

The plot of *Shadow Zones* will continuously be re-animated and re-scripted over the course of three months.

15 July

Opening of the installation with photographs, film clips, selected reference publications and a wide range of newly translated archival materials to be annotated by Zone Collective and viewers

6 August

Hand-viewings of Vlado Kristl's banned animation films made available at When Site Lost The Plot

13 August

Studies in Character Development released – at once, an audio accompaniment for the installation and a podcast to be heard by listeners near and far

24 September

Cinema for Houseboats, a screening night following from experiments in film-viewing undertaken in 1970s and 1980s Zagreb, held on Amsterdam's Westerdok

To follow updates, visit @whensitelosttheplot on Instagram.

EDITORIAL Kirila Cvetkovska and Megan Hoetger; CROATIAN TRANSLATION AND VISUAL DESIGN Karoline Swiezynski



When Site Lost the Plot is an artist-run space, working with site as a fiction preceded by plots that go beyond it, and looking at site-specificity in relation to displacement, climate, gentrification and the internet. We are a film studio when we need to be, a public relations organisation, a publishing-ing collective where we want to affix ourselves in print, archivists when we want access to histories, and a project space when liveness is key. **Synchronic Cinema** is a series of works with (dis)placed narrators, presented over the duration of 2021. The physical works are shown in Westerdok, with online stories appearing at whensitelosttheplot.eu.



SHADOW ZONES

EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA HISTORY
IN YUGOSLAVIA; OR,
A CINEMA AND A HISTORY MADE
AND UNMADE BY MAPS

15 JULY –
16 OCTOBER
2021

OPENING HOURS
Fridays 14h-18h
Saturdays by appointment

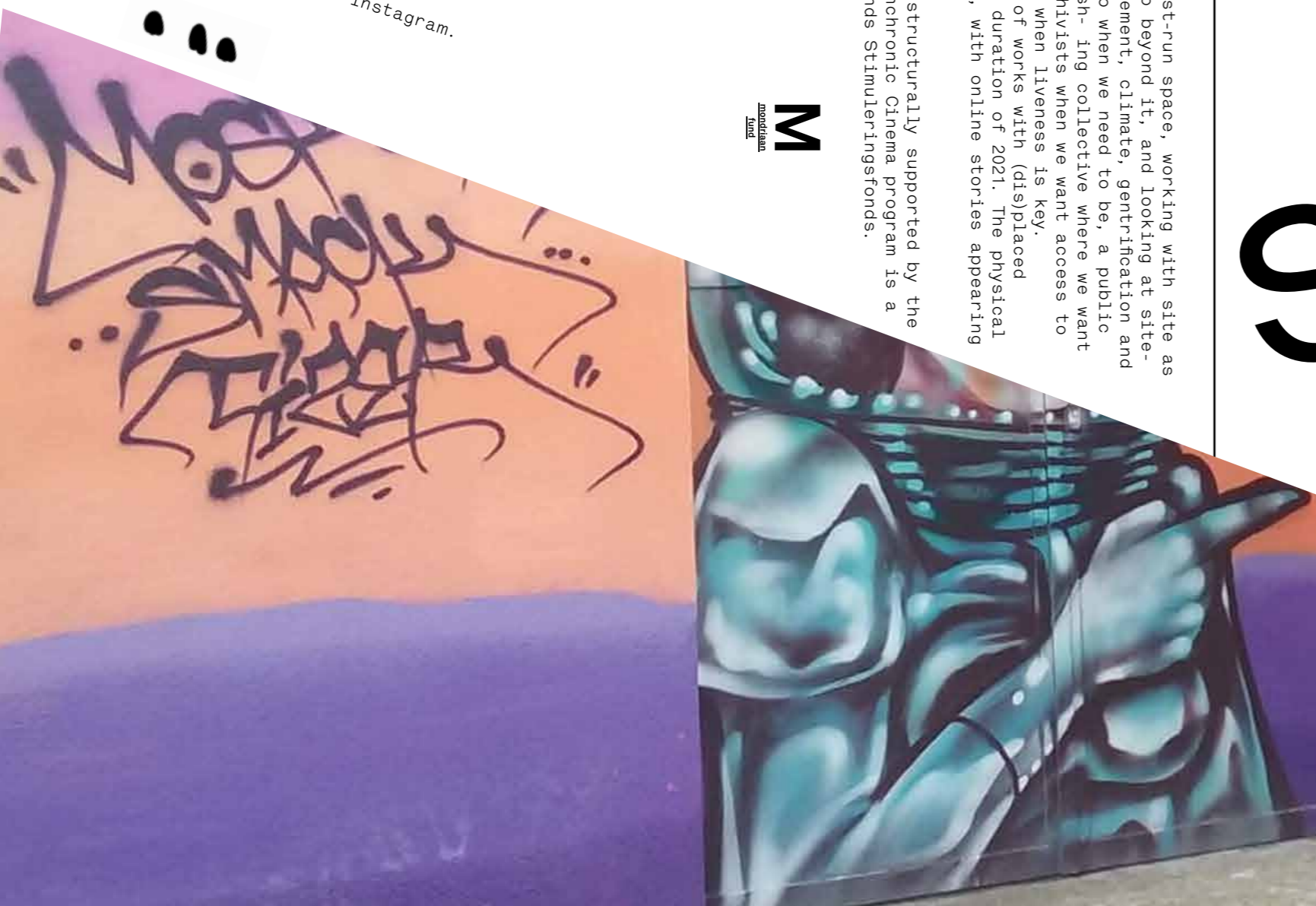
WHEN SITE LOST THE PLOT
Westerdok 782
1013BV Amsterdam

