



*Borjana Ventzislavova*

**WE ARE PART OF A COLLECTION**



is still coming, 2016  
neon words on perspex  
120 x 180 cm

*Borjana Ventzislavova*

## **WE ARE PART OF A COLLECTION**

**8** Dessislava Dimova  
**Deep Mirror**

**73** Biography

**79** Imprint



Hey you! It's us!  
2016, mirror foil, razor wire  
bäckerstrasse4, Wien



**Lovejoy**, 2016  
photographic wallpaper, neon object on perspex  
wallpaper variabel; object: 70 x 70 cm

Once in a while everyone should start from the beginning and ask where it all came from. How did we get here?

Where to start? Walter Benjamin famously started from the 19th century – flashbacks of a Berlin childhood and the memories of a City – that of the century's capital – Paris, peeled off layer by layer, no core, only surfaces that still haunted the 20th century. One has to start from the origins of the present moment.

There are many urgent topics that dominate our present, but if we have to choose one word to describe the constantly shifting terrains, the movement and the speed, the uncertainty of ideas, territories and people, this word should most likely be change. Yet this is a word that still seems to belong to the previous century, overly exploited already more than 25 years ago with the fall of the Berlin wall. More pressing concerns make this memory seem irrelevant yet it still has bearings upon and can teach us lessons about our present.

Borjana Ventzislavova's exhibition *"We are part of a collection"* is such going back into (personal) history in order to understand our present, looking at the origins of the artist's consistent concern with topics of hope and change, imagination and reality, past and future.

It all starts with Borjana's hometown of Sofia and listening to her telling about the time of her teenage years around 1989, is a virtual walk through city. Sofia had not yet experienced the

rapid changes of the mid and late 90s, with new constructions, transformations and the demolition of monuments such as the Mausoleum of the first party leader Georgi Dimitrov. The real changes in the city were the movements of people, of young people. There was a lot of gathering outside – at the monument of the Soviet Army, in front of the Drujba cinema (the theater of the Bulgarian film archive), The Pope (the monument of Patriarch Eutimius of Tarnovo across the street from the cinema), Kravai (a fastfood pizza place), Apteka (the Pharmacy – simply a pharmacy). "There were not that many bars and cafes then, Borjana remembers – they appeared later, and anyway we didn't have much money for that." It is telling that a lot of these underground locations were out in the open. They were places of energetic and joyful gatherings, anarchistic moods and dark or hard music – a true statement, the opposite of the supposedly bright and well-organized life of the official discourse, which quickly turned into chaos in 1990. For the "normal" folk however these places of weird congregations of strangely dressed young people were not only new and difficult to understand. They represented a dark new world, the edge of society for the first time out in the open. Most of these young people were far from being outcasts, on the contrary - a lot of them were coming from middle class families and attended top schools. An article from a daily newspaper from 1995 opposed the "healthy" drinking crowds in regular bars to the "rat men" – the underground youth in the bar-hole "Kalnoto" which was occupying the long abandoned pit of the future Sofia metro, but these were already the last years of the true "underground". Roller skating and skateboarding, drinking wine or beer in the park might all seem like banal teenage occupations, but at the right moment and with the right attitude they became symbolical gestures of claiming the city and one's own freedom, of declaring individuality and difference, in a time when difference was not yet part of the socially accepted discourse. The changes that were already becoming palpable in the second

half of the 1980s were manifested most acutely in a youth underground culture that was a truly new phenomenon of the times. Music was its most powerful agent, with various underground groups identifying with different styles, and Bulgarian groups like Violetov General or Nova Generacia reaching a cult status .

The importance of music and the mixing of cultural references and social contexts through songs is addressed with the project "West Music in West Park" (2013-2016). The installation was conceived as a karaoke set, for which the artist has made a selection of songs that are mostly unavailable in karaoke libraries, but represent the soundtrack of her teenage experiences – Bulgarian, Western and Russian alternative rock, new wave, punk or pop, and children's songs.

Borjana Ventzislavova's upbringing was undoubtedly intellectually privileged. Growing up in the capital, in a family involved in cinema, she had probably more access to foreign films, music and information as well as to critical discussions than the majority of her peers. It possibly allowed her to be more daring and fearless than the average teenager, although not in an overtly political way. Political change as much as it truly existed (knowing now a lot of it turned out to be simply a shift of players and ownership of resources) and to be fair, for a time it did exist, was carried by the older generation. For Borjana and her friends it was more about living the change as an act of personal and collective transformation. We cannot but wonder - is it different to

grow up in tumultuous times, when everything around you is shaken? Or is it the nature of every growing up to see its history as times of change, as a moment to turn things upside down? Do you perceive the uncertainty surrounding you as something exceptional or on the contrary as the way the world has always been? Do you make yourself immune to the bleak reality of the painful experiences that inevitably accompany the revolutionary excitement? The way these changes made us is the way they have made up the world of today.

Listening to some of the songs of the time, these appear to have been indeed some dark ages. The song from which the title of Borjana Ventzislavova's exhibition is derived – the 1992, "Part of Collection" of Nova Generacia – talks about butterflies pinned down by their own dreams, unable to fly, just part of a collection. Another song, from which the artist has also borrowed a title – Milena and Review's "Flowers from the End of 80s" – is about how accustomed we have become to suffer in silence: flowers like bird wings die in the iron embrace of square forms. It seems that no optimism could be rescued from the political and social changes as finally the individual had acquired the right to openly address suffering and melancholia. However it is true that the generation of those song writers – older than Borjana herself – paid the highest price of the transition and the feeling of being too broken to learn how to fly was not simply a poetic indulgence. Furthermore, melancholia and a dark mood was the general air of the times on both ends of the Iron curtain. It is telling that the film that has been most cited as an influence by bright young people in Bulgaria at the time was Wim Wenders' "Wings of Desire" (1987). A direct reference to the film is also present in Borjana's exhibition in the neon sign "Als das Kind Kind war". There is, of course, a lot of this dark, poetic mood to be found in the exhibition, for example in the photographic series "Thank You for All the Flowers" (2016). Close ups of flowers meet objects that have been symbolic

of Borjana's personal experiences and those of her generation. They might seem banal and recognizable as anybody's memories - ice cream, strand of hair, roller skates or the tape of an old audio-cassette. Yet, the way they float on the dark background, like artifacts of a lost civilization sent in space from some distant past, charges them with importance even if we don't know their particular significance.

