

TOWARD A BETTER WORLD 2

CONTEMPORARY ART IN SERBIA

October 6 - 18th 2015
Galerie NEST, Genève (CH)



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Galerie NEST, Genève (CH)
14 rue Etienne-Dumont, 1204 Genève

Production:

Bel Art Gallery & Mali Princ Foundation

Concept:

Aleksandra Vegezzi Boškov & Vesna Latinović

Curator: Sava Stepanov

Artists: MRĐAN BAJIĆ • diSTRUKTURA • ANDREA IVANoviĆ JAKŠIĆ •
TADIJA JANiČIĆ • BORiS LUKIĆ • ANA VRTAČNIK

A Repeat Exhibition: Toward a Better World 2

by Sava Stepanov, *art critic*

In a society undergoing prolonged social, political, economic and cultural transition hesitantly set in motion in the last decades of the past century, Serbian art endeavours to offer the basic principles of a project and of development by way of forced modernist principles. Artists have been working on transposing into a *sui generis* initiative that they offer to Serbia's current reality Filiberto Menna's stance that "art is entitled to uniqueness, not in order to distance itself but to act as a model for other knowledge and practices". Still, changes within art itself are even more dynamic than the changes that occur in parallel in society. The changes are brought about primarily by the advanced world network and technologically accelerated communication on all levels of man's life and functioning. In these conditions the most significant changes occur in the field of painting and its phenomenology.

At the crossroads of centuries, that is at the end of the last century and 2000 onwards, the form of contemporary art has significantly changed. Painting is no longer the leading visual language in art since other and different images are closer to the sensitivity of contemporary man. Images are mainly technologically and digitally accentuated and are imposed on us by electronic social networks and advertising in an offensive, decisive and merciless manner. Lev Manovich, the renowned American media researcher, recently claimed that these images are increasingly selected, characterised and promoted by the powerful computer algorithm that, in the era of global digitalization, is becoming more and more alienated from man and his sensitivity.

However, in this environment of electronic visual phenomena, painting is still in circulation. Today it protects the dignity of the artistically imbued *hand made* product inspired by man's thought and sensitivity. Divna Vuksanović, the Belgrade theorist on contemporary art practices, believes that the contemporary artist can resist global digitalization efficiently with the "return" to the body/hand traditional procedures. One thing is certain, the equation has changed: contemporary painters have lost their aura of uniqueness their predecessors had. However, even in this context, they continue being creators with integrity

and authority. In fact, the artist today is a citizen, he is no longer merely an onlooker, a commentator nor a critic of current events but he is an authentic constituent of the everyday and his art is socially integrated and contextualised.

It is these theoretical remarks that we have to keep in mind as we view the exhibition before us. Non-manual technological images are confronted by works that fall within the domain of “classical” media (painting, sculpture, drawing). The artists exhibited here (*Mrđan Bajić, diSTRUKTURA, Tadija Janićić, Andrea Ivanović Jakšić, Boris Lukić, Ana Vrtačnik*) are all well-known actors on the Serbian art scene of these last several years. They express unique and valid visions of the world and specific artistic messages: personal, suggestive, aesthetic, ethic as they address the phenomena of transition, the city, structure, protests, efforts to improve the world, how to reconcile with it and make it a better and more humane world.

It is interesting to note that an exhibition of the same title and a similar composition of exhibitors was organised in this gallery in 2014. Have there been any significant changes since then and why is such an exhibition needed? The exhibition *Toward a Better World 2* offers works of art created out of honest existential motives and reasons. All artists are genuinely concerned with the fate of man and society. Hence the importance of referring to their art and those processes in Serbian art where there is a constant desire by the artist to respond adequately to the challenges of contemporaneity and to make these responses artistically authentic in their relevance and to make them morally convincing. This is because, regardless of whether local or universal, art and morals are not, nor can they be, mere social “decorations”. Today, more than ever before, they are truly needed as valuable models of human hope, of the future and of civilisational survival.

