

Identi!ties

*Reinis Hofmanis / Juris Justs / Jan Langer / Miroslav Predojevic /
Gregory Michenaud / Patrick Galbats / Miklos Deri*

PHOTO EXHIBITION 5 – 24 OCTOBER 2018
NEIMËNSTER / LUXEMBOURG

ORGANISED BY

CINÉAST

WITH THE COLLABORATION



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Latvia 100

Photo exhibition

5-24 OCTOBER 2018
NEIMËNSTER
LUXEMBOURG

Reinis Hofmanis

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Identities

This year's photography exhibition organised as part of the CinEast festival is titled Identities. Curator Violetta Luba has invited seven artists that present documentary images of Eastern European identity as well as artistic visions and references to this theme.

One of the inspirations for the choice of this theme was the 100th anniversary of many Central and Eastern European countries gaining independence after the First World War, and at the same time the almost 30th anniversary of the collapse of the communist regimes. It seems, therefore, to be a good

moment to reflect on who we are and who we want to be, as well as what connects and what divides the East and West of Europe.

The works presented at the exhibition include the project of the Latvian artist **Juris Justs**, who has been documenting the streets of Riga for many years, presenting an image of the city in the process of historical transformation. In his photographs, modernity enters the lives of the inhabitants, clashing with clear traces of the remains of the socialist era.

The multi-faceted project of the Luxembourg

artist **Patrick Galbats** is an image of present-day Hungary, showing in many ways the state of today's Hungarian society and its contrasts: on the one hand, the pursuit of integration with Europe, and on the other hand, isolationist trends and signs of nationalism and xenophobia – rebelling against immigrants and “foreign identity”.

The works of the Serbian artist **Miroslav Predojevic** show the image of modern Serbia. His reportage reveals a country with a complicated history and dominating elements of collective identity, common not only for Serbs but also for other Balkan and East European nations.

This year's exhibition also addresses the problem of numerous national minorities in Eastern Europe. We present two projects related to this aspect of identity. The first is by **Grégory Michenaud**, a French artist residing in Poland. It shows national minorities living in this seemingly nationally homogenous country. The artist photographed thirteen representatives of various minorities and combined their current images with archive photographs of their family members. For Michenaud's subjects, those tiny and often very damaged pictures from years ago are proof of the existence of their own separate identities.

The Hungarian artist **Miklós Déri** also focused on the problem of minorities, in a different but equally interesting way. His work contrasts pictures of Romani artists and intellectuals who achieved success in Hungarian public life with the stereotypical image of the Roma, usually considered a representative of a non-assimilated nation.

Reinis Hofmanis, in turn, represents an entirely different point of view and shows us the different potential faces every one of us could have, regardless

of identity. With the virtual world emerging all around us under the influence of popular culture, life is increasingly taking place in parallel worlds. Regardless of what one does for a living in real life – be it doctor, student or clerk – in the world of fantasy one can be anything and identify with anyone.

The timeframe of the exhibition is closed by the Czech project by **Jan Langer**, who also chose to juxtapose old and new photographs. His diptychs contrast photographs of Czech centenarians with their portraits taken decades ago. The people's beautiful faces encourage viewers to try and read the private life stories written in them, a history probably often closely tied to the turbulent history of 20th century Europe.

This year's exhibition speaks about every one of us separately, about our roots, about what we identify with as individuals, but also about the different dimensions of our collective belonging and identity. The works presented at the exhibition encourage us to reflect on the factors that have determined the development of what we now see as a very diverse identity of Eastern Europeans. The changes that took place in this part of Europe over the course of the 20th century had considerable impact on the identities of people living there, but so did the fall of communism or the process of European integration. Today, we are dealing with a complex human mosaic of different identities shaped by many different factors.

Violetta Luba

Curator of the exhibition

Reinis Hofmanis

LATVIA

Reinis Hofmanis was born in Latvia in 1985. He graduated with a Master's degree in Visual Communications from the Art Academy of Latvia and studied photography at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts in Hanover, Germany. Hofmanis participated in group as well as solo exhibitions in Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Russia, Belarus, Germany, Italy, France, Belgium, Portugal, Iceland, Canada, Singapore, and the UAE. In 2012, he won the top prize at the international architectural photography awards Archifoto, and in 2013 he was awarded the 2nd place in the architectural photography category at the Sony World Photography Awards. His works have been published in The New York Times, The Financial Times, Spiegel, Esquire, Bloomberg, Le Monde, The Globe and Mail, The British Journal of Photography and other media.

LARP

“Live action role playing” (LARP) games show the present-day world, shaped by mass culture. Elements of pop culture such as film, books and computer game characters become someone's new identity. Everyday life is changed into a parallel world – the world of fantasy, where future, past and present are not separated. Everything that does not seem possible in the real world is possible in a game. An office worker, student, hospital director, nurse, soldier, jeweler, or teacher can become a sorcerer, ork, zombie, troll, elf, moss man or goblin. Dreams and desires to be a hero are realized and enacted. This work balances documentary photography

and staging. In the series “LARP” the artist portrays heroes outside the game context. Thus the space around them works as an interspace that creates a natural distance between these characters and the viewer.