Another piece that looks like an eclectic collection of memorabilia and plays with the allure and opacity of the silvery reflective surface is "Colored Concepts" (2016). Here the objects from the artist's teenage years have lost their original colors to become generic silver casts, while gaining in mystery. If some of the objects are fairly recognizable (a Walkman for instance) others (like what turns out to be a chicken's rump) leave us perplexed. The images are paired with the handwritten words describing the concepts that very much defined the epoch: "transition", "democratization", "privatization", "crisis" acquire here unexpectedly personal tones and reveal themselves as dramatic backgrounds for very intimate and unapologetically mundane concerns.

Despite playing on a nostalgic note, most of the works on display are rather joyful and light. The flight in space is not an accidental metaphor as there is a hint of the promise of modernism in Borjana's rendering of her past. Progress, bright future and other planets were promises that may have persisted longer in the East. This symbolic, yet very personal notion of the bright

future is approached and materialized with complexity and humor in two of the works, with which the exhibition begins.

In "Lovejoy" named after the comet which is most famous for releasing types of sugar and alcohol in space, Borjana Ventzislavova presents us with a large wallpaper of a snapshot of the universe – millions of tiny stars, clouds, dust, galaxies, bright and colorful, somewhere among them – the greenish light of the comet Lovejoy. What stands out – literally- in the image is not the comet though, which is somehow lost among the heavenly bodies. A neon sign – a disproportionate pentagon - is posed on the image of the skies. Dreams and symbols are mixed up here, just like in the imagination of a young person growing up around 1989. Distant galaxies, omens of progress and other worlds encounter the collapse of ideologies: what becomes of our dreams in a world that seems to have stopped dreaming?

Another neon work seems to give an answer to that question. On a black surface a neon sign reads: "Is still coming" (which is also the title of the work). Those who know Borjana Ventzislavova's previous work might recognize in this fragmented phrase "The bright future is still coming" (2012) – a neon sign placed on a palm tree seascape. This older work was part of a trilogy "for the future because of the past - specters everywhere", which was dealing with the question of imagination of what was beyond the Iron curtain. The use of silvery foil in this series symbolized the curtain, not so much as a physical separation, but as a projection of desire. In the new neon "Is still coming" the subject of the sentence has disappeared in the black hole of the dream realized. However, something is still coming, a hope that is impossible to erase, but there are no ready answers or prescriptions telling us what it might be. The black surface points to a nothing, that is both dark as Borjana's inspirations from the 90s and alive with new beginnings.

The silvery reflecting surface – as a mirror, as a soft and festive, light reflecting material, and as an impenetrable wall, which does not allow us to see beyond, reappears instead in the site-specific work “Hey you! It’s us!” on the façade of the gallery. The windows and walls on the outside are literally wrapped in foil, while on the top a coil of razor wire turns the gallery into a fence, a border, like the ones which once divided Europe and which now have reappeared with the refugee crisis. Europe as an impenetrable dream, a projection, a shiny thing on the horizon; borders supposedly non existing, but still preventing people to move freely; the uneven mirror that reflects light and shadows, our broken silhouettes, not yet a strong clear shape. “Hey You! It’s us” takes the Berlin Wall as a reference and reflects on the current phenomenon of enclosing Europe by building new walls and borders. The artist addresses our fear and literally puts a mirror in front of it – it is not the others but ourselves we are afraid of. “Hey You! It’s us” is Borjana Ventzislavova’s answer to “fortress Europe” – let’s imagine walls as mirrors and take a good look at ourselves.

In Borjana Ventzislavova’s work the interest in migration, refugees and human rights is a persistent concern. The video, photography and text installation “Migration Standards” (2011), showed children recite extracts of text related to migration and pose in front of backdrops of buildings with historical and political importance in Vienna, the backdrops themselves placed in the middle of places migrants have to cross – roads, fields, sea.

It is easier to understand the artist’s engagement in the light of “We are part of a collection”, which is a historical exhibition of sorts. Borjana Ventzislavova reminds us that no past should be discarded with the excuse of new, more pressing circumstances. It is the experience of this past that allows us empathy and understanding of our present. May be growing up not only with uncertainty but also with an image of an elsewhere (which in the case of Bulgaria was alternatively communism or the West), experiencing living between here and there, being a foreigner, reminds us of the persistence and the legitimacy of the dream of people crossing lands and seas in order to give a better future for themselves and for their children. “We are always in the place where we don’t want to be”, said recently author Georgi Gospodinov about what seems to him to be the burden of Bulgarian history. It is easy to see how this has become a universal plight today.

Borjana Ventzislavova’s work is particularly sensitive to the sense of general instability and anxiety of our society. In “It Shakes Everywhere” (2012) she took photographs of people in LA, standing on the street in their pijamas in the middle of the night because of earthquakes. Here it is literally the ground under our feet that is unstable. But what allows us to move forward, and it is really the quality of Borjana’s work to always grasp it, is the human capacity to dream. What better image of dreaming, than a whole dreamworld that has spanned now over two centuries – that of Hollywood? One of Borjana Ventzislavova’s most poignant works is probably “Permanent Casting” (2012), a series of 42 photographs and texts. The material for the work comes from the casting process for another photo and video piece “American Dream Acting” (2012). The artist has interviewed aspiring actors about their own “American dream” and captured their image before and after the interview. The collection of stories is deeply touching – personal strife, challenges or simply following one’s own dreams, journeys across countries and continents, all meet up in one place, the promised land of all dreams.

What is most striking in this work as a document, is the change in the faces of the participants in the before and after photos– the softening, the gain of trust, the openness - the humanity of sharing one's dreams.

A similar, although more socially charged “before” and “after” of dreams is explored in another photo and text piece – “Roles” (2014). Borjana Ventzislavova has invited friends of hers to share how they see their role in Bulgarian society today. Even though dreams are not directly addressed here, we can feel the confrontation of a before and after, of the sudden realization of how what you do measures up to your dreams. This subtle yet powerful awareness of our present moment in history, and of our power(lessness) in society is carried not only by the testimonies of the participants but also by the dramatic play of light and dark in the photographs. The images, taken at the seaside, show us people in a moment of freedom, barefoot in the sand, the dark sea behind their backs – there is no hint of their occupation or “importance”. It is an image of infinite possibilities, where dreams are still possible. The participants are lit by a spotlight as if on a stage. This seemingly random carefree moment becomes the crossroad of all our choices, of what we are now. Borjana Ventzislavova's talent lies in capturing this moment where past and present come together and our faces become the mirrors of our dreams and memories.