Mrđan Bajić

For over two weeks in 2008, I travelled around Syria. I still have the habit of drawing when visiting museums, as it helps me better than photography to see what I'm looking at. It's a fantastic country of unsuspected mythical places, and my impression was of a kind and gracious people, with a striking and inconceivable gap between unimaginable riches and untold poverty. Even at the time, both the control wielded by the police and control of the media were unbelievable. In an old glass factory in Damascus, I bought about fifteen cobalt glass teardrops, actually intended for chandeliers, and brought them home among other souvenirs, spices and stones, with no idea of why I felt I needed them. Later, as terrible reports began to come in from Aleppo, Damascus and the other towns that were being destroyed, I found in my sketch pad a forgotten drawing of an antique head from a dusty museum shelf – who knows what has become of it since. The one material led inevitably to the other. It was as if I were reliving the situation before a war that you can intuit, while refusing to acknowledge it because to do so is unbearable. It is this unbearable, the perception of the thin line that divides living joy and beauty from death and destruction, that is the substance of this work.

Mrđan Bajić was born in 1957 in Belgrade (Serbia). He lives in Belgrade. He graduated from the Sculpture Department at the Academy of Fine Arts in Belgrade. Between 1985 and 1990 he worked as an assistant at the Faculty of Fine Arts. In 1995 he was awarded a Pollock-Krasner Foundation in Paris. Since 1997 works as a professor at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Belgrade. Mrđan Bajić had solo exhibitions in many European cities (Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana, Paris, Stockholm, Krakow), as

well as his works were seen in group exhibitions in Rome, New York, Sydney, Krakow, Paris, Graz, Copenhagen, Venice, Monaco and Thessaloniki. In 2002 Mrđan Bajić has participated at the 25th Biennial in São Paulo with the project Jugomuzej. In 2007 he performed at the 52nd Biennial of Visual Arts, which represented Serbia project Reset which was set in the Serbian pavilion.

According to critic Jasmina Cubrilo, Bajic belongs to rhetorical stream of new art scene in Serbia,

formed in the early nineties of the 20th century. In fact, this rhetorical line in sculpture Bajić began to develop already in the eighties. In the first half of the nineties, Bajić art is reflected in the tumultuous neo-expressionist expression, while in the second half of the eighties feel slightly calming shapes and lines. Influence of his art can also be seen in the works of many young artists, his students.

>> mrdjanbajic.net





We are trying to build on an extended view of Nature - as sublime, pseudo, or synthetic nature in urban constellations - aiming to define the various relationships, both real and virtual, that create the realities of modern-day life.

Experience of being-a-part-of-nature or becoming-a-part-of-a-new-nature which was taken from the tradition of romantic landscape painting, is a starting point in our confrontation with the surrounding of 21st century. This is how motives of landscapes and cities all over the world, became object of isolated contemplation inviting the observer to join that contemplation.

In paintings planned and executed together on a solid plane canvases, as well as in drawings, photographs and the video, the scope of our decisions is relied on mutual interaction and questioning of our position in contemporary landscape with noticeable computer intervention in layer applications interpreted as *mistakes in the landscape*. For the reason that digital image is replacing our immediate experience of a surrounding, the observer is confronted with computer rephrased experience of the world. More precisely, these ideas are expressed in works made with syntax permeation of digital and classic image, showing the observer 'simple' images that by small interventions to the motifs become a critical reflection of reality. Accordingly, in our work the motif of 'pure' nature that is 'damaged' by pixels associate with digital pictures. Our intention is that our work allows for a multidimensional interpretation and to be read as commentaries of today's political, economic and technological life conditions. We offer a new view of Nature, it's new interpretation named *The Third Landscape* and in which we see the possibility of a new (self)consciousness towards environment."

