

# VESSNA PERUNOVICH VESNA PERUNOVIĆ



Museum of Contemporary Art Belgrade / MoCAB  
Gallery - Legacy of Milica Zorić and Rodoljub Čolaković

Muzej Savremene Umetnosti Beograd / MSUB  
Galerija - legat Milice Zorić i Rodoljuba Čolakovića



*Home Paradigm: A New Place of Belonging*  
*Paradigma doma: Novo mesto pripadanja*

10 / 03 - 21 / 05 / 2023. Beograd / Belgrade

curator / kustos: Miroslav Karić

## Miroslav Karić

### Exhibition curator

When the first news about the mysterious virus emerged at the end of 2019, no one could have foreseen that the world would face a global health crisis within a few months, with entire countries and cities under strict lockdown measures. The pandemic changed the daily lives of millions, confining them to their homes, which became, at the same time, their workplaces, offices, and classrooms, while the closure of international borders and the impossibility of travel forced some to temporarily find a home in countries where they happened to be. “We are all in this together” was one of the slogans highlighting the challenge humanity faced, painfully reminding us of inequalities and revealing the true face of the perpetuated divisions between the rich and poor, the disparities in healthcare, education, economic opportunities as well as housing conditions. The call to stay at home as a gesture of social responsibility towards the vulnerable community did not mean the same for everyone, adding a new dimension to our already complicated and complex relationship with the concept of home. The pandemic everyday life, induced by the fear of danger lurking from the outside world, recalled the old and dominant narratives about the house/home as a physically separate, private sanctuary and zone of safety.

But a house does not necessarily mean a home, which functions more as a concept to mark a range of emotions, practices, and relationships that are established within certain living spaces or even associated with imaginary forms, dreams, and states through which we create a sense of belonging and grounding in the world. As Aviezier Tucker, a writer, political scientist, and historian, states: “most people spend their lives in search of home, at the gap between the natural home [conceived as the home environment conducive to human existence, i.e. dry land] and the particular ideal home where they would be fully fulfilled.”<sup>(1)</sup> From the natural to the ideal or imagined, the multidimensionality of the nature of home, besides the most common attributes related to a stable residential structure that plays a significant role in shaping an atmosphere of intimacy, family, and idyllic settings, often includes another, opposing aspect, i.e., a place that can also be a source of feelings of tension, fragility, insecurity, alienation, and defamiliarization.

During the last few decades, Serbian-Canadian artist Vessna Perunovich has been developing her work thematically and conceptually around, among other things, the multifaceted notion of home, primarily from her perspective as an immigrant but also a cultural nomad, i.e., someone who, through various international art residency programs, often finds herself traveling and geographically relocating. In the late 1980s, along with her family, Perunović moved to Canada at a time when her homeland was still the house of the Yugoslav nations, which would shortly after be destroyed and permanently disappear in dramatic events. The 1990s were a period of farewells, departures, and starting life anew somewhere else for many from the former Yugoslavia. For Vesna, it was also a time of intense reflection on her personal immigrant existence and the process of establishing a new domestic environment in the context of her new surroundings. Opening up different thematic fields and temporarily departing from her previous painting practice, Perunovich delved into the story of home, examining it in the realm of intimacy, the fragility of gender relationships, and interpersonal relations. This shift during the 1990s led to a series of works in which the artist made a turn in her poetics and choice of visual expressions, increasingly based on exploring the associative and meaningful potentials of materials that she began experimenting with. Recycled household items and various textiles become the building blocks of her sculptural and object-like creations, with their narrative and metaphorical characteristics shaped by the dynamics of interactions and constellations of qualitative physical properties of the used components (metals, ceramics, synthetic fibers, etc.). Perunović incorporates

materials and readymade objects in her works that retain recognition in broader contexts or are related to constructing a sense of home. Through their juxtapositions and other constructively devised interactions (often utilizing techniques of traditional women’s handwork), the artist aims to express and convey to the observer certain emotional, psychological states, processes, experiences, or sensations. Supporting this, theorist Bojana Videkanić emphasizes that the artist’s “...multidisciplinary, multisensory approach to art-making produces affect when we are confronted with the supple, seductive nature of the gestures and materials she uses... by their sensuousness, beauty, and sometimes implied danger.”<sup>(2)</sup> The intense emotional experiences generated by Vessna’s artworks, demanding the observer’s special “attention of and to the body”, according to Videkanić, actually originate in encounters with the uncanny, an impression present in the artist’s works due to the creation of a network of signs that depart from the real, representational, and often prompt us to question: why? Playing with the dimension of the familiar and the strange can be linked to the artist’s earliest interests in surrealism as well as her decision to view the concept of home through such a poetic expression, exploring its ambivalence and questioning our perceptions of the spaces we inhabit or believe we belong to. Diving into the depths of home and, in that context, the matter of the unconscious remains for Perunovich, to this day, a terrain of exploration and the discovery of layers that exist beneath the surface of everyday life, structured by routines, stereotyped activities, instructions, and expectations. As art historian Žana Vukčević points out, Vessna’s works “examine and comment on all the frameworks and limitations within which we function as human beings, both those given to us naturally and those we have adopted or imposed by external factors (social, political, cultural, national, religious).”<sup>(3)</sup>

Continuing her practice of working with various materials as well as further exploring the potential of their symbolic expressiveness and transformability after the 2000s, Vessna Perunovich’s artistic production will be marked by more complex formal solutions in the form of installations, ambient-sculptural entities, and site-specific interventions. During this period, the artist also begins to expand her artistic expression into the field of video art and performance, while at the same time, in terms of thematic problematics, she increasingly approaches reflections on and re-examination of the concept of identity in migratory movements, barriers and borders, phenomena of displacement within the framework of today’s transnational and transcultural reality.