Shadow Zones is an installation by the Zone Collective (Kirila Cvetkovska and Megan Hoetger), which presents materials from Croatian and Slovenian perspectives on Yugoslav experimental film histories as a deconstructed theatre play with a narrative web that unfolds over time and across on-site and online spaces in Amsterdam and beyond.

Experimental and structuralist films are often intended to be anti-narrative, until a look in the archives reveals a complex of 'characters' and 'scenes', each with their own lay of the land. **Shadow Zones** maps the weave of this drama in the Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav contexts. With anticipatory suspense, structural conditions come to be inhabited as characters who are embroiled in systems of film's circulation.

Geopolitics, romance, style and suitcases of celluloid wind into a tangled transnational fabric. Traveling between moments in the production of 'Croatian scenes,' the installation also circuitously tracks the border statuses of the Balkans within conceptions of 'Europe' and 'European' avant-garde film history: a snake in one direction can be a ladder in the other.

Materials in **Shadow Zones** have been culled from the archives of the Croatian Film Association, Zagreb; Student Center Zagreb; Moderna galerija (MG+MSUM), Ljubljana and the "This is All Film" symposium; Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden; and the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Additional research materials have been collected from resources available online. Special thanks to Karoline Swiezynski, whose design support has made **Shadow Zones** come alive, and to Diana Nenadić, Ivan Pačić, Bojana Piškur, Tomislav Čorić and all the others who so generously opened the doors to their archives, embodied and material, to us.



When a wall becomes a door...

There is some light out there, far away... and in order to catch it, you need to leave.

The burden of living only for survival in a society of slow death, such as the Balkans, has ingrained a belief that 'good life' exists somewhere else, especially when that somewhere else is in the West. Being from a provincial town in Macedonia, I have grown up around conversations that encourage leaving as the only option or the norm for achievement (whatever that entails), reflecting a deep fear and desire for material security. Once you make it out there, you are allowed to 'preach' at home. Most of the ones who leave, though, end up with the paralyzing fear of perhaps having to come back for one reason or another, and having to stay. And this talk is the one of a working class human, often romanticized or just ignored.

Ignorance then creeps into the cracks of homes and into the already degraded education system, alienating further the ones on the fringes who try to hold onto air.

I left a few times, came back and decided to stay (for a while), although I still suffer from the contracted 'disease' of leaving - or as artist David Wojnarowicz writes in *Close to the Knives* (his 'memoir of disintegration' 1991): *When I was told that I'd contracted this virus it didn't take me long to realize that I'd contracted a diseased society as well.*

Coming to terms with my own ignorance, in 2017, I gladly joined my friend Megan on a journey to Croatia and Slovenia along the way, to look into experimental film histories at different archives and in conversation with various cultural workers. Wandering around the Student Center in Zagreb, looking for the space of the archive, someone we asked

pointed at a mural on one of the buildings. I told her that what I see is a wall, while she was trying to convince me that it is the door to the archive. It did turn out to be a door - and it seems that I failed to see the door knob. Entering into this repository, with supposed cultural heritage scattered on the floors, we encountered stories of people with honest creative efforts and dedication, but also of neglect by the powers that be, ultimately allowing for disputable trades in which cultural heritage is sold to never known places and individuals. Instead of developing systematic solutions to this problem in our region, we are mostly fixated on the acquisition (and presentation) of our cultural heritage by big institutional names around the world. This acquisition may help in the preservation of the material, but it will certainly not do the job that we are supposed to do on our own: find a lasting solution within our own cultural and institutional parameters. A solution of this sort requires accessible spaces for open dialogue, away from all the cliques and the guarded cultural environments.

