

Maja Bajevic To Be Continued



Proyecto *Continuará* en el Palacio de Cristal

DATES: 26 May – 3 October 2011

PLACE: Palacio de Cristal. Parque del Retiro

ORGANISED BY: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía

CURATED BY: Manuel Borja-Villel and Teresa Velázquez

COORDINATED BY: Patricia Molins

Is change the only stable factor in history?
—Maja Bajevic

Opening on 27 May at Palacio de Cristal in Parque del Retiro is a show by French-Bosnian artist **Maja Bajevic** (Sarajevo 1967). *To Be Continued*, a never-before-seen project made specifically for the occasion, is also the first time in Spain that the artist—very little known here—exhibits her work individually.

In the making of *To Be Continued* there are two premises that work as strategic starting points and that Bajevic frequently uses: the construction of history and identity as unfinished processes and the idea of flux and fluidity. The project schemes from a reading that the artist made of Palacio de Cristal: to her, it is some sort of Sleeping Beauty, a static figure, arrogantly ignorant of the world, who needs to be put into the flux.

The artist has composed a multidisciplinary proposal conceived from a selection of **one hundred and forty political slogans** from the last hundred years, **from 1911 until 2011**. Political and economical mottos, as Bajevic sees them, are “the most direct way of expressing opinions or messages in the masses”. The selected slogans have been categorised following five criteria: by **year**, by **political or economical direction**, **content/meaning**, a **children’s game**—starting a sentence with the last word of the previous one—and **random**, regardless of their impact or importance.

As the artist explains, the quantity and content of slogans speaks about the “political temperature” of the moment in which they were created. Bajevic saw that political mottos were far more prolific in boiling times than in calmer periods, in which slogans “tend to take a more economical nature”. In exploring these issues, the artist wants to reflect the events and social balance throughout the century with its multiple shifts: from left to right, from political to economical, from enthusiasm and idealism to resignation and discontent, and thus successively, in a continuous permutation of social tendencies from one side to the other.

Bajevic also realised that, with time, these slogans have become shorter and evolved from *us/ours/them*, where plural is equal to social and political, to *me/you*, in which singular represents the individual and economical.

In assembling this motto archive, *To Be Continued* rises a fundamental question: which are the five moments in the last hundred years that have led to the most radical shifts in society? And how can we illustrate them? Thus Bajevic builds up this project, which includes screenings, installation and a performance, all aimed to question and analyse how we face historical events and, especially, how we tell them.

The project develops in changing mechanisms and devices, depending on the time: day and night. With this, Bajevic wants to “awaken Sleeping Beauty”, involving the very exhibition frame as an active element in the show.

During the **day**, the public will see the **Sound Installation**, the **performance** —only on specific days—, the slogan **archive** and the **monument**. All these elements explain several essential aspects in Bajevic’s work: the construction of identity, the ludicrous dimension — even absurd— of art and the implication of exhibition space and the public in setting the work in motion.

Sound installation: category – game

For each slogan, composer **Nedim Zlatac** has made an original melody, sung *a capella* by several performers, some of them musically qualified, some of them not. The method that links the slogans comes from a children’s game, consisting of beginning each sentence with the last word of the previous one. At the same time this sound game hooks with the bird’s trills, underlining the distinction between Nature and Culture.

Performance: category / random

To Be Continued includes the execution of a four hour-long performance that will take place eight times during the show's season: the first three days and the last five. Scaffolding —an element very much seen in Bajevic's work as it is an indispensable mechanism of construction and building up— is placed in one corner of Palacio de Cristal and allows access to the first and second level of windows. On top of it, five performers will undertake an absurd process: they dust the windows and they write slogans on them. Afterwards, the windows are washed and the process starts all over.

Scaffolding, the dusty, maybe half-cleaned windows will stay on view as artefacts of the performance. Bajevic does not consider occulting them necessary; she finds more interesting to explicitly show the mechanisms of the piece. Montage and disassembling of scaffolding, that will be placed in different spots inside the Palace every time, is also part of the performance. During the days in which it will take place, an opera singer will perform, from the top of the “monument”, the slogans that the *operatives* will write on the windows.

Archive: all categories

The archive of slogans is set inside a box on the floor. It will include a photograph of the motto located in a public space and a related text, written by art historians and critics Bojana Pejić, Henriette Sölter and Mara Traumane, and the artist herself. This archive represents the only permanent physical appearance of the slogans in the project, which have an ephemeral nature in the rest of elements of the show.

The Monument

The “monument” that Bajevic has installed in Palacio de Cristal is a structure formed by a pedestal and an empty podium: it is a monument without a statue. On top of the podium the artist has set five screens, disposed as a frieze, projecting her 2010 film *Wende* (German for “turnaround”, “twist”).

“Wende” is used in German to describe the events of the fall of the Berlin wall. In “Wende” groups of people are depicted walking on the streets and, at a given moment, all of a sudden and all at once, they make a turnaround, a twist. This relates to Bajevic’s idea that the people seems to be in continuous change: “The mass that is saying or has been spoken to in one way today might be saying / being spoken to totally differently, even in opposition to what has been said, tomorrow.” Hence her question: is change in fact “the only stable factor in history”?

On top of the monument there is the empty podium to which visitors can access, becoming the missing statue. In this space, surrounded by scaffolding that locates it in an intermediate space “in between being built and being de-built”, as Bajevic affirms, the only way to descend is to turn around or use the slide on the back of the structure. Both options, as the artist states, are disappointing. When the performance is being executed, the opera singer will occupy the podium.

Steam machines: years, meaning, game

When the **night** falls and Palacio de Cristal closes its doors, the steam machines go off. They are also on display during the day, with a sign that reads “Night shift”. From 9.30pm to 11.30pm the public will see, from the outside in, slogans being projected on moving stream. This underlines the ephemeral tone of the whole project and, as Bajevic states, “the way it tends to speak about history”.

The artist

Maja Bajevic (Sarajevo, 1967) is an artist who takes a critical and witty approach to art in order to pinpoint dualities in human behavior, in particular those involving power. The power of history is opposed to the power of choice and interpretation; collective memory to collective amnesia, objective accounts to subjective storytelling and imagination – as a construction in progress, fluid and unstable (the presence of scaffolding in her work is not fortuitous), whose shifts and derivations react to contradictory stimuli.

Bajevic's work, performative in many ways, ranges from video, installation, performance and sound to text, crafts, machinery and photography. She combines her artistic work with teaching at the Università IUAV of Venice and at the Bauhaus Universität Weimar, among other institutions.

She has been invited to take part in some of the most important exhibitions of the 1990s and 2000s, including Manifesta (2000), Documenta (2007), and the Istanbul (2001) and Venice (2003) Biennials. She has had solo exhibitions at PS1, MoMA, New York (2004); Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2005); and Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa, Venice (2008).

RELATED ACTIVITIES

The **performance** will take place in the first and last days of *To be continued*, between **5pm** and **9pm** the following dates: **27, 28 and 29 May; 29 and 30 September** and **1, 2 and 3 October**.

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