conditions and Noble Designs*, Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, USA  
 2001 / *Hugo Boss Prize 2000*, Guggenheim Museum, New York

### Selected Group Exhibitions

2010 / *A New Community in the Open City*, APAP2010 Anyang Public Art Project, Anyang, Korea; *The Promises of the Past*, Centre Pompidou, Paris; *Project Europa*, Harn Museum of Art, University of Florida, Gainesville  
 2009 / *Shenzhen & Hong Kong Biennale of Urbanism and Architecture*, Shenzhen, China; *The Cook, the Farmer, His Wife and Their Neighbour*, Stedelijk Museum goes West, Amsterdam; *Making Worlds*, Venice Biennial, Venice  
 2008 / *Heartland*, van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, Netherlands; *Land Wars*, The Tuhi Centre for the Arts, Manukau, New Zealand; *Island and Ghettos*, Heidelberger Kunstverein, Germany; *Something from Nothing*, Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans  
 2007 / *Still Life: Art, Ecology and the Politics of Change*, Sharjah Biennial 8, Uited Arab Emirates; *This Place is my Place – begehrte Orte*, Kunstverein in Hamburg, Germany  
 2006 / *Good Morning, City Noise*, Soemardja Gallery, Bandung, Indonesia; *How to Live Together*, 27th Sao Paulo Biennial; *What is positive? Why? Strategic Questions – Platform 6*, Kunsthalle Exnergasse, Vienna  
 2005 / *Sweet Taboos*, 3rd Tirana Biennial, Tirana, Albania; *Monuments*, CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco; *Occupying Space, Generali Foundation Collection*, Haus der Kunst, Munich; *Witte de With*, Rotterdam; Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb, Croatia

### Selected Grants, Awards & Residencies

2010 / Artist-in-Residence Program, Jerusalem Center for Visual Arts, Israel; Audain Artist-in-Residence Program, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver  
 2009 / Artist-in-Residence Program, Dartmouth College, Hanover, USA; Grant of Ministry of Culture Ljubljana  
 2007 / Vera List Center Fellowship for Art and Politics, the New School, New York; The International Encounter Medellin Residency Program, Medellin, Colombia  
 2006 / IASPIS International Artists' Studio Program in Sweden Grant, Stockholm, Sweden; Sao Paulo Biennial Residency Program, Brazil  
 2004 / AICA U.S. Art Critics Association Award, New York  
 2003 / Caracas Case Project Fellowship, Federal Cultural Foundation, Germany and Caracas Urban Think Tank, Venezuela  
 2000 / Hugo Boss Award, Guggenheim Museum, New York; Parque de la Memoria Sculpture Prize, Buenos Aires, Argentina; Soros Center for Contemporary Arts Grant, Ljubljana



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