Milica Miličević (1979) and **Milan Bosnić** (1969) are both MA of Departments of Painting, Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Arts in Belgrade (Serbia) and although in diverse individual artistic ventures in group and solo exhibitions, they have been working on joint projects for the past ten years under the name diSTRUKTURA. Their ideas are expressed in different media but mostly photography, painting, drawing and video. They live and work in Belgrade. diSTRUKTURA took part in over 20 individual and more than 40 group exhibitions in the country and

abroad (Taiwan, Luxembourg, Austria, Slovakia, Check Republic, Romania, Netherlands, France). They exhibited solo in Austria, Netherlands, Germany, Japan, Czech, Slovenia and Finland. Their activities were supported by Pollock-Krasner Foundation, European Cultural Foundation, KulturKontakt, Kingdom of Norway, ProHelvetica, Serbian Ministry of Culture, Belgrade City Municipality, Okolje Consulting and others. Their works are now part of many private, public and corporate collections such as Collection of Museum of Contem-

porary Art of Vojvodina, Cultural Center Belgrade Collection, Wiener Stadtsche collection, Belgrade City Museum, Telenor collection as well as Okolje Consulting Art Collection from Ljubljana.

For the past nine years they participated in artist in residence programs and workshops in Switzerland, Austria, Netherlands, Slovenia, Italy, Finland, Egypt and Serbia and for their contributions in diSTRUKTURA duo they have received 2 awards.

>> distruktura.com

Tadija Janičić

"No great artist ever sees things as they really are. If he did, he would cease to be an artist." - Oscar Wilde.

This is the world I aspire to be in, one where I never have to see things as they really are, but as works of art.

Art has always been an important part of my life. I can remember spending most of my childhood just drawing and being inspired to make anything and everything. This love for art stayed with me all these time and still grows in me. Now, I cannot imagine wanting to do anything else. I always had a lot of ideas and the need to implement them, so I had started channelling my creativity into visual art.

I enjoy being creative and view art as a natural way for me to express myself. I particularly enjoy how painting allows me to create images in a way that I see them. I enjoy working in a figurative and detailed way and I aim to make my work expressive and visually interesting through tone and mark-making.

I prefer painting then anything else, as painting to me has more potential in it to embrace the artists' emotions and can contain more depth and concept than any other media.

I see an artwork as the concentration of an idea or concept into a physical entity. I'm not interested in art for its decorative qualities, I'm interested in art for its philosophical qualities. In my paintings opposites are connected. They are attractive and in the same time repellent. For me art is trying to create a situation within an image or an object that is unresolvable. In my opinion, you can never really resolve piece of art, either in your mind or your eye, so you keep on wanting to look at it. In my painting I permanently and consistently deal with the life of contemporary man, re-examining the relative and temporary character of moral, ethical and even artistic norms of the world surrounding me. Irony, grotesque and paradox are my favourite means of expression. I do not use them in order to convey any message, moral or mockery. My attitude toward the world could be interpreted as voyeuristic, whereby what is seen is always and at the same time the reflection of the observer – of my intellectual, emotional and philosophical views, dilemmas and notions.

Tadija Janičić was born in 1979 in Nikšić (Montenegro). He lives in Novi Sad (Serbia). Graduated and got his MA degree from the University of Novi