Precisely such an encounter between different times and spaces, between projections and reality, between history and the now is at play in Borjana Ventzislavova's new large scale photographic series “Study of Causality” (2016). Like all the other works in the exhibition, this is also a kind of autobiographical piece. However the artist has avoided pointing the camera towards herself trying instead to understand her past and present through spaces and people. Two moments in time are confronted by the means of photographic collage – the places of the artist's youth in Sofia and the people (and their own working or living environment) whom she has encountered through her work. These are collectors, curators, representatives of institutions. Among them Josef Ostermayer, the former Austrian Federal Minister for Arts and Culture, Georg Pölzl, Chairman and CEO of the Austrian Post, or Stella Rollik, Artistic Director, Lentos Museum Linz. They pose diligently for the artist, proving their engagement with her work. In the collages created by Borjana Ventzislavova they are, unbeknown to themselves, confronted to the environments of her youth – a school, a famous gathering place, a cinema or fragments of private interiors. These places creep in the image, not only as someone else's memories but as a collective imaginary, a common past. Somewhere behind the shoulder of collector Gaudenz Ruff we see a young Borjana working on her homework in the room of her childhood. This is the only time the artist's image appears in the work. In the foreground we see the artist's studio and in fact some of the props used for the works in the exhibition. The role of the sitter becomes clearer here. We see a person, a patron, who supports the artist but also a person who legitimizes her artistic efforts – a sort of authority figure. As in most of Borjana Ventzislavova's work, we have a multifaceted mirror here. The two spaces – the one of memory and the one of reality are mirrored. The personality that has been pictured is thus somehow a curious

mirror image of the artist - someone who by engaging with her work, takes a place between her past and present, between the dreams of the young girl and the aspirations of the artist. Is it too big a responsibility to bestow to someone so seemingly random and external to the path of a person, to the intimate makings of an artist? It is a responsibility we all take by engaging ourselves with art, or anything else in life for that matter. In the text accompanying the work there is another collage – the thoughts of the sitter about the artist's work meet the memories of the artist herself. These are two different regimes of language, both personal, yet in one art serves as a distancing mechanism – speaking about the work we speak neither directly of ourselves nor directly of the persona of the artist. The work confronts us with an essential question we rarely address – how do artists negotiate a deeply personal practice with the necessities of a professional world and the demand to speak for humanity rather than for themselves?

We are all part of a collection, seems to be Borjana Ventzislavova's answer – collectors and artists, general public and figures of authorities. We are all butterflies animated by dreams and memories, trying to move forward in the world. Eventually we are pinned down by labels, statistics, sometimes history itself. Our most intimate selves are very similar though. If we can only see we are equally part of the same collection – just one possible order that traps us into roles, may be we can rescue the future we still owe to the children we once were.



Als das Kind Kind war, 2016  
neon words  
L: 110 cm





**Thank you for all the flowers # 1, 2016**  
 framed pigment printing  
 90 x 90 cm



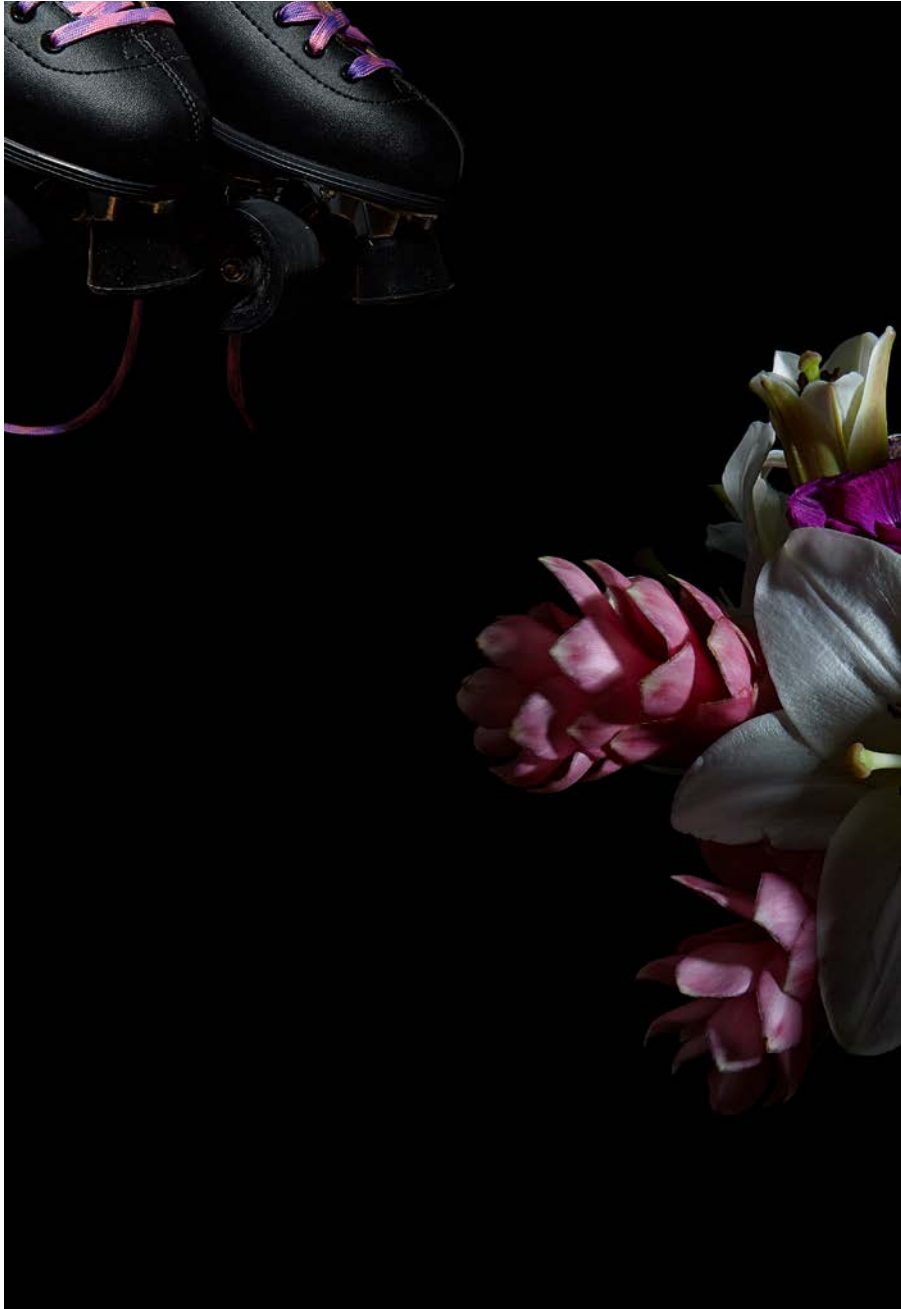
**Thank you for all the flowers # 2, 2016**  
 framed pigment printing  
 60 x 90 cm



