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Beatrice Mumdjian

Excavation Sites and Magic Cities  
Restoring from a Void.

GALERIJA ŠKUC

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## Obnova praznine. Najdišča in čarobna mesta

*"Forgetting is a process we should all be allowed to do."*<sup>1</sup>  
(Beatrice Moudjian)

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Samostojna razstava Beatrice Moudjian *Obnova praznine. Najdišča in čarobna mesta* v treh konceptualno povezanih projektih preizpravi proces ustvarjanja in doživljanja lastnega spomina. Tiste, ki ga tvorijo fotoalbumi, polni manjkajočih fotografij, pripovedi, polne praznin, in subjektivna dojemanja zgodovinskih prelomnic.

Umetnica lastno zgodovino kot materijo svoje prakse obravnava skozi pripovedi o preteklih dogodkih in sedanjih vplivih. Pri svojem interdisciplinarnem ustvarjanju posnema arheološke, forenzične in muzejske pristope. Imitiranje arheološkega izkopavanja postavi za metaforični temelj raziskave, saj se odstirana skrinvitost lastne zgodovine loteva preko natančnega razkrivanja drobnih delčkov, skritih v pripovedih in fotografijah, ki jih je podedovala.

Prav tako v svojih projektih rekonstruira krajine in prostore, ki so zaznamovali premike in zgodbe njenih prednikov, kov. ureja, preučuje in označuje jih kot artefakte v muzejski zbirki. Njen ustvarjalni proces je mestoma stilistično podoben forenzičnemu pristopu, kjer so predmeti brezmejno oštrevljeni in dokumentirani.

Moudjian v svoji pripovedi včasih zapolni prazne prostore s poetično fiktivno zgodbo, ki jo sestavlja na podlagi preurejanja lastnega arhivskega gradiva. Osnovni vzbog njene raziskavke je obnavljanje prikritih ali izgubljenih podatkov. Popolna razgradnjina podobe družine, tako na ravnih zavžetenih fotografij kot neodgovorjenih vprašanj o družinski zgodovini, odraža fragmentacijo, skozi katere umetnica imitira proces razkroja in ponovnega sestavljanja lastne identitete.

Vstopna točka v umetnično raziskovanje lastne identitete je fotografksa serija *Čarobno mesto (Magic City, 2017–2021)*, v kateri podobe utopičnega mesta, sestavljenega iz vsakdanjih predmetov in kulturno specifičnih prehrambenih izdelkov, gradijo elemente, podobne različni sakralni arhitekturi. Moudjian z mešanjem prvin svoje armensko-bolgarsko-nemške zgodovine in sedanjosti ustvarja čarobno mesto. Izhodišče za nastanek dela je mladinski roman angleške avtorice Edith Nesbit *Čarobno mesto*, vzet z umetnične police otroških knjig, ki sta jo polnili skupaj z materjo. Zgodba se vrти okoli miniaturnega mesta, zgrajenega z otroško domislico: iz drobnih predmetov, ki jih glavni junak najde v svoji hiši. V zgrajenem mestu pomanjšani protagonist doživlja čarobne dogodivščine. Čarobno mesto Moudjian razume kot recept, s katerim posameznica iz najljubših sladkarij in drobnarji ustvarja avtoportret v nekem trenutku, v nekem okolju. Avtorica mora biti le previdna en, da najljubšemu kolaču ne poteče rok trajanja in se utopija sanjskega mesta ne poruši.

Umetnica s serijo analognih fotografij *Družinska ozvezja / Diasporaportret kot simbolični kruh (Family Constellations / Diasporaportraits as Symbolic Bread, 2022)* materializira pripoved o svoji družini. Blížnje sorodnice ke predstavlja v kruhu, svoj odnos do vsake\_ga pa definira z ornamenti. Kruh priprijava z združevanjem in prepletanjem bolgarskih, nemških in armenskih receptov. Ornamenti izvirajo iz različnih kulturno-političnih kontekstov in krajev, povezanih z umetnično zgodovino in zgodovino njene družine. Četudi je njihovo pokrelo v skupnosti vzhodno- in srednjevropskega ter azijskega prostora, imajo soroden pomen, na primer simboli, povezani s plodnostjo. Kombinacije receptov in ornamentov/simbolov tvorijo nove celote, z njimi pa kruhaste figure dobijo nove pomene. Razumemo jih lahko kot razmišljanja o družinskih članih in poskus zbljedevanja z njimi. Vsebinsko nasičen kruh rekonstruiра praznino v spominu, ki so del dedičnine. Novonastale podobe in njihove sopostavitev tvorijo narativ, ne le o zgodovini umetnične družine, ampak tudi o njeni lastni identiteti.

Vezni element razstave in hkrati najpovednejši pričevalec umetnične osebne zgodbe je projekt *Inventar forenzičnih najdišč ali popolna razgradnjina armenske družine (Forensic Excavations Inventory or The Total Deconstruction of an Armenian Family, 2017–2023)*. Moudjian lastno zgodbo in identiteto, ki sta pogojeni v plasti gledje na nenehno spreminjačo se okolje, razkraja in ju na novo (selektivno) pripoveduje. Rokuje z zbirko 150 družinskih fotografij, posnetih približno med letoma 1930 in 1990. Z izrezovanjem posameznih *Objektov* iz arhiva fotografij izpostavlja na tisoče raznolikih predmetov, včasih komaj prepoznavnih detajlov, vzetih iz njihovega izvirnega okolja na fotografiji. Nato jih poveča in kot objekte prenese s hladne sive podlage računalniškega zaslona v fizičen prostor galerije kot nosilce spominov. Hkrati samostojne enote in delci sestavljanke, povsem pa vizualni pripomočki umetničnega osmisljanja njene lastne in identiteti.