For Perunovich, the question of home remains central in every story of migration, exile, and diasporic forms of existence. Because of her personal, lived experience of empathy and understanding of the positions of individuals and communities in ongoing negotiations with new environments and identities, in emotional relationships they establish with spaces they have temporarily or permanently settled or left, there is a constant curiosity about belonging. In the installation *House of Exile*, one of her emblematic works from the early 2000s, the artist returns us to the primary symbol of home through a reduced or more archetypal representation of a house, emphasizing its inherent fragility through the chosen elastic material for walls and roof, and “...reminding us that the idea of home is actually a changeable, vulnerable construction.”<sup>(4)</sup> The mentioned work also serves as the artist’s manifesto about home in a certain sense, which, in the context of the complexifying global socio-political situations, high mobility, and frequent displacements, can no longer be associated with values of stability or permanence but becomes a concept in a continuous process of redefinition. Her move to Canada, travels to artistic residencies around the world, frequent returns to her home country, according to the artist, influenced a change in her attitude towards what a home is and the desire to find an ideal home: “...A new space has emerged, which is not a permanent place, but rather a mental principle that opens up the possibility that home is possible everywhere and that it is possible to feel a sense of belonging even when there is no permanent place of residence.”<sup>(5)</sup> The states of mobility, flexibility, and transitoriness that the artist deals with are transposed into her artistic practice through, as usually happens, a careful selection of materials (economical, recyclable, easily portable, and (dis)mountable), artistic forms, and media, which are considered crucial for conceptualizing the relationship with the ultimate recipient – the observer, always insisting on openness and the processuality of the work.

Also, for Vessna, an important aspect of her work remains the contexts of the places where she exhibits, as was the case with the exhibition *The Home Paradigm: A New Place of Belonging*, which was featured in the space of the current Gallery-Legacy of Milica Zorić and Rodoljub Čolaković, initially built in the late 1930s as a family home, whose fate over the decades was determined by the shifting socio-political circumstances and ideological changes in our environment. The exhibition, installed on three levels of the gallery, introduced visitors to a wide range of themes related to the complexity of the phenomenon of home through the selection of artworks and their interconnected narrative dialogues, navigating

them through contents, experiences, scenes, situations, impressions with which most could identify on various levels or recognize them as personal experiences. Considering the paradigm of home in contemporary contexts, from the notion of a physically defined, immediate formative and protective environment to the concept that implies the constitution of a sense of situatedness through encounters, movements, interactions, i.e., in establishing connections with others and with the world, Perunovich confronts us with essential questions: who are we and where do we belong? Regardless of how we perceive it, whether as a place of origin or a destination point, home is always our relationship with localities, people, things, a verb rather than a noun, a state experienced in tensions between the given and the chosen, the past and the present, here and there, the real and the desired. Through extensive exploration of the primary territory and meanings of home, the artist was able to see all its dualities: home is located in space but is not necessarily a fixed space; it can be an expression of someone's identity, but the body itself can also be a home; it can be an experience of being in the world and an ideological construct; it can be synonymous with comfort or discomfort and burden, a place without which there is no further movement, but also the magnetic force of eternal retrospection. Vesna's works, as explained by Canadian art critic and curator Donald Brackett, suggest that "permanence is illusory"<sup>(6)</sup>, and we add that in the case of home, it is particularly complicated, involving tensions between psychological, physical, geographical, mental, and cultural lines and networks in which we position and construct ourselves as human beings.

1 In: Shelley Mallet, *Understanding Home: a critical review of the literature* <https://www.scribd.com/document/426651384/Understanding-home-pdf#>, accessed 2/7/2023.

2 Bojana Videkanić, *Border Stitching*, <https://www.oboro.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/opuscul-v-perunovuch-en-web.pdf>, accessed 1/6/2023.

3 Žana Vukčević, *Tranzitorna mesta*, published in the exhibition catalog *Borderless*, Muzej savremene umetnosti Vojvodine, 2011, p. 15.

4 Carly Butler, *(W)hole House of Exile*, in: *(W)hole Vessna Perunovich*, Art4media Production, 2004, p. 93.

5 Vesna Perunović, *Samo je jedan sekund potreban da se život anulira*, Nova, <https://nova.rs/kultura/vesna-perunovic-samo-je-jedan-sekund-potreban-da-se-zivot-anulira/>, accessed 18/5/2023.

6 Donald Brackett, *Emblems of Enigma*, published in catalogue: *Vessna Perunovich*, Art4Media, 2009, p. 40.

## Miroslav Karić

### kustos izložbe

Kada su se krajem 2019. pojavile prve vesti o misterioznom virusu, niko nije mogao da nasluti da će se posle nekoliko meseci svet suočiti sa globalnom zdravstvenom krizom a čitave države i gradovi biti pod strogim sistemom zaključavanja. Milionima ljudi pandemija je promenila svakodnevicu zatvorivši ih u kuće, koje su postale istovremeno i radni prostori, kancelarije, učionice, dok su zatvaranje međudržavnih granica i nemogućnost putovanja neke primorali da privremeno dom nađu u zemljama u kojima su se zatekli. *We are all in this together*, jedan od slogana kojima se ukazivalo na izazov pred kojim se našlo čovečanstvo, bolno je podsećao i na nejednakost otkrivajući pravo lice trajne podeljenosti na bogate i siromašne, na neravnopravnost u pogledu zdravstvene zaštite, obrazovanja, ekonomskih mogućnosti kao i stambenih uslovnosti. Poziv da se ostane kod kuće kao gest društvene odgovornosti prema ugroženoj zajednici nije za sve predstavljao isto i uz to je otvarao novu dimenziju u našim, inače komplikovanim i kompleksnim, odnosima prema konceptu doma. Pandemijska svakodnevica, indukovana strahom od opasnosti koja vreba iz spoljašnjeg sveta, podsetila je na stare i dominantne narative o kući/domu kao fizički omeđenom, privatnom utočištu i zoni sigurnosti.