The work explores live action role players and poses a number of intriguing questions: Is a mask just a mask or is it a part of a person's identity – a side of their identity that cannot be otherwise realized? What makes an office worker take a huge axe and move deep into the bush? Can we separate a fantasy world from the real world?



Juris Justs

LATVIA

Juris Justs was born in Latvia in 1984. He is a freelance photographer and a musician. Based in Riga, he defines himself as a social landscape photographer. He participated in group and solo exhibitions in Latvia and Russia, but he usually prefers exhibitions in social places like markets, shopping centers and libraries, avoiding galleries or museums.

To him, photography has become a reason to meet people, to reach places that he would otherwise never see in his daily life. It was a breath of fresh air for him that took him so far.

“I do walking trips around the city without any purpose, just capturing city life. I’m mostly interested in casual moments that define my own city”. The power of capturing street life is a great tool to understand our society and take a look at ourselves from the outside.

His motto is: the most interesting things in life are always just around the corner.

RIGA STREET PHOTOGRAPHY

The collection of images of today’s Riga proposed by Juris Justs is an extraordinary journey into a world full of contrasts. On the one hand, we can see bustling streets, eye-catching shop windows and luxury cars; but just around the corner the image of Riga changes drastically to one of a city immersed in its socialist past. This complex reality, full of different identities, reveals a city in the process of a great transformation. Wealth mixed with poverty, glass edifices and shabby hovels, the

wealthy and the deprived, and all of it right there, in close proximity to one another. It is where two worlds meet: one seeking integration with the West, and the other one obviously still stuck in the past. Despite the many contrasts, the city is full of people,





often children, smiling and feeling hopeful about the future. One can also feel this while observing street artists. They are the ones who make the world emerging from those photographs seem not yet permeated with consumerism, so typical of mature capitalism.



Jan Langer

CZECH REPUBLIC

Jan Langer was born in the Czech Republic in 1978. He graduated from the People's Conservatory and the Institute of Creative Photography at the University of Silesia in Opava. In 2008–2011 he studied Social Anthropology, International Relations and Spanish Philology at the Masaryk University in Brno. At present, he is continuing his doctoral studies. He lives in Prague and works in documentary and portrait photography. He won the 2012 Prague Photo Young Award and is the author of several individual exhibitions and dozens of group exhibitions presented in the Czech Republic and abroad.

FACES OF CENTURY

These photographs are portraits of hundred-year-old Czechs. Currently, there are over 1,200 centenarians in the Czech Republic. Over the next fifty years, this number is expected to increase to more than 14,000. The author wonders how these people look at their lives after such a long time. Most of those he came across agree that time goes faster when we age, until finally life passes in an instant. Time shrinks just like the faces of old people, but it remains recorded on them. What do these people remember, and what would they rather forget? A lot of changes in a hundred years.

The present images of the centenarians are supplemented with archive portraits from the period of their youth obtained from their family collections along with short descriptions.





Miroslav Predojevic

SERBIA

Miroslav Predojevic was born in Čačak, Yugoslavia, Serbia in 1955.

In 1978 he graduated from the Faculty of Agriculture (agro-economic department) in Zemun – Belgrade. Since then, he has dedicated himself to photography. He lives and works in Belgrade. He participated in hundreds of group photo and art exhibitions in Serbia and abroad. Many of his works are highly regarded and have won numerous awards. Some of his photos can be seen in private and museum collections in Serbia and abroad. In 1999/2000, he earned the title of Master of Artistic Photography, awarded by the Photo Association of Yugoslavia.

“Photography is my world, which I love, but never fully understand. It requires a lot of me: endurance, commitment, dedication, but gives me freedom and brings meaning to my existence”.

SUCH A LIFE

A personal document covering 10 years (2005–2015) of life within Serbian society. Portraits of ordinary people and their everyday affairs, away from the mainstream of social life. These photographs create a visual layer of a country with a complicated history and complex identity. The project includes pictures presenting Serbian rituals, idyllic rural scenes and family feasts. Those are interspersed with images of a country that still struggles with wartime trauma and divisions. In all the photographs, the question of the collective is striking: Did we leave our past behind: communist, war and post war? Who are we now – as a community and as a society? And where do we want to go now?

The order and arrangement of the photographs take the form of a closed circle, with people as both the focal point and the interweaving thread.





Gregory Michenaud

FRANCE

Grégory Michenaud was born in France in 1975. Since 2003, he has been living and working in Krakow, Poland. He makes documentaries and reportages. He is a member of the Union of Polish Art Photographers; a graduate of the Sputnik Mentorship mentoring program (Warsaw 2013) and the 7th Masterclass (2016–2017); the winner of many prizes and awards, including 2nd place in the category “people / wedding photography” at the Moscow International Photo Award (MIFA); the author of numerous exhibitions in Poland and abroad, such as: “Crossing Borders” in the Pauza Gallery or “Feilai Feng” in the Lokator Club’s gallery; the author of publications in the Sony World Photography Awards Winners Book 2009, as well as in newspapers and periodicals (Gazeta Wyborcza, Dziennik Zachodni, Biuletyn Fotograficzny) and on websites on photography.