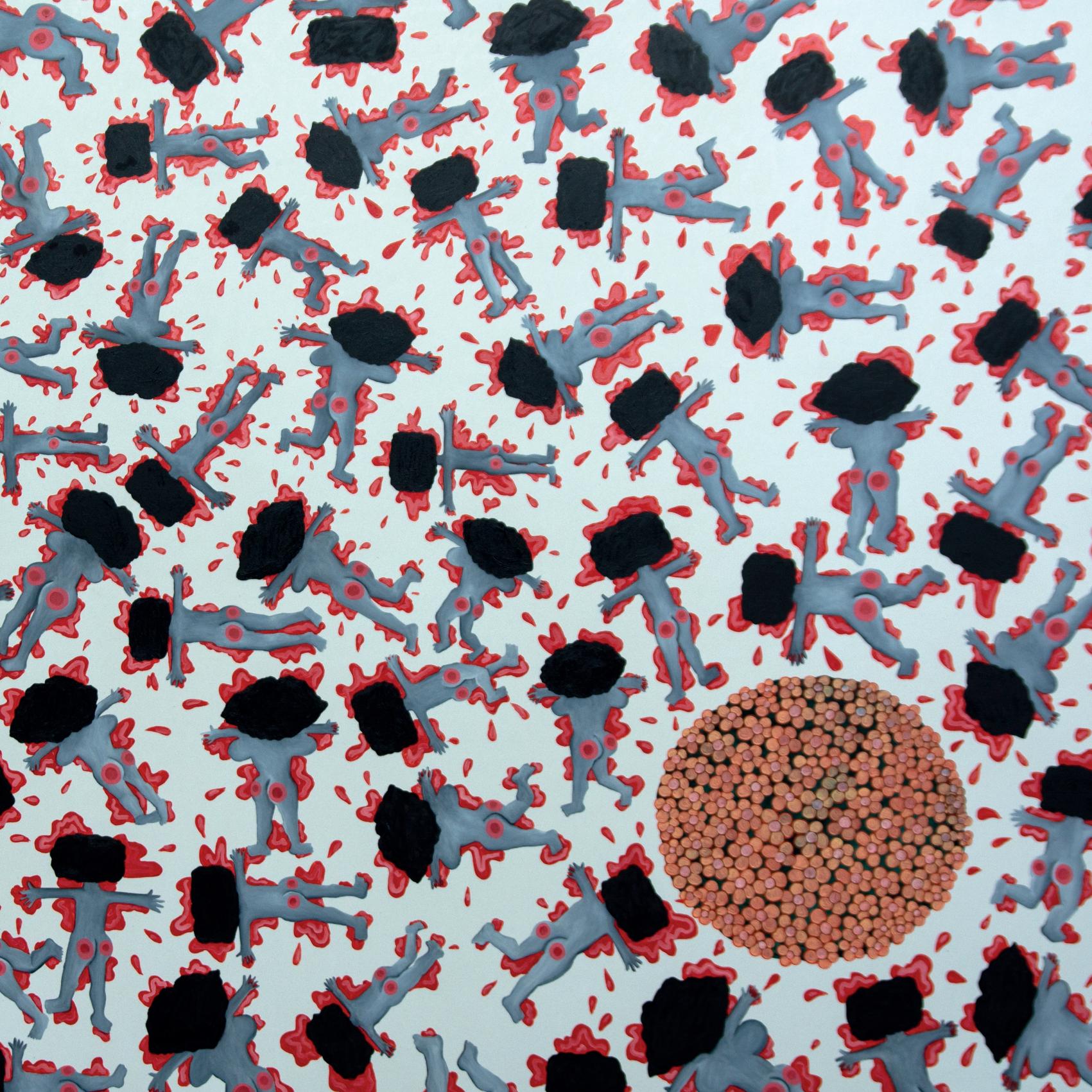
Sad Academy of Arts. He has presented his works in solo and group exhibitions in the country and abroad (Hungary, Slovenia, Japan, Montenegro,

Austria, France, Germany, Belgium, Sweden, Russia, Romania). His works can be found in many private and public collections.