Ali kuća odavno ne znači nužno i dom, koji funkcioniše više kao pojam za markaciju niza emocija, praksi i odnosa koji se uspostavljaju unutar određenih životnih prostora ili se čak povezuju sa imaginarnim formama, snovima, stanjima kroz koja stvaramo osećaj pripadnosti i utemeljenosti u svetu. Kako navodi pisac, politikolog i istoričar Aviezer Tucker: „Većina ljudi provede svoje živote u potrazi za domom, u procepu između prirodnog doma (zamišljenog kao kućno okruženje pogodno za ljudsku egzistenciju, tj. suva zemlja) i posebnog idealnog doma gde bi u potpunosti bili ispunjeni.”<sup>(1)</sup> Od prirodnog do idealnog ili izmašanog doma, višedimenzionalnost njegove prirode, pored najčešćih atributa vezanih za stabilnu rezidencijalnu strukturu, koja ima značajnu ulogu u formiranju atmosfere intimnog, porodičnog i idiličnog, neretko podrazumeva i drugu, suprotnu stranu, odnosno mesto koje može da bude i izvor osećanja napetosti, krhkosti, nesigurnosti, otuđenja i začudnosti.

**SWEET HOME**



Srpsko-kanadska umetnica Vesna Perunović tokom poslednjih nekoliko decenija svoj rad tematski i idejno razvija, između ostalog, oko mnogoznačnosti pojma doma, i to najpre iz perspektive sopstvenog imigrantskog iskustva, ali i iz pozicije kulturnog nomada, odnosno nekog ko je, kroz različite programe međunarodnih umetničkih rezidencija, često u prilici da putuje i geografski se izmešta. Zajedno sa porodicom Perunović, seli se u Kanadu krajem osamdesetih godina, u trenutku dok je njena domovina još bila kuća jugoslovenskih naroda, koja će ubrzo zatim biti srušena i nepovratno nestati u dramatičnim događajima. Devedesete godine prošlog veka, koje su za mnoge sa prostora bivše Jugoslavije bile period opraštanja, odlazaka i započinjanja života negde drugde, za Vesnu su takođe bile vreme intenzivne refleksije o ličnoj imigrantskoj egzistenciji i, u tom kontekstu, konstituisanja neposrednog domicilnog okruženja u datostima nove sredine. Otvarajući drugačija tematska polja i privremeno napuštajući dotadašnju slikarsku praksu, Perunović u fokus umetničkih interesovanja uvodi priču o domu sagledavajući ga u sferi prostora intimnosti, fragilnosti rodnih odnosa i međuljudskih relacija. U tom pravcu se tokom devedesetih godina razvija serija radova kojom je umetnica napravila zaokret u svojoj poetici i izboru vizuelnih izraza, zasnovanih sve više na istraživanju asocijativnih i značenjskih potencijala materijala sa kojima počinje da eksperimentiše. Reciklirani kućni predmeti i razne vrste tekstila postaju gradivni elementi skulpturalnih i objektolikih ostvarenja čije narativne i metaforične karaktere umetnica određuje dinamikom interakcija i konstelacija kvalitativnih fizičkih svojstava upotrebljenih komponenti (metala, keramike, sintetičkih vlakana itd).

Perunović u radove uključuje materijale i readymade predmete koji ostaju prepoznati u širim kontekstima ili se dovode u vezu sa građenjem osećaja doma, dok njihovim jukstapozicijama i na druge načine konstruisanim sadejstvima (neretko postupcima i tehnikama tradicionalnog ženskog ručnog rada) autorka nastoji da izrazi i posmatraču prenese određeno emotivno, psihološko stanje, proces, iskustvo ili senzaciju. U prilog tome govori i zapažanje teoretičarke Bojane Videkanić koja ističe da umetničin „multidisciplinarni, multisenzorni pristup stvaranju umetnosti proizvodi uticaj kada se suočavamo sa gipkom, zavodljivom prirodom gestova i materijala koje koristi... njihovom čulnošću, lepotom i ponekad impliciranom opasnošću.”<sup>(2)</sup> Intenzivni emocionalni doživljaji koje generišu Vesnina dela, tražeći od posmatrača takođe posebnu „pažnju tela i prema telu”, za Videkanić, zapravo, imaju izvore u susretima sa začudnim, utiskom prisutnim kod umetnice zahvaljujući kreiranju mreže znakova koji su u odmaku od realnog,

predstavljčkog, a koji nas vrlo često pokreću pitanjem: zašto? Poigravanje sa dimenzijom bliskog, a stranog, može se dovesti u vezu sa autorkinim najranijim interesovanjima za nadrealizam, kao i odlukom da takvim poetičkim izrazom pojam doma sagleda u njegovoj ambivalentnosti, preispitujući naše percepcije prostora u kojima živimo ili verujemo da im pripadamo. Zaron u dubine doma i u tom kontekstu materije nesvesnog za Perunović ostaje do danas teren istraživanja i otkrivanja slojeva koji postoje ispod površine svakodnevnog života, ustrojenog rutinama, šabloniziranim aktivnostima, instruiranošću, očekivanjima. „Vesnina dela”, navodi istoričarka umetnosti Žana Vukčević, „propituju i komentarišu sve okvire i ograničenja unutar kojih funkcionišemo kao ljudska bića, kako one koji su nam dati prirodno, tako i one koje smo usvojili ili su nam nametnuti spoljašnjim faktorima (socijalnim, političkim, kulturološkim, nacionalnim, vjerskim).”<sup>(3)</sup>