*Objekt 032* so gosti, črni lasje umetnične matere, izrezani iz fotografije, posnete leta 1990 kmalu po ponovni združitvi Vzhodne in Zahodne Nemčije, na kateri umetnica in njena mati opazujeta prihod vlaka. Materini bujni lasje tako niso več le neopazen detalj podobe, ampak simbolizirajo zavestno odbiranje in poseg v tolmačenje lastnih spominov in tujih pripovedi. Arhiv *Objektov* in *Objekti* sami tvorijo plasti generacijskih spominov med armenskim Araratom, bolgarsko Sofijo in Vzhodnim Berlinom po padcu železne zavese, kakor jih Moudjian ponovno zgodovini sama.

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*"This work tells an autobiographical story that begins before my birth. My own longing and search for recognition, meaning and justice hold together this autobiography in fragments."*<sup>2</sup>  
(Beatrice Moudjian)

<sup>1</sup> "Gre za avtobiografsko zgodbo, katere začetki segajo pred moje rojstvo. Njene fragmente povezujeta moje hrepenejenje in iskanje priznanja, smisla in pravčnosti."



## Restoring from a Void. Excavation Sites and Magic Cities

*"Forgetting is a process we should all be allowed to do."*  
(Beatrice Moudjian)

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The solo exhibition by Beatrice Moudjian, *Restoring from a Void. Excavation Sites and Magic Cities*, in three conceptually linked projects, questions the process of creating and experiencing one's own memory. The one that consists of photo albums full of missing photographs, narratives brimming with voids and subjective perceptions of historical turning points.

The artist considers her own history as the material of her practice through narratives of past events and present influences. In her interdisciplinary work, she emulates archaeological, forensic and museum approaches. She makes the imitation of the archaeological excavation the metaphorical foundation of her research, as she sets out to unravel the mysteries of her own history through the precise uncovering of tiny fragments hidden in the narratives and photographs that have been handed down to her.

She also reconstructs in her projects the landscapes and spaces that marked the movements and stories of her ancestors. She arranges, studies and labels them like artefacts in a museum collection. Her creative process is at times stylistically similar to a forensic approach, where objects are endlessly numbered and documented.

Moudjian's narrative sometimes fills empty spaces with a poetic fictional story, which she constructs by rearranging her own archival material. The basic impulse of her research is the recovery of concealed or lost data. The complete deconstruction of the image of the family, both on the level of discarded photographs and unanswered questions about family history, reflects the fragmentation through which the artist imitates the process of disintegration and reassembly of one's own identity.

The entry point into the artist's exploration of her own identity is the photo series *Magic City* (2017–2021), in which images of a utopian city made of everyday objects and culturally specific food products form elements that are reminiscent of various sacred architectures. Moudjian mixes elements of her Armenian-Bulgarian-German history and the present to create a magic city. The starting point for the work is the children's novel *The Magic City* by the English author Edith Nesbit, taken from the artist's childhood bookshelf, which she filled together with her mother. The story revolves around a miniature city built with the imagination of a child from tiny objects that the main character finds in his home. In the constructed city, the young protagonist becomes part of magic adventures. Moudjian sees the magic city as a recipe by which the individual creates a self-portrait of themselves out of their favourite sweets and knick-knacks, at a certain time, in a certain place. The author just has to make sure that their favourite cake does not expire, and that the utopia of the dream city does not collapse.

With her series of analogue photographs *Family Constellations / Diasporaportraits as Symbolic Bread* (2022), the artist materialises the narrative of her family. She represents her close relatives in bread and defines her relationship to each of them with ornaments. She prepares the bread by combining and intertwining Bulgarian, German and Armenian recipes. The ornaments originate from various cultural and political contexts and places associated with the history of the artist and her family. Even though they originate from the Eastern and Central European and Asian communities, they have a related meaning, for example, symbols tied to fertility. The combinations of recipes and ornaments/symbols form new wholes, and with them, the bread figures take on new meanings. They can be understood as reflections on family members and an attempt to get closer to them. The bread, saturated with meaning, reconstructs the gaps in memory that are part of heritage. The newly created images and their juxtapositions form a narrative, not only about the history of the artist's family but also about her own identity.

*The Forensic Excavations Inventory or The Total Deconstruction of an Armenian Family* (2017–2023) is the connective element of the exhibition and the most telling testimony to the artist's personal story. Moudjian deconstructs and (selectively) retells her own story and identity, which are conditioned and layered given the constantly changing circumstances. She is working with a collection of 150 family photographs taken between 1930 and 1990. By cutting out individual *Objects* from the archive of photographs, she exposes thousands of diverse objects, sometimes barely recognisable details taken from their original environment in the photograph. She then enlarges them and transfers them as objects from the cold grey surface of the computer screen into the physical space of the gallery as carriers of memories. They are simultaneously independent units and pieces of a puzzle and serve the artist primarily as visual aids in making sense of her story and identity.

*Object 032* is the thick, black hair of the artist's mother, cut out from a photograph taken in 1990, shortly after the reunification of East and West Germany, in which the artist and her mother observe an arriving train. The mother's abundant hair is thus no longer just an inconspicuous detail of the image but symbolises a conscious reflection and intervention in the interpretation of her own memories and other people's narratives. The *Objects* archive and the *Objects* themselves form layers of generational memories between Armenian Ararat, Bulgarian Sofia and East Berlin after the fall of the Iron Curtain, as Moudjian re-historicises them herself.

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