# 3



# 4



# 5



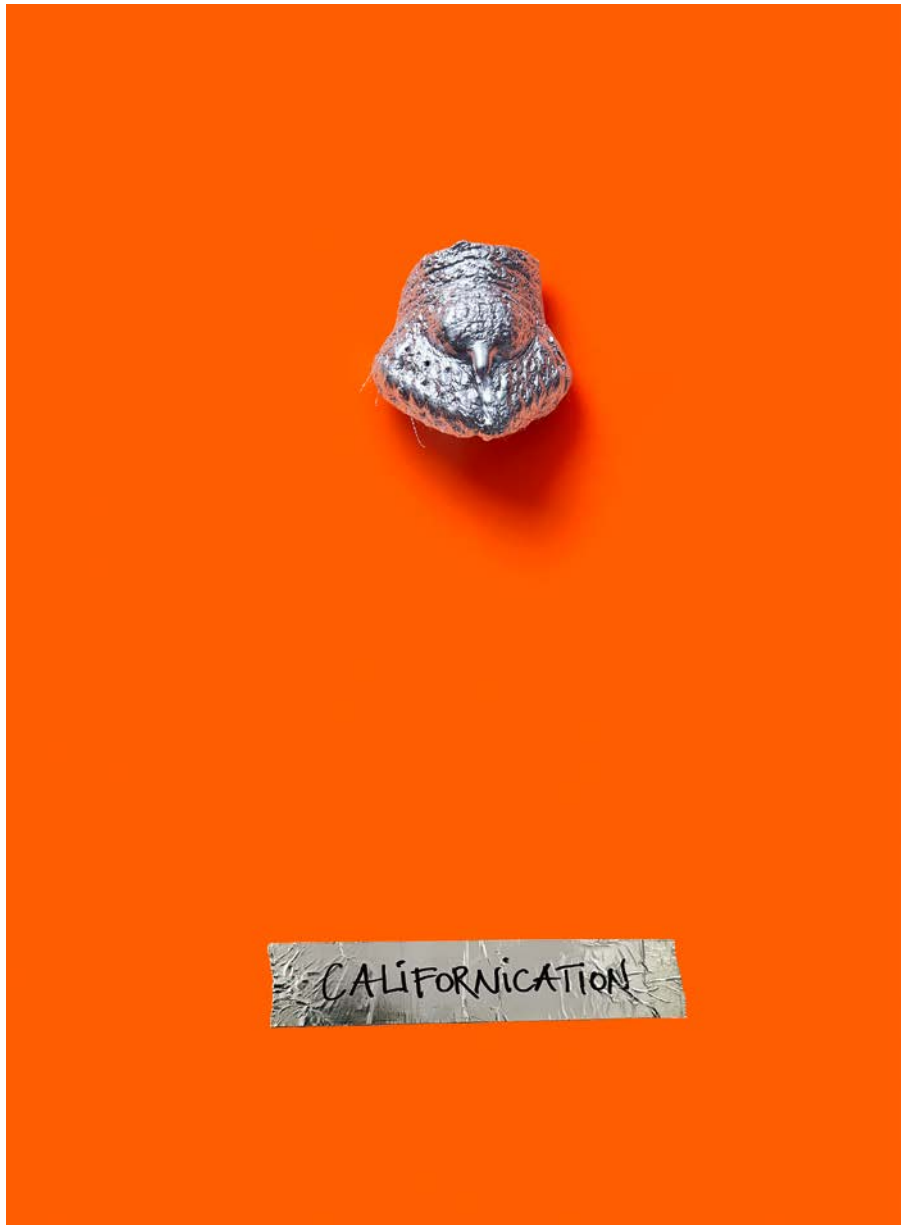
# 6



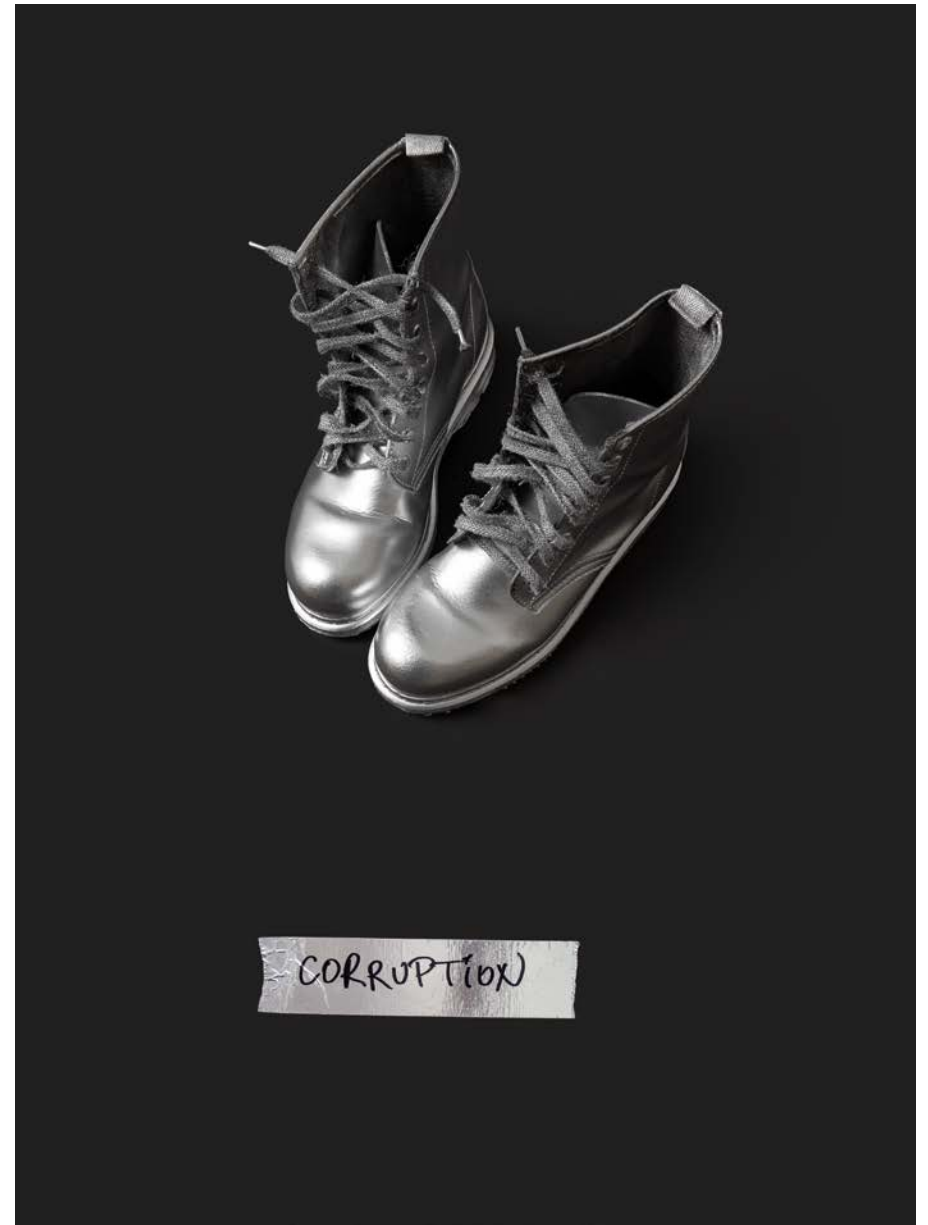
Exhibition view



West Music in West Park, 2016  
HD video, 2 h 22 min



Coloured Concepts # 1-8, 2016  
framed pigment printing  
60 x 80 cm



# ?



PRIVATIZATION



TRANSITION



**The artist:**  
 Study of Causality #1-9, 2016. The artist, a woman, is standing on a red-carpeted staircase. The staircase has a dark wooden railing. The background is dark and moody.

**The artist:**  
 Study of Causality #1-9, 2016. The artist, a man, is standing in a grand, dimly lit room. To his left are rows of red upholstered seats. The room features high ceilings, ornate chandeliers, and a patterned floor. A shadow of the man is cast on the seats to his left.

**The artist:**  
 Study of Causality #1-9, 2016. The artist, a woman, is standing on a red-carpeted staircase. The staircase has a dark wooden railing. The background is dark and moody.

**The artist:**  
 Study of Causality #1-9, 2016. The artist, a man, is standing in a grand, dimly lit room. To his left are rows of red upholstered seats. The room features high ceilings, ornate chandeliers, and a patterned floor. A shadow of the man is cast on the seats to his left.

Study of Causality # 1-9, 2016  
 framed c-print, text: framed pigment printing  
 100 x 150 cm, Text: 40 x 60 cm



The artist:

These red carpets with these heavy metal stair rods! They were everywhere, especially in those places where I had to follow a formal dress code. Those carpets always happened to fold up and form big bumps, on which I always tripped and fell down - of course, especially when your feet are packed in patent leather shoes (not those of the Unknown Soldier, but the second hand ones from my cousin from Vienna) - very beautiful, yet terribly inconvenient. Though I liked those places, I hated to trip on the carpets.

Elfi Sonnberger

Chamber of Labour - Culture, Upper Austria and collector:

I saw Borjana Ventzislavova's works for the first time in 2011 at the Viennafair. The three photographs from the series „In the Name of“ (2010, with Mladen Penev) immediately caught my attention.

Two images show women in burkas and orthodox Jewish men with payot. The centrepiece of the triptych displays women and men in outfits that are familiar to us - jeans with t-shirts. These works depict in a very straightforward manner how prejudices and clichés are born: we mostly judge people by their appearance.

Nevertheless Borjana Ventzislavova's works never seem didactic, which probably creates the strong appeal of her artistic oeuvre. The political statement, as well as the artistic quality wonderfully merge in her photography.