So far he has won several awards in the field of art (Annual award for drawing, Faculty of Visual Art, Cetinje Foundation in 2001, the best young artist in

the class of drawing, Perspektive II project in 2003, YU paleta mladih, the first award of the 37th Novosadski salon in 2008)

>> janicictadija.portfoliobox.me





Boris Lukić

The *Femen* series is an artist's exploration of contemporary aspects and manifestations of the female body in visual culture, communications and society. The form resulted from an exploration of the importance of visual images at a time which habitually and constantly breaks its own record for picture production. The English word *image* formulates more exactly the idea of a picture, as it refers to all kinds of two-dimensional visual representation and its role in contemporary society. The saturation of the visual domain prompts us to re-think what we see and experience, the idea being to add a fresh quality to what might be culturally important, both to the spectator accustomed to all forms of the new virtual reality, and to a meaning which relies on archetypical values. Depiction of the female nude has been present in all civilizations and ages. Its continuity from the diachronic perspective is highlighted, with particular reference to contemporary interpretation. It thus functions as a possible continuation of different ideas dealing with the same theme. In our time, the ambition when formulating figures of such individuality is to institute and map a new set of artistic and social values.

Boris Lukić was born in 1985 in Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina). He lives in Novi Sad (Serbia). He graduated and got his MA degree from the University of Novi Sad Academy of Arts. He has presented his works in solo and group exhibitions in the country and abroad (Switzerland, Austria, UK,

Spain, Italy, USA). Boris Lukic is a visual artist who realized his works in many different media. Currently, his involvement is most concentrated on painting. In his work he deals with the consideration of the importance of visual representations for modern man and the forms in which this shape of appear-

ance occurs. This method gives him an opportunity in which modern visual world and inherited traditions can rethink and to offer new perspectives on the world in which we live.

Boris Lukić, TRUTH - ПРАВДА, 2014, oil on linen, 110 x 90 cm

Andrea Ivanović Jakšić

Eternity is a child moving counters in a game: the kingly power is a child's. – Heraclitus

This work is an impression of an inner state, a barely hinted-at testimony to the observation of life, man, phenomena and our own times, a reflection on the impermanence and flux of human life, which lasts as briefly as a child laying out a jigsaw puzzle. *Happy Birthday* celebrates Life in all its absurdity and imperfection, where man must constantly relive the struggle for his own meaning, and where he alone must determine the destiny he not only has to endure but to embrace.

To know joy, man must remain a child!

The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred 'yes'. – Friedrich Nietzsche

The work is a combination of various painterly and unpainterly techniques and materials, featuring a layered superimposition of paper, vigorous drawing and finally, surfaces drawn and painted with precision.

Andrea Ivanović Jakšić was born in 1979 in Slavonski Brod (Croatia). She lives in Zrenjanin (Serbia). Graduated from the Academy of Arts in Novi Sad, Department of Painting. She has presented her works in solo and group exhibitions in

the country and abroad (Japan, Hungary, Switzerland, Austria). Her works can be found in private collections (Serbia, Greece, Italy, Switzerland, Japan, USA) and the corporate collections of Philip Morris International Nis Art Foundation.

In her work she deals with a variety of media and different forms of visual expression.

>> andreaivanovicjaksic.com





Ana Vrtačnik

The paintings to be exhibited in Geneva belong to a cycle of works entitled *Perception As A Transgression of Space*. Conceptually, they rely on my research into the reflection of the inner state of mind, and my goal is to achieve the most immediate contact with the inner workings of the painter's being.

As an artist, I work hard to create paintings that radiate internal energy, that speak to both myself and to others. In this way, a work of art has an immediate effect on the viewer's soul, resonates through it and makes the spirit tremble. I base my artistic expression on a kind of abstraction akin to the poetics of informel, which ties in with the layered structure of textures throughout by using a range of painting materials: oil paint, paste wax and synthetic industrial oil paint.

Through this artistic approach to painting, I have developed an interest in structure, layers and the artistic life of a painting. Compositional and rhythmic functions within the work I achieve through a concentration of layers in different areas of the image, where I juxtapose different tactile values in order to produce new structures: sensitive, transparent and ethereal. The polyphony of colors, on which I insist in my paintings, is set as a universal harmony of a new reality in which I prefer explicit expression which is the sum of my acquired impressions and emotions. Pure colour gravitates toward a free rhythmic arabesque that extends dynamically across the surface of the painting and is introduced into the field of pure visuality. The colours are primary, basic, somewhat harsh, and ultimately expansive. The nuances that accompany these colours are of a rich and varied registry: gray, greenish, purple, brown. They enhance the colours's sonority and ennable it at the same time. The tendency of the blue to deepen in these paintings is so strong that it is precisely in the deeper tones that it becomes stronger and more forceful in its typically internalized manner. It is directed from the person to its own center. The more the blue deepens, the more it calls man to infinity; it awakes in man a longing for purity and eventually for the extrasensory.

