

Before the war Sarajevo was, artistically speaking, very traditional. Art after the 1960s was not an issue. In 1989 I saw an exhibition in Paris «Les magiciens de la terre» which completely changed my views and my life. That is the reason why I wanted to go to Paris to study and I did so in 1991. In a way, art may have saved my life. I went to Paris for one year and stayed for eight years. The war started in 1992. I could not go back. The experience of being somewhere else during a time when every second someone you love can be killed filled me with feelings of guilt, hopelessness, put me in a state of waiting. I was neither in Paris nor in Sarajevo. When the war stopped, I simply had to go back. It had not been my choice to be away, it was imposed upon me. And whatever is imposed, one does not accept. But it was my choice to go back. Since then (when the war broke out I completely stopped working because it seemed to me that art is too small compared to war and death), my work has been deeply marked by my own experience. An experience that I unfortunately share with many people all over the world through centuries.

The meaning of a piece of art that is engaged in a «local theme» is of course never the same «on location» as in the international world. If it is good enough, though, it can not only bridge the differences but also awaken some feelings that might have nothing to do with its geographical background, but rather with human history in general. Human history and human fears, beauty. The fact that an artist is talking from his/her own experience can only give power to the work, the power of lived through, not only thought through. Crossing the borders is a question of the capability of an artist to present his/her own experience so that it is readable also to people with completely different experience. Personally these are the art works that I find the most interesting. The biggest difference between Sarajevo and all the other cities for me is that only Sarajevo is the town of my birth. Everything else could have and has happened in many other cities all over the world.

**MAJA BAJEVIC**

*Maja Bajevic, born in Sarajevo in 1967, is the artist-in-residence at the Collegium Helveticum from October 2001 until April 2002. Her work consists of performances and installations. She had a fine arts education in Sarajevo and went on to Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris for diploma and post-diploma studies in multimedia. 1999 she held a residency at Arts Link, Boston. 2000/01 she was guest professor at the Ecole Nationale des Beaux-Arts de Lyon. Her work has been shown in Europe and the United States of America. More information on our homepage: [www.collegium.ethz.ch](http://www.collegium.ethz.ch)*

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*In connection with Maja Bajevic's stay, the workshop «Shifting Localities. Dealing with the Specificity of Context» will take place on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2001, see page 25.*