Kontinuirana praksa u radu sa različitim materijalima kao i dalja testiranja potencijala njihove simboličke izražajnosti i transformativnosti nakon dvehiljaditih godina obeležiće umetničku produkciju Vesne Perunović složenijim formalnim rešenjima dela, u vidu instalacija, ambijentalno-skulpturalnih celina i site-specific intervencija. Pomenuti period za umetnicu označava i početak proširivanja umetničkog izraza na polje video umetnosti i performansa, istovremeno je, u pogledu tematsko-problemskih fokusa, sve više približujući preispitivanju pojma identiteta u migratornim kretanjima, promišljanjima koncepta barijera i granica, fenomena izmeštanja u okvirima transnacionalne i transkulturalne realnosti današnjeg sveta. Pitanje doma za Perunović ostaje centralno u svakoj priči o migraciji, egzilu, dijasporskim formama egzistencije i zbog ličnog, proživljenog iskustva empatije i razumevanja pozicija pojedinaca i zajednica u neprestanim pregovorima sa novim sredinama i identitetima, u emotivnim odnosima koje uspostavljaju prema prostorima koje su privremeno ili trajno naselili ili napustili, te u tom smislu stalne zapitanosti o pripadnosti. U instalaciji *Kuća egzila*, jednom od svojih amblematskih radova sa početka dvehiljaditih godina, Perunović nas u svedenoj ili više arhetipskoj predstavi kuće vraća u primarni simbol doma, naglašavajući njemu svojstvenu krhkost kroz izabrani elastični materijal zidova i krova i „...podsećajući nas da je ideja doma zapravo promenljiva, ranjiva konstrukcija.”<sup>(4)</sup> Upravo pomenuti rad je i autorkin svojevrsni manifestni iskaz o domu, koji se, u kontekstu permanentnih usložnjavanja globalnih društveno-političkih situacija, velike mobilnosti i frekventnih dislociranja, više ne može asociirati sa vrednostima stabilnosti ili situiranosti, već postaje koncept u procesu neprekidnog redefinisanja.

Odlazak u Kanadu, putovanja u umetničke kolonije širom sveta, česta vraćanja u zemlju iz koje je otišla, po rečima umetnice, uticali su na promenu njenog stava prema tome šta je kuća i težnja da se pronađe idealan dom: „Stvorio se neki novi prostor, koji nije stalno mesto, već više jedan mentalni princip koji otvara mogućnost da je dom moguć svuda i da je moguće osećati pripadnost, iako ne postoji stalno mesto boravka.”<sup>(5)</sup> Stanja mobilnosti, fleksibilnosti, prolaznosti kojima se autorka bavi transponovana su, kako to inače biva u njenoj umetničkoj praksi, pažljivim izborom materijala (ekonomičnih, reciklirajućih, lako prenosivih i (de)montažnih), umetničkih formi i medija, koji se smatraju ključnim za konceptualizaciju odnosa sa krajnjim recipijentom – posmatračem, uvek uz insistiranje na otvorenosti i procesualnosti rada.

Takođe, za Vesnu Perunović, važan aspekt u radu ostaju konteksti mesta u kojima izlaže, kao što je slučaj sa izložbom *Paradigma doma: novo mesto pripadanja* koja je realizovana u prostoru današnje Galerije–legata Milice Zorić i Rodoljuba Čolakovića, inicijalno građene u drugoj polovini tridesetih godina kao porodični dom, čiju će sudbinu tokom decenija određivati prelamanja društveno-političkih okolnosti i ideoloških promena u našoj sredini. Postavljena na tri nivoa galerije, izložba je izborom radova, kao i njihovim međusobnim narativnim dijaloškim relacijama uvodila posetioce u širinu tema koje se tiču kompleksnosti fenomena doma, upravljajući ih kroz sadržaje, doživljaje, prizore, situacije, utiske sa kojima se većina mogla identifikovati na različitim nivoima ili ih prepoznati kao lična iskustva. Razmatrajući paradigmu doma u savremenim kontekstima, od pojma fizički definisanog, neposrednog formativnog i protektivnog okruženja do koncepta koji podrazumeva konstituisanje osećaja situiranosti kroz susrete, kretanja, interakcije, odnosno u ostvarivanju veza sa drugima i sa svetom, Perunović nas suočava sa suštinskim pitanjima: ko smo i gde pripadamo? Bez obzira na to kako ga posmatramo, da li kao mesto porekla ili odredište, dom je uvek naše uodnošavanje sa lokalitetima, ljudima, stvarima, pre glagol nego imenica, stanje proživljenog u tenzijama između datog i izabranog, prošlosti i sadašnjosti, ovde i tamo, realnog i željenog. Dugo istraživanje primarne teritorije i značenja doma omogućilo je umetnici da sagleda sve njegove dualnosti: dom je lociran u prostoru, ali nije nužno fiksni prostor; može biti izražavanje nečijeg identiteta, ali i telo može biti dom samo po sebi; može biti iskustvo bivanja u svetu i ideološki konstrukt; može biti sinonim za komfor ili nelagodu i teret, mesto bez kojeg nema kretanja dalje, ali ni magnetne sile večnih osvrtnja. Vesnini radovi, kako objašnjava kanadski likovni kritičar i kustos Donald

Brackett, sugerišu da je ”postojanost iluzorna”<sup>(6)</sup> a, dodajemo, po pitanju doma i posebno komplikovana, u napetosti psiholoških, fizičkih, geografskih, mentalnih, kulturoloških linija i mreža u kojima pozicioniramo i gradimo sebe kao ljudska bića.