As it is, and in this way, a certain invasion takes place, both internal and external. But in times of invasion, literal and metaphorical, one should not lose their head. The road to frustration is an easy way out, especially in a place such as the Balkans, continuously suffering from an inferiority complex. Or as writer Georgi Gospodinov puts it: *The question is not who will pay my electricity bill, but who will pay for my frustrated life. Instead of trying to justify our lives to the ones that are the 'world-renowned,' we might remember that sometimes our own walls are in turn doors, and it might take some real effort to find the door knobs.*

-Kirila Cvetkovska

...you might find a pile of hay

In the late spring and summer of 2016 I was commuting daily to the Getty Research Institute (GRI) in Los Angeles to conduct archival research in the Otto Mühl Papers, a vast archive of the Austrian artist, provocateur and eventual, to my mind, cult leader. Despite Mühl's ultimately violent historical trajectory, I entered his archive to trace the movement of Austrian filmmaker Kurt Kren's 'action films' from the mid-1960s, co-created with Mühl during a series of happenings undertaken by the artist and collaborator Annie Brus in the cellar of Mühl's Leopoldstadt (second district) apartment. The films are legendary and continue to circulate through underground cinema scenes today, as well as now (as opposed to in 1964) also gracing the screens of museum displays, from Vienna's Museum of Modern Art to Paris's Pompidou Centre. Amidst hundreds of documents - fliers, postcards, programs, letters (typed and handwritten), press clippings, photo contact sheets, writing drafts, I found two documents making reference to the screening of Kren's work in Zagreb. Both documents were letters sent by Mühl to museum curators, attempting to market his performance work by way of reference to Kren's action films (the 'documents' of the performances). Zagreb appears in a longer list of screening locations. Nowhere in Kren's own curriculum vitae over the years did such a reference appear, so no further details are available.

Perhaps the archives of the Production Art Production (P.A.P.) Agency might hold an answer: the P.A.P. Agency was an early experiment in art film distribution. Years before Leo Castelli or Iliana Sonnabend would generate markets for moving image art in their New York galleries, Munich-based underground cinema organiser Karlheinz Hein was working with others in the West German, Austrian and Swiss German scenes to open up an economy for 'experimental' and generally non-commercial film. Kren's work was in the P.A.P. catalog for the duration of the Agency's existence, and his action films regularly traveled around Europe in experimental programs, first with the Undependent Film Center and then with the Center's successor, the P.A.P. As I learned at the end of 2019 at the conclusion of a 5-month research fellowship, today the archives of Werner Schulz (co-founder of the Undependent) are held in the Archive der Avantgarden, a vast collection held by the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

and housed in the 18th century Japanisches Palais on the northern bank of the Elbe River. The archives of the P.A.P. Agency, though, are held by Karlheinz Hein (co-founder of the Undependent and mastermind behind the P.A.P. Agency) in an unknown condition in a cellar in Berlin - Hein has not yet been open to allowing collectors or researchers to visit. That door remains closed.

The two documents referencing Kren's films being screened in Zagreb stayed in my memory long after my library fellowship with the GRI finished. The next year, in 2017, when I embarked on a lengthy research program across sites in Europe, I resolved to include sites in Zagreb in hopes that I could identify where in the city and in what context Kren's films were made accessible for Yugoslavian audiences. I had, at that point, found numerous connections between the *filmwerkstatt* in Poland and the underground cinema scene in West Germany (and its networks around Western Europe), but I had not encountered so much from Yugoslavia, save at the 1958 EXPRMNTL Festival and Festival Mondial du Film in Belgium (held that year in conjunction with the Brussels World Exposition). I was very interested to learn more about the 'underground' or 'experimental' scene in Zagreb and Yugoslavia more broadly. How did or could the economic propositions of the filmmakers' cooperatives I was tracking in Western Europe sit within or alongside or underneath the 'openness' of the Yugoslav self-management system, I wondered. After months of email communications and preparations, Kirila and I embarked on a period of intensive research, including long days in the archives, late afternoon interviews, screening nights (with the Subversive Festival), and walks around Zagreb and, briefly (that trip anyway), Ljubljana. In all of that, we never found anything - whether in the written records of the archive nor the embodied memories of the interviewees - that could confirm Kren's films were screened in Zagreb in the early to mid-1960s (they were, however, screened later, in the late 1980s in the programming of Ivan Paić at the Multimedia Center in the Student Center Zagreb).

As the English expression goes, we were looking for a needle in a haystack. What we found - and this is often my experience with archival research - was so much more. What we found was the hay.

-Megan Hoetger