# TRUST ME



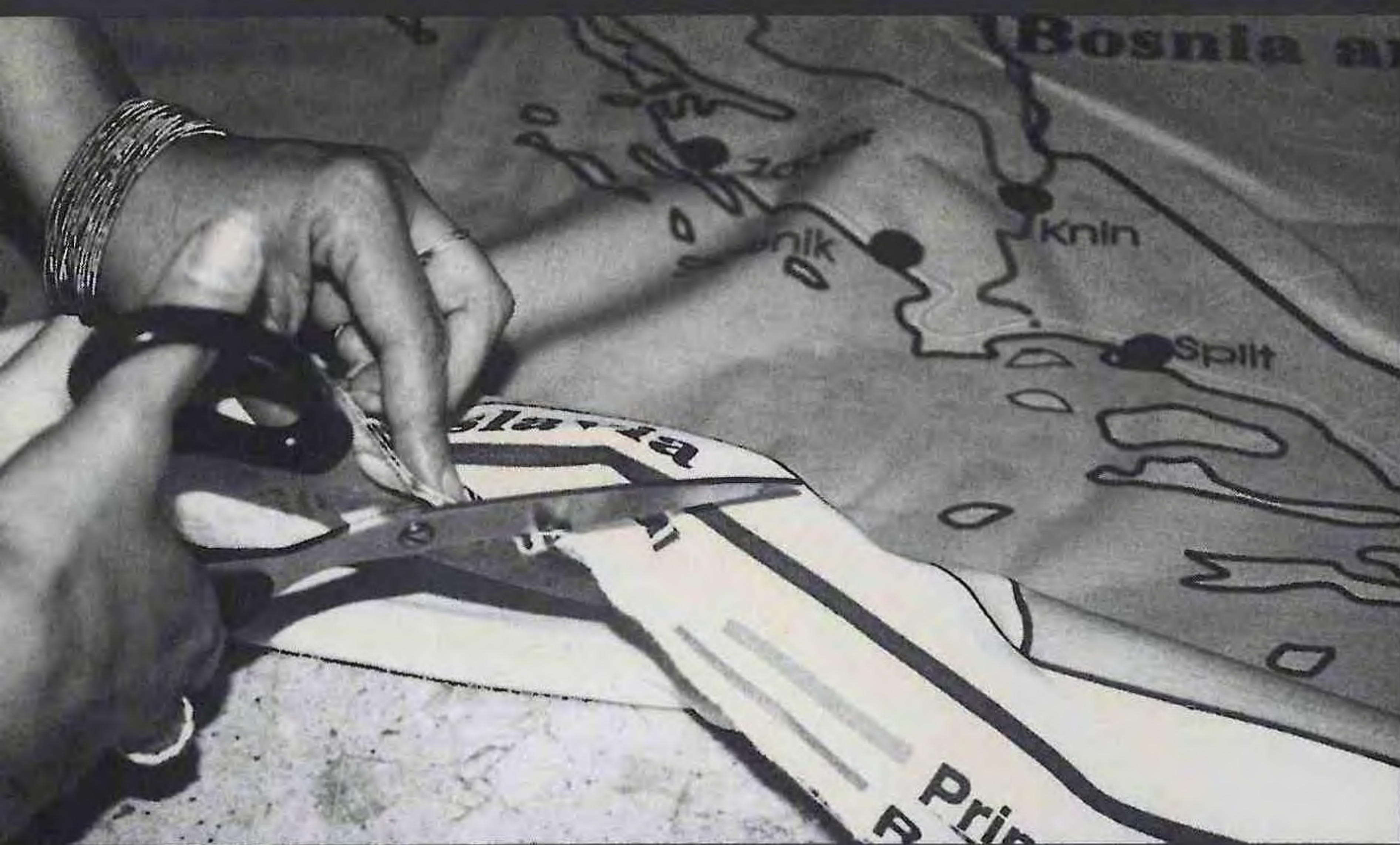
Video iz oblasti Sarajevo: "DJEČJA IGRA" se čini prijemom  
koliko možemo vjerovati politici/politiku, odnosno demati-  
kacijom političara kao nekog.

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«The Speaker» (Sarajevo 1998). The van drives through the snowy streets of Sarajevo. On its back a video screen was mounted. It shows a man in a suit sitting at a table talking to imaginary viewers. The man keeps talking but there is no sound. Only the gestures of talking are seen.

On the street flyers are distributed picturing the «politician» saying «I love you», «you love me», «trust me».





*«Dressed Up» (Sarajevo 1999). A piece of fabric with a map of Yugoslavia. A gallery space with a table and a sewing machine. The artist cuts out a dress for herself and sews it up. The audience watches the scissors cut through the landscapes, splitting neighbouring towns and dividing roads, indifferent to anything but the overall pattern, manifested to the hacking sounds from the sewing machine. At the end of the performance, the artist leaves the room in her new costume.*

«Women at Work» is a performance trilogy in collaboration with Bosnian refugee widows.  
«Women at Work I». Sarajevo, September 1999. Six women sit on the scaffolding set up for the reconstruction of the façade of the National Gallery of Bosnia and Herzegovina. For five days, five hours a day from 4 pm till 9 pm, the women embroider each their traditional motifs on the protection net of the scaffolding: a bird, flowers, ornaments framed by other patterns. The installation does not show the art represented in the National Gallery, but a fundamental self-expression of the women which participated in this work of the artist. Maja Bajevic «has invited women refugees from Podrinja, Srebrenica, Vlasenica. And that was a rare occasion that the women expelled from Podrinja take part in the social life of their Capital city, and this time not to carry transparencies on which are written the names of their killed and disappeared sons, brothers, husbands» (Nisvet Dzanko, «Dani», 10 September, 1999).  
«Women at Work II» was set at Château Voltaire, France 2000. «Women at Work III» will be part of Istanbul Biennale in September 2001. Both relate in different ways to the women involved and their common Ex-Yugoslavian history.