<sup>1</sup> Citirano u Shelley Mallet, *Understanding Home: a critical review of the literature* <https://www.scribd.com/document/426651384/Understanding-home-pdf#>, pristupljeno 2. 7. 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Bojana Videkanić, *Border Stitching*, <https://www.oboro.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/opuscule-v-perunovuch-en-web.pdf>, pristupljeno 1. 6. 2023.

<sup>3</sup> Žana Vukčević, *Tranzitorna mesta*, objavljeno u katalogu izložbe *Borderless*, Muzej savremene umetnosti Vojvodine, 2011, str. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Carly Butler, *(W)hole House of Exile*, objavljeno u publikaciji *(W)hole Vessna Perunovich*, Art4media Production, 2004, str. 93.

<sup>5</sup> Vesna Perunović, *Samo je jedan sekund potreban da se život anulira*, *Nova*, <https://nova.rs/kultura/vesna-perunovic-samo-je-jedan-sekund-potreban-da-se-zivot-anulira/>, pristupljeno 18. 5. 2023

<sup>6</sup> Donald Brackett, *Emblems of Enigma*, objavljeno u katalogu *Vessna Perunovich*, Art4Media, 2009, str. 40.



**House of Exile** (2002 / 2023)  
metal frame, elastic, sound /  
metalni ram, lastiž, zvuk  
4.5 m x 3.30 m x 2.6m

The work takes us back to the primary symbol of home while revealing the inherent fragility of such a symbol. Meant to embody security and belonging, we are reminded that the idea of home is a shifting vulnerable construct. Installed for the first time in the exterior of the Gallery - Legacy Milica Zorić and Rodoljub Čolaković, House of Exile premiered in 2002 at the IV Cetinje Biennial in Montenegro and had since travelled the world. It has been exhibited in 20 different locations on three different continents.

Rad nas vraća do prvobitnog simbola doma istovremeno otkrivajući nestalnost svojstvenu takvom simbolu. S namerom da označi sigurnost i pripadnost, podseća nas da je ideja doma promenljiva i osetljiva tvorevina. Prvi put postavljen u spoljašnjem prostoru Galerije-legata Milice Zorić i Rodoljuba Čolakovića, rad House of Exile je premijerno izveden 2002. na IV Cetinjskom bijenalu u Crnoj Gori i otad je putovao svetom. Bio je postavljen na 20 različitih lokacija na tri kontineta.









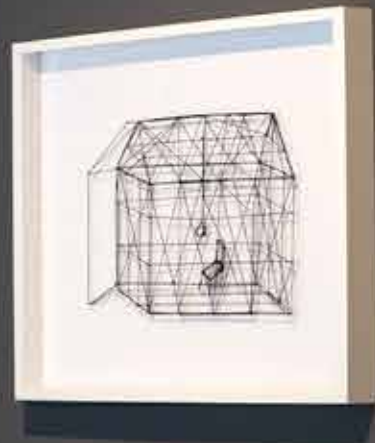


*Moving Monument (2012) & Safe at Home (2004-2023),  
exhibition view / pogled na postavku*

Zovem se neko i svako. Hodam polako,  
poput onoga ko dolazi iz takve  
daljine da i ne očekuje da će stići.

My name is someone and anyone.  
I walk slowly, like one who comes  
from so far away he doesn't expect to arrive.