Ana Vrtačnik was born in 1991 in Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina). Since 1992 she lives in Novi Sad (Serbia). Graduated from the Academy of Arts in Novi Sad, Department of Painting, she is presently master student and teaching assistant at the same Academy of Arts in Novi Sad.

Since 2010 she has actively participated in over fifty solo and group exhibitions at home and abroad

(Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hong Kong, Croatia, Switzerland, Belgium, Denmark, USA, Portugal, Brazil, Canada, Spain). She is a member of the Association of Fine Artists of Vojvodina, Novi Sad, Serbia.

So far she has won several awards in the field of art ("Mali Princ" Foundation award from the University of Novi Sad, annual award of Department of Fine

Arts at Academy of Arts Novi Sad in 2014, award from Foundation "Milivoj Nikolajević" in 2011, first prize award for the poster of "King Lear" at 58. Sterija Theatre Festival, Novi Sad, Serbia)

>> anavrtacnik.com

Mali princ (Little Prince) is a foundation that is founded in 2000. Its main ambition is to support young generation in Serbia. Among other activities, we choose to work with the *Academy of Fine Arts* in Novi Sad. Every year we award the best student in the Academy's disciplines plastic arts, music and drama.

To this day we have awarded 30 students. We have also been able to grant two scholarships for MA programmes in the Netherlands and Switzerland.

Art is universal language. It transgresses borders, changes opinions, exerts influence, spreads a different vision of the world. With this idea in mind the *Mali Princ Foundation* and *Bel Art Gallery* based in Novi Sad jointly prepared the Geneva exhibition project. We wish to present to the Geneva public what we believe is the best and the most interesting in the domain of contemporary art in this region of the Balkans. Acclaimed artists rub shoulders with students of the Academy of Fine Arts always in the spirit of openness which projects us into a better world. The exhibition will be opened from 6th till 18th October 2015 in Galleries Nest.

The possibility to exhibit in Geneva is an exceptional opportunity to show the talent of a generation of Serbian artists not yet known.

Novi Sad based **Bel Art Gallery** founded in 1994 has constantly and deliberately been engaged in presenting and promoting contemporary Serbian artists locally and internationally. We have organized numerous exhibitions, art events, workshops and symposiums aiming to present and cherish authentic artistic values and encourage talented young artists. Important part of our activities is devoted to art books publication. In 1999 Bel Art founded distinguished national annual contemporary art award Sava Sumanovic. Our latest project has been the *Danube Dialogues* contemporary art festival of the Danube region launched in 2013.

The exhibition *Toward a Better World 2* curated by art critic Sava Stepanov aims to show the work of several artists who can be seen as representatives of the current art scene in Serbia. In spite of never ending transition and unfavourable circumstances in Serbia today there is a vibrating, lively art activity. Selected authors define their reactions to the world and the times they live in an authentic manner. The concept of the exhibition is based on a synergy of aesthetic and ethic categories, on the principles of artistic autonomy and social and cultural context of a durable and draining crisis toward the emergence of a new hope. *Mali princ Foundation* and *Bel Art Gallery* truly believe that art can not change the world but can make it a better place.

>> belart.rs

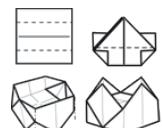
>> danubeartfest.org



Toward a Better World, opening, 28th January, 2014, rue Etienne-Dumont, Genève

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Novi Sad, Serbia



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