Back then I was mesmerized by her photographs thinking: "Wow! That would fit perfectly into the premises of the Chamber of Labour in Upper Austria." The artist addresses important topics, furthermore her photos equally irritate and fascinate. They trigger an inner conflict between what you see and your personal attitude towards different religions or generally the otherness.

Ventzislavova manages to address political understatements in various ways - sometimes very subtly, other times very directly. However, the political dimension and the expressiveness are immanently present in her works.



The artist:

The red seats, the big screen, the bar, the restaurant and these black and white photographs of actors, directors, and film crews on the wall - sometimes my father was shown on them too. And of course I was proud - it was like a portrait of Georgi Dimitrov or Vassil Levski in school.

Every Sunday and holiday they showed films for kids - I was there. When a new Bulgarian film was released and my father produced the sound for it - the whole family was there. For every new film, birthday celebration, or special dinner - we always went there.

The House of Cinema or the Union of Bulgarian Film Makers was a special place - it felt home - the cinema, the bar, the restaurant (with the best Wiener Schnitzel ever) and the holiday homes at the Black Sea or the countryside - how many vacations I spent there with my best friends!

Then the system shifted and slowly everything changed - the restaurant turned into a pop-folk club, the bar closed, some of the holiday homes shut down or they were taken over in order to turn them into hotels, only the cinema was left. It's still there and still one of the best!

Josef Ostermayer  
Austrian Federal Minister for Arts and Culture

I am interested in the artist's approach on her work - between past and present, reality and fiction. That made participating in this project even more exiting for me.



The artist:

Two things... and many more: singing on the stage with "Pim Pam" at the assembly "Flag of Peace" in the first auditorium of the NDK (National Palace of Culture). This was also the place, where my father always took me to buy me LPs from the Balkanton shop.

Later we skated there - inside, outside - it was one of the best spots in Sofia, as the floor was made of marble and skating was a real fun. Trying to escape from the security and jumping from the staircase: the result was a broken hand. The next day I was back with a cast skating and running away from the security again.

And the Kinopanorama! In the winter it was the place to watch all the new films from the west. Sometimes I had tickets from my parents, but mostly we would sneak in and watch for free. Up and down, up and down - at which entrance would they let us in for free? On the third floor at one of the doors there was this good guy - we always hoped it was his shift. At the end of the film we would hide between the seats and wait for the next one to start. The Kinopanorama was one of the best things ever - people were waiting for tickets in queues before sunrise - like years later for milk or bread.

Boris Kostadinov - independent curator:

The relationship between a curator and an artist is as professional as it is personal. The understanding of the work of an artist goes through the knowledge of his personality in professional circumstances but also in circumstances that are very different - sometimes atypical or even "extreme". This creates a common history, which is equally important as the collaborative art projects.

We have many common stories that consciously or subconsciously affect our work. We met many years ago at a bar. At that time I wrote an article about her exhibition in Sofia. Many times we got drunk together. We have travelled together. We have mutual friends...

All this affects the final product. And perhaps this is the best - if the personal is shown to the audience, the things are always true and authentic.



**Abstract** The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of a 10-week training program on the physical fitness of 10-year-old children. The study was conducted in a primary school in the city of Ankara, Turkey. The study group consisted of 20 children (10 boys and 10 girls) who were randomly selected from the 10-year-old children in the school. The children were divided into two groups: a control group and an experimental group. The control group did not participate in any physical education program, while the experimental group participated in a 10-week training program. The physical fitness of the children was measured at the beginning and at the end of the 10-week period. The measurements included heart rate, blood pressure, and body mass index. The results of the study showed that the experimental group had significantly higher heart rates and blood pressures at the end of the 10-week period compared to the control group. The body mass index of the children in the experimental group also increased significantly. These findings suggest that a 10-week training program can improve the physical fitness of 10-year-old children.

[illegible][illegible]



The artist:

The first time. You know all of these clichés.  
First kiss, first love, first boyfriend, first cigarette...  
and all of those first things, which you learn in school.

I became "Chavdarche", then a "Pioneer", then I was threatened to be moved into a children's pedagogical room (for bad behavior), then, shortly before entering the "Komsomol" - 1989 - the system changed. I got involved in organising the first demonstration for children's rights in Sofia and regularly skipped school to go to demonstrations... for this I could have paid the price of not being accepted to the German High School, after preparing for a whole holy year for the entrance exams.

The 38th was a cult school. It gave me a lot: the teachers (some of them were truly crazy, but mostly amazing) and all of my friends - most of them were children of the nomenklatura, they were great kids though!  
I love this time. Happy childhood!

Claudia Slanar - curator and lecturer:

I cannot separate between my personal and my professional interest in Borjana Ventzislavova's work - maybe my personal one is less strategic? Whatever, I have always been fascinated by her ability to let the glitziness/glamour of a utopian dream world collide with the critical and sober analysis of today's precarious living and working conditions - be it those of actors in Los Angeles, artists, or migrant workers in Vienna - without being tacky. She is interested in societies in transition and uses architecture, urban spaces, and even "natural" sites to frame changes intrinsic to this process. She has a clear political stance and an incredible "eye" when portraying people. In her photographs and videos she is able to catch something - a gesture, a pose, a sentence - that not even the portrayed were aware of having/doing/displaying. Strangely, I am thinking now about the idea of fragility that lies in her works, unexpected, subdued, maybe even mixed with melancholy, who knows?

There's at least a playfulness, too, that is not surprising at all if you know her predilection for black dungarees, silver leggings and 80s New Wave music.



The artist and other artists:

Flowers from the End of 80s! Kravaj!  
A lifetime injection.

Punkers, Wavers, Metals, Skaters - it doesn't matter.  
Pizza, wine, joint, whatever, flowers, flowers everywhere.  
Countless stories, sense, experience.  
Observing until forgetting, new haircuts.  
Hopelessness, my dear.

I won't go back  
To my childhood memories.  
The way, which remains for us.  
Is waiting in front of us

The video shows us  
countless others clips.  
In the clip of my own life  
I'm the leading part.

That's why I'll bark,  
That's why I'll howl.

WE ARE NEW GENERATION FOREVER AND OUR QUESTIONS ARE TO AN  
ENTIRE NATION FOREVER... or if you ask me:  
TO ENTIRE WORLD FOREVER.

Verena Kaspar-Eisert - curator, Kunst Haus Wien:

I showed the group of works entitled "Euro de Lux" (2006) in a group exhibition in 2012. On that occasion I took an in-depth look into Borjana Ventzislavova's work. Her art, which broaches topics such as migration, trafficking in women, prostitution, and deals with questions of home and identity, is of utmost political and social relevance. These motifs affect each and every one of us; they touch us because they concern us all. The artist identifies the fault lines of the social system and succeeds in establishing a relation between these fault lines and ourselves by immersing herself into these topics, by becoming an artistic filter, by being a mouthpiece for all those involved. Her photographs and films are highly empathetic and at the same time brutally direct. With her politically and socially motivated art Borjana Ventzislavova seeks to obtain understanding from the viewers and hopes that they take individual and social responsibility. Get engaged!



The artist:

7PM everyday! Friends, films, laughs and tears, music and parties, drugs, big love, another one, films, many, many interesting conversations....and being foolish all the time - best friendships forever! Dancing, dancing, dancing... and sometimes on the street. I truly love every single part of it. Eternal meaning and a spotless life!

Georg Pölzl -

Chairman and CEO of the Austrian Post and collector:

I got to know Borjana Ventzislavova's work for the first time in 2012. Her touching image composition, which clearly can be placed between documentary and fiction, fascinated me right away. They encourage to think out of the box and to question own points of view. Furthermore it fascinates me how she manages to stage social differences subliminally in her work.



The artist:

The time when I finally had a room of my own - it was amazing - I never was alone on my own before! When I was at home (which was rare) I loved spending most of the time there - listening to my music, reading or sometimes studying for exams...It was where I could have friends come over to my place. And the door was painted and scratched all over - until one day one of my skate friends drew a swastika on it. I made a window out of it but my father still recognized it. The next day the door was painted over in white.

Gaudenz Ruf - collector:

Borjana has a sharp eye for the sometimes not so pleasant social and psychological situations of human beings, the *conditio humana* of nowadays. However, she refrains from crude realism but composes pictures with precise architecture and of a shining clear and distant beauty. It is this contrast that makes her art so attractive.



The artist:

This is the picture that appears in my head when I think about home and about Sofia. Until the age of 12 I didn't have a room of my own, I slept in my parents' room on a rollaway bed. Every morning I opened my eyes the first thing I would see was the library. No matter which cabinet you open, it is always packed with books, except of two special cabinets, which only my father had access to and they had an official "don't touch" status for me. One was filled with antique stamps - my father was an amateur collector and always told me: "There are two Mercedes in here" (He was proud of his collection, but I had no idea what a Mercedes was). The second cabinet was even more interesting, full of tape rolls and cassettes - the music that my parents listened to and probably some professional recordings of my father as well.

One of my favourite things at home - those evenings, when the entire family had squeezed into the kitchen to watch black and white Soviet war films (sometimes they'd run a Charlie Chaplin film - then I joined them as well). Meanwhile I spent most of my time in the other room listening to music, dancing, and singing along in my made up English.

Katharina and Clemens Schindler -  
lawyers at Schindler Attorneys and collectors:

Borjana really gets into the subjects that she addresses in her work. As a result her art - besides being highly aesthetic and simply beautiful - creates awareness for relevant topics ahead of time.

## BIOGRAPHIE

*Born 1976 in Sofia, Bulgaria. Lives and works in Vienna. Graduated from the University of Applied Arts Vienna in visual media and digital art (Peter Weibel / Karl Dudesek / Thomas Fürstner).*

*BORJANA is an cross-disciplinary artist who works in the fields of film/video, installation, photography, performing and media art. In her works she analysis stereotypical roles and models of representations and the impact of political and social structures and control mechanisms on our existence. Her work addresses issues of mobility and crossing of socio-geographical and cultural borders and deal with the complex process of communication and translation. Focusing on documentary and narrative structures and constructions, she mixes stages and situations, still and moving image, text and sound into cases and stories that test the line between personal and social, examine the interaction between individual and collective in the frame of current events and history. In her concern with the strategies of re-positioning, manipulation and perception, discrepancy procedure Ventzislavova's work draws attention to the permeable borders between reality and fiction.*

*Her works have been exhibited internationally in solo and group shows as well as at media art and film festivals, including, 21er haus – the new Museum of contemporary art in Vienna, MAK Vienna, MAK LA, Museum of Modern Art Salzburg, Museum of Modern Art Carinthia, Museum of Modern Art - Esterházy Foundation, MUSA, Museum of Contemporary Art Soifa, Sofia City Art Gallery, National Art Gallery Sofia, Landesgalerie Linz, Essl Museum, Klosterneuburg. Gallery bäckerstrasse4, k/haus, quartier21, gallerie Ostlicht, Thomas K. Lang Gallery, BCI "Wittgenstein House" - all in Vienna, Austrian Cultural Forum Washington DC and London, ICA London, ex-garage, Maribor, Academia gallery, Sofia, ICA Sofia, Art Today Plovdiv, Hunt gallery, St. Louis, US, Cologne Conference, IDFA, Diagonale, Graz, EMAF, Osnabrück, transmediale, Berlin, filmwinter, Stuttgart, Rencontres Internationales, Berwick Film and Media Arts Fest., Moscow Int. Filmfest., Int. Short Film Fest. Istanbul, Split Film Fest., etc.*

## PUBLICATIONS

*Five weird and wonderful works at the (e)merge art fair*, Text: Maura Judkis, The Washington Post, US

*Constitutional Performance Art?*, Text: Ann Binlot, The Daily Beast, US

*EIKON #80*, 2013 - Borjana Ventzislavova, Text: Silvie Aigner

*Case Study, Borjana Ventzislavova*, b ckerstrasse4 (Hg.), Wien 2012

*Einw nde gegen die Unbetroffenheit*, Text: Dominik Kamalzadeh, der Standard, Print 22.01.2011

*In The Name Of - Borjana Ventzislavova & Mladen Penev*, Eyes on, Monat der Fotografie Wien, 2010

*Gallery - Borjana Ventzislavova & Mladen Penev „In The Name Of“*, Wiener Zeitung, Nov., Wien, 2010

*Triennale Linz 1.0*, Contemporary Art in Austria, Text: Stefanie Hoch

*Im Dreieck der Kunst*, Linz: Die Triennale 1.0 zeigt das aktuelle Kunstschaffen in  sterreich

*Wiener Zeitung*, Text: Julia Urbanek, Wien, Juni, 2010

*Contemporary photography. New positions from Austria.*, Text: Luisa Ziaja

Bildpunkt, Zeitschrift der IG Bildende Kunst, *“Regimest rungen”* / Fr hling 2010 - Poster

*Die Br cke - K rnten, Kunst Kultur* / NR.103 - Zeitgen ssische Fotografie

*Life without insurance*, Text: Svetla Petkova - Kultura, Februar 2009

*the committed artis*, Text: Gergana Pirozova, Dnevnik, 17 Februar 2009

*Parallel Worlds*, Text: Svetlana Kuyumdzhieva, Kultura, J nner 2009

*edno*, J nner 2009

*EIKON #63*, 2008 - Fokus S dosteuropa (“We shall overswim”) - Text: Yana Kostova

*“Borjana Ventzislavova” in At Home in Europe*, Text: Dr. Bernadette Buckley, Culture 2000/ ISIS: London, 2007

Vlna 27/2006- *“EURO DE LUX”*, Text: Yana Kostova

Jungle World - *“T nzerin gesucht”*, Text: Jutta Sommerbauer, Juni, 2006

*edno*, 06/06 - *“Dancer in the dark”*, Text: Svetlana Kuyumdzhieva

*Design Anarchy 2006* - tabula rasa

*Illywords thirteen 2005*, conscious project

*Adbusters* Jan/Feb 2005 – tabula rasa

*Museum in Progress*, Der Standard 6/7 2004 – dezentrale medien

*Kurier*, Mai, 2003, Sonderausgabe zur Ausstellung Kunst am Balkan

*Die Bunte Zeitung* Nr.1, 2002 – virtuelles Wohnhaus

## PUBLIC & PRIVATE COLLECTIONS (SELECTION)

Fotosammlung des BMUKK, Wien, AT

Sammlung der Stadt Wien, MUSA, AT

Sammlung Essl, Klosterneuburg, AT

Sammlung Privatstiftung Estherhazy, Eisenstadt, AT

Sammlung der Nationalen Kunst Galerie, Sofia, BG

21er haus, Vienna, AT

I'LL NEVER LEAVE  
MY CONSCIENCE  
BY THE ROADSIDE,  
PICKING FLOWERS.  
YES, THE STARS  
SHINE BRIGHTLY  
BUT NOT IN DAYTIME!