MINORITIES

“For all the years of politically forced amnesia that have passed since the atrocities of WWII gravely wounded the social body of Central Europe, the holders of the broken heritage of multicultural Poland were a mere one per cent of its citizens who belonged to thirteen different national and ethnic minorities. Just a shadow of what it used to be. Extracting their identity from the collected and piously preserved scraps of the lost past, they’ve kept transmitting it to daughters and sons. Even if some of them chose to assimilate rather than integrate, they remained overwhelmed with the

fondness for particular kinds of clothes, food, songs, beliefs, aesthetics and all these things that people long for without even knowing why and sometimes call their “roots”. That’s how we learn our own cultures and identities.

While traveling the country and visiting minority families in search of images of those silent, almost invisible rites of initiation, I also dug into collections of photographs, which were often presented to me. What I found was another pattern of cultural transmission – through aged images of the past and ancestry.

By carefully selecting old photographs and matching them with the present portraits of generations in their present-day environment, I am trying to show how this transgenerational communication that shapes not only the minorities in Poland, but all of us around the world, is both strong and fragile at the same time.”









Patrick Galbats

LUXEMBOURG

Patrick Galbats was born in Luxembourg in 1978. He studied photography at the École Supérieure des Arts de l'Image in Brussels. He is active in the field of reportage and documentary photography, focusing on the social groups that surround him. Interested in people and their evolution in the ever-changing world, he went on missions organised by a number of non-governmental organisations to Haiti, Ethiopia, the Philippines, Bolivia, and Cameroon. He has held numerous exhibitions in Luxembourg and other European countries and was awarded a scholarship by the Luxembourgish Ministry of Culture. In 2018, he published the works from the presented project in the form of a book.

The works presented at the exhibition are a collection of images of present-day Hungary. Most of them come from the project Hit me one more time. The collection is an attempt by the photographer, a Luxembourger of Hungarian descent, to search for his family roots, an important frame of reference being the fact that his grandfather had to leave Hungary in 1944 and became a refugee. Having undertaken numerous trips to his ancestral home, he explored in depth both the country and the state of Hungarian society and brought back captivating photographs that show a country in transformation but also a divided country – manifestly in search of its identity and common goal.

Galbats' project also touches upon issues of national identity and sovereignty, revealing on one



side people's nostalgia for the 'Great Hungary' with its borders as they were in 1919, and on the other quite widespread sentiments of apprehension or reluctance towards immigrants. The aggressive political climate in the country favours the rebirth of nationalism and populism, which is also reflected in the selected photographs.



Miklos Deri

HUNGARY

Miklós Déri was born in Hungary in 1964. He obtained his diploma in Photographic Art from the Hungarian College of Arts in 1990. He worked for many years as a photojournalist for Hungarian art magazines. He also leads the photojournalism faculty of the Photography Department at Budapest Metropolitan University.

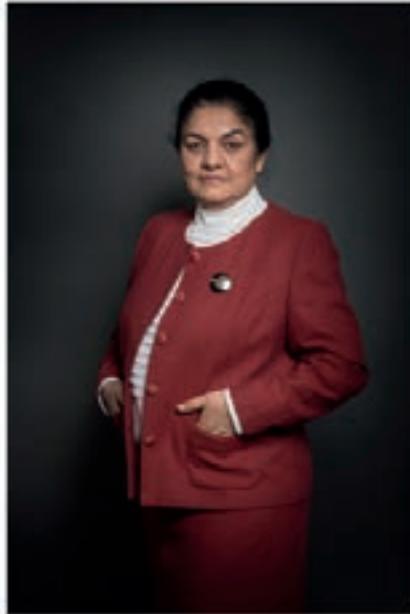
He participated in various Hungarian and international photo exhibitions, and he was awarded the André Kertész Grand Prize in 2016. The artist is particularly interested in social issues; he has been working on subjective, documentarist, thematic photo essay projects that focus on current problems. The photos of Roma people presented at our exhibition were on display in Prague and Berlin, among other cities.



ROMA BODY POLITICS I. NO INNOCENT PICTURE

Miklós Déri's project comprises of individuals of Romani heritage who perform important functions in Hungarian society. The photographs are arranged in the form of diptychs depicting each person in traditional Romani attire and in clothing typical of their current social role. With his work, the artist highlights the problem of our perception of other people being shaped by superficial attributes and the related conceptions and prejudices. He addresses the issue of xenophobia, present to a significant extent in Hungarian social life, and asks questions about its sources and prevalence. His work can be also interpreted as an exploration of the notions of identity, integration, assimilation, and the resulting changes.





11th Central and Eastern European Film Festival

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Artists participating in the exhibition:

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Violetta Luba (curator),

Radek Lipka (coordination), **Jiří Vlášek** (graphic design)

MOST SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL THE ARTISTS AND OUR PARTNERS:

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