*Jorge Luis Borges, pisac*

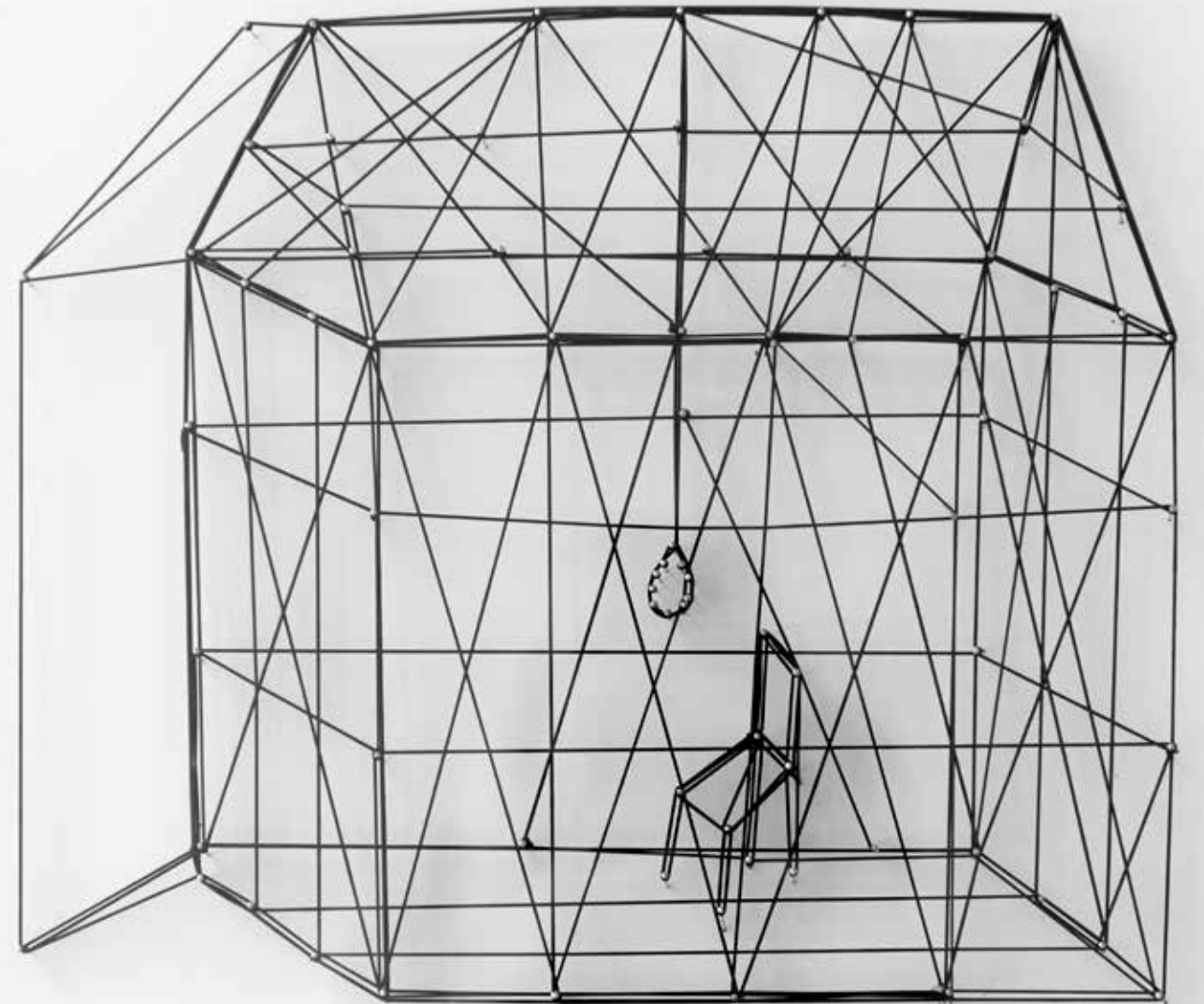


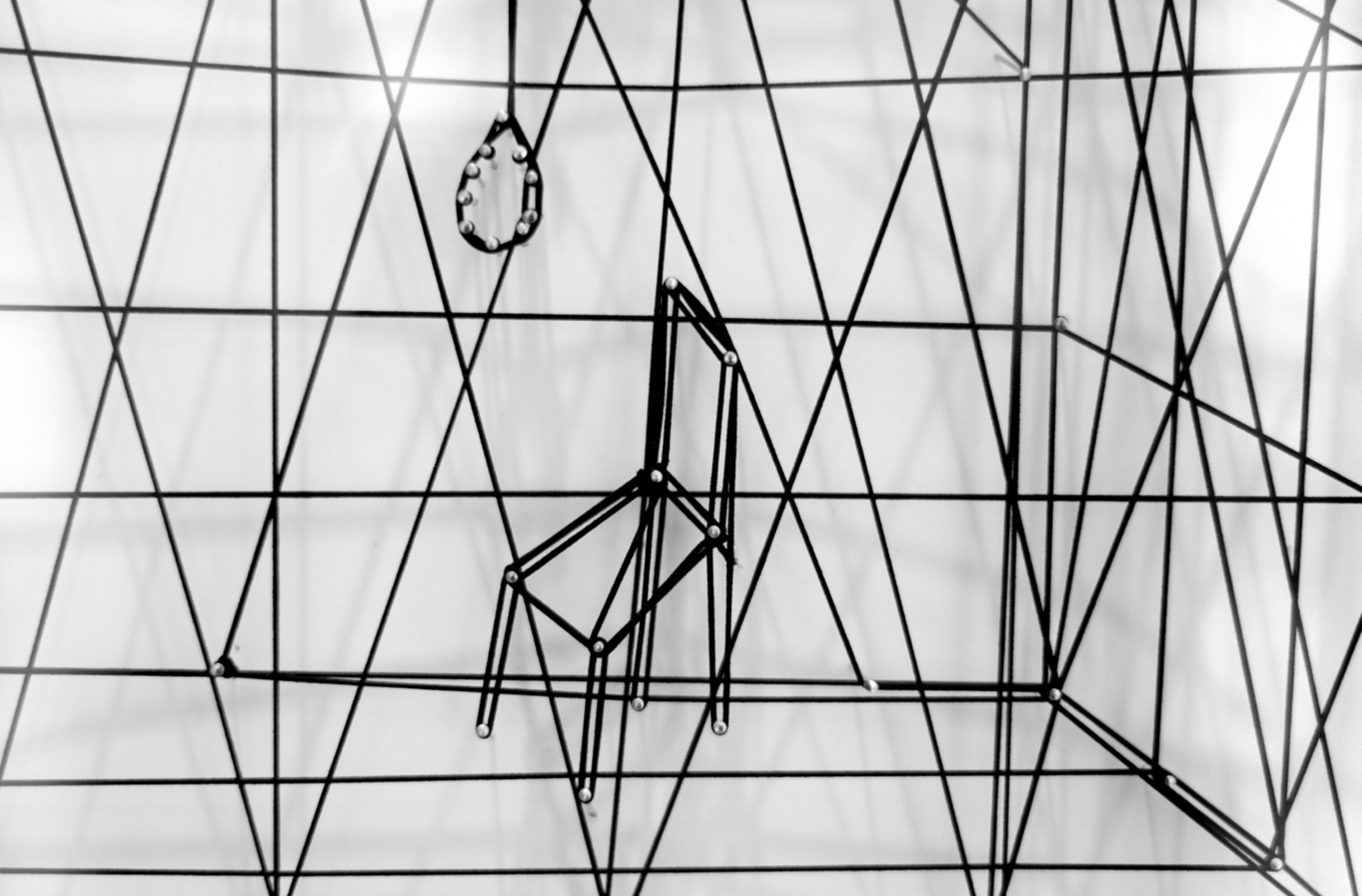


**Zovem se neko i svako. Hodam polako,  
poput onoga ko dolazi iz takve  
daljine da i ne očekuje da će stići.**

**My name is someone and anyone.  
I walk slowly, like one who comes  
from so far away he doesn't expect to arrive.**

*Jorge Luis Borges, pisac*



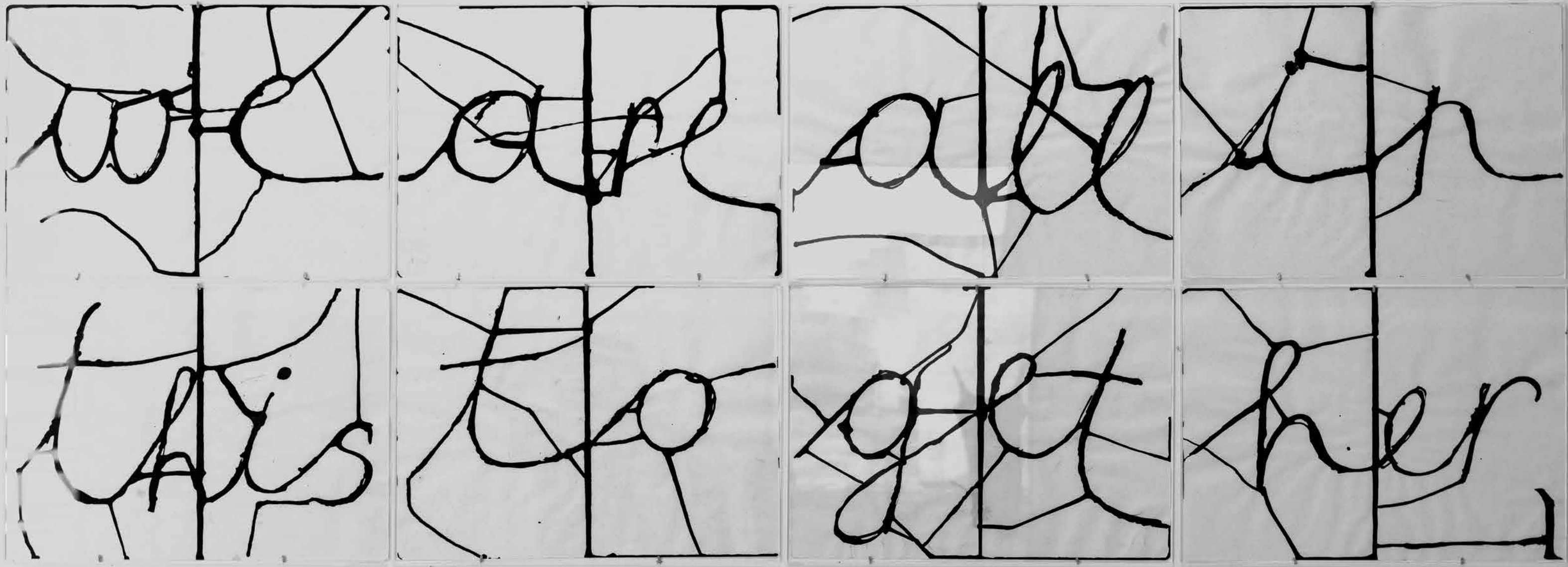


**Safe at Home** (2004 - 2023)  
elastic thread, dressmakers pins /  
elastični konac, krojačke špenadle  
50cm x 50cm

The work explores the domestic realm  
through the opposing notions of safety vs.  
isolation, protection vs. confinement, and  
desire vs. danger.

Rad ispituje domen domaćeg kroz  
oprečne koncepte bezbednosti i izolacije,  
zaštite i sputavanja, želje i opasnosti.





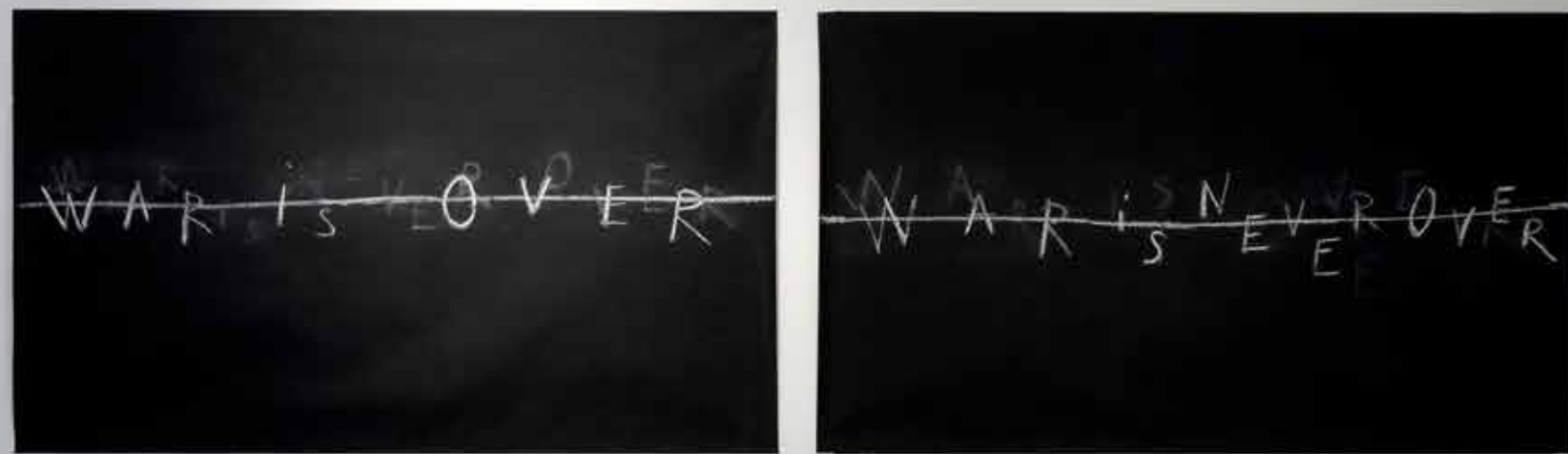
***We Are All in This Together* (2022)**

drawing installation, black ink on individual notebook spreads, 8 drawings, 30cm x 42cm each drawing /  
instalacija crteža, crni tuš na duplericama u svesci, 8 crteža, 30cm x 42cm svaki crtež

Referring to the saying that became one of the most used mottos during the times of the Pandemic,  
the work suggests compassion, but also a collective responsibility.

Odnoseći se na izreku koja je postala jedna od najčešće korišćenih fraza za vreme pandemije, ovaj rad  
ukazuje na empatiju ali i kolektivnu odgovornost.





**War is Over War is Never Over (2016)**

folding military bed from the Second World War, wooden bench,  
white oil chalk on Mylar, matt black paint, dimension variable /  
vojnički krevet na rasklapanje iz Drugog svetskog rata, drvena klupa,  
beli uljani kreon na paus papiru, crna boja  
za školske table, promenljive dimenzije

Echoing John Lennon and Yoko Ono's 1969 performance "War is Over," the work ponders the notion of conflict and war as a constant in human history.

Kao svojevrsan odjek performansa Džona Lenona i Joka Ono iz 1969. „Rat je završen”, rad razmatra pojam sukoba i ratovanja kao konstantu u ljudskoj istoriji.



**Exiting** (2018)  
video, video loop 11:18 min. loop, sound / zvuk

Filmed in Malta on a seemingly abandoned terrace, a single black dress dances in the wind. Suggesting defiance, beauty and loss, the dress penetrates the frame of the isolated, barren space, occupies it by moving slowly from right to left, leaves the frame briefly, comes back for the final dance and then vanishes from our view for good.

Snimljena na jednoj naizgled napuštenoj terasi na Malti, crna haljina pleše na vetru. Nagoveštavajući prkos, lepotu i gubitak, haljina prodire u kadar izolovanog, pustog prostora, polako ga zauzima krećući se zdesna nalevo, napušta kadar na trenutak, vraća se za poslednji ples, a zatim zauvek nestaje iz našeg vidokruga.

## Magda Gonzalez-Mora

*Independent curator*

# REFUGE OF CHANGE: A JOURNEY THROUGH EXPERIENCE

*Shifting Shelter* is a new art commandment of the Serbian-born Canadian artist Vessna Perunovich, who has been based in Toronto since 1988. Throughout her artistic career, she has stood as an eloquent communicator, dedicated to the reflection on displacement and the ways in which dispositions involving physical change are juxtaposed – frustration vs. hope, connectivity vs. absence – reconciling the change of the individual's psyche and his /her approach to habitat.

Despite her initial training as a painter, Vessna Perunovich soon embraces other poetics and artistic media such as installation, video, photography, object-based intervention, and performance. The artist subscribes her work under a universal vision in the construction of channels that provide a zone of intellectual contact, thus facilitating a space for socialization. Her approach reveals an open position that accepts the challenge and the emotional comparison imposed by the transformations in the language, the psychological-emotional associations, and in the adjustments of the new modes of behavior.

*Shifting Shelter* establishes a thoughtful introduction into the politics of transcultural migrations in the oscillating global system at a crossroads where displacement manifests itself as one of the predominant geopolitical characteristics of living generations.

In her vocation to share, Perunovich teaches us how to confront a place in our lifetime in which past, present, and future have lapsed, understanding the phenomenon of migration as a continuous and dynamic line of destabilization, of rooting and uprooting, which manifest a need to link past with the current.

With consistency, Perunovich's work deepens the exploration of the processes of movement in the current society, from the expansion of the term displacement, its corporal and spatial-geographic dimensions, to its symbolic configurations. Articulated from her own perceptions and aesthetic representations, her work questions cultural factors and the effect they have on current society.

With particular sensitivity, *Shifting Shelter* collects moments of absence and challenge in a conciliatory space that requires adaptation in time. Consciously, the artist induces a strategy of assimilation in this space of struggle, conditioned by physical and mental displacement.

Using humble materials, Vessna Perunovich produces works that critically question the contemporary condition of existence. The artist does not refer to a specific site. In her works, a territory can be located in the family, in the community, or in those symbolic spaces that constitute a shared culture, a common ethnicity, and even the nostalgia for a distant ideal land to which we all desire to belong in some way.

Nothing is by happenstance in her pieces. Perunovich is precise in the selection of her titles, managing to accurately coordinate them with each individual work. Each title – *Shifting Shelter*, *Nothing to Lose*, *The Archive of Insignificant Losses*, *Timing is Everything*, *Welcome*, among others – recall stories that assimilate multiple experiences, each of them diverse and with passionate nuances that strengthen an identity existing simultaneously beyond a domicile.

*The Archive of Insignificant Losses* is an