## AWARDS, GRANTS (SELECTION):

- 14/15** *Artist in Residence Program Chicago*, BMUKK, AT
- 13** *Österreichisches Staatsstipendium für bildende Kunst*, BMUKK, AT  
*Research Residency*, ISIS Arts, Newcastle, GB
- 11** *MAK Schindler Artist in Residence*, Los Angeles, US  
*Grant for Independent Project*, CEC ArtsLink, New York, US
- 07** *Ruf Award*, Sofia  
*Artist in Residence* ISIS Arts, Newcastle, GB  
*Artist in Residence* BKA, Rom, IL  
*Nominierung für Dokumentarfilm* – Robert Bosch Stiftung, DE
- 06** *Gewinner Top Ten Nonfiction (Fokus Pokus Euromatik)*, Cologne Conference, DE  
*Preisträgerin des Otto Prutscher Fonds*, Wien, AT
- 05** *Stipendium Susmannstiftung*, Wien, AT  
*Artists in Residence – dezentrale Medien*, Austrian Cultur Forum, London, GB
- 02** *Anerkennung (luis, i think!)* – AIM III, Art in Motion, Los Angeles, US  
*Auszeichnung (herein.at)* – Ars Electronica, Graz, AT
- 01** *Anerkennung (luis, i think)* – CYNETart, Dresden, DE

## IMPRINT

This catalog is published on the occasion of the exhibition

*"Borjana Ventzislavova - WE ARE PART OF A COLLECTION"*

24.05.2016 - 29.07.2016 bäckerstrasse4

**Publisher:**

bäckerstrasse4 - plattform für junge kunst gmbh, [www.baeckerstrasse4.at](http://www.baeckerstrasse4.at)

**Text by:** Dessislava Dimova

**Photos:** Borjana Ventzislavova

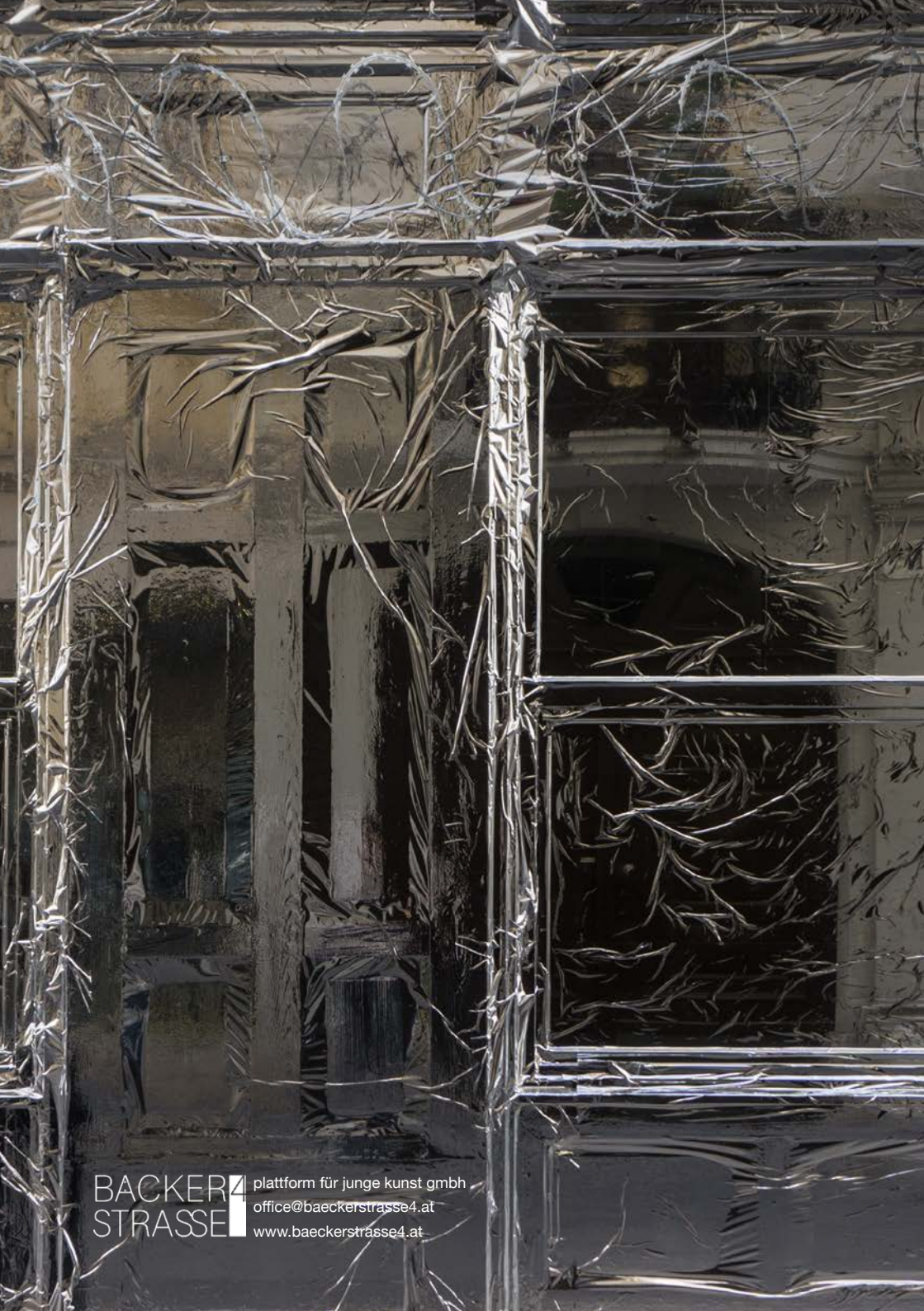
**Graphic Design:** Aneta Grzeszczyk-Köck ([sodazitrondesign.com](http://sodazitrondesign.com))

**Cover:** Borjana Ventzislavova - Hey you! It's us! (2016)

© texts by the authors

© photos by the photographer

© bäckerstrasse4 - plattform für junge kunst gmbh, Borjana Ventzislavova



BACKER  
STRASSE

plattform für junge kunst gmbh  
office@baeckerstrasse4.at  
www.baeckerstrasse4.at