

La Biennale di Venetia 2003

Artist's Statement:

Milica Tomic

National Pavilion, 2003, (Light installation on a building façade: surface 160 m².

On the façade of the "Yugoslavian Pavilion", 400 interconnected flashbulbs have been placed – in equal distance from each other – to cover the surface. The bulbs are set to flash simultaneously and in regular intervals. Consequently, the dazzle of the flashes causes "damage" in the scopic field of the observer. This temporary blindness lasts until the eye recovers. This prevents the eye from seeing the object/pavilion. The accompanying text is situated on the steps of the stairway in front of the pavilion.)

Having in mind that this year is the last when the name "Yugoslavia" is used on the international political scene, and at the same time considering the conceptual framework of the Biennial, suggested by its art director Francesco Bonami as "Dreams and Conflicts", this significant historical moment must be marked. The building of the "Yugoslavian" pavilion appears to be an unavoidable symbolical knot for the historical and all invested phantasmas in the idea and character of Yugoslavia; its international reputation and the subsequent loss of that reputation in the disastrous conflict that left people dead, tortured, deranged and ashamed.

In the project for the façade of the "Yugoslavian" pavilion, Milica Tomic seeks to rethink the previous existence of Yugoslavia to confirm one of its emancipatory political projects, the anti-fascist Peoples Liberation Struggle. However, she seeks to abandon its worn out iconography. The artist's utopian desire for unmediated human connections discards iconography that romanticises the role of Nation and Nations, and conceptualises an abstract statement that romanticises human desire to emancipate and be emancipated. When throwing some "Light" on the existence of this country of "Enlightened Socialism", we notice/imply an observer who sees more when looking aside. When light flashes, the eye is blinded, when the eye moves to the right or left one can still see the shape and the entrance of the object, the National Pavilion, merges with sunny Venetian sky. An optical trick, one might say, but that would be true only if the focused object magically disappears, but it does not. It is the proximity (spatial and temporal) of the observer which conditions the acceptance of this installation; the question to be asked is not what, when and how do you see it. The question would be *who is mediating what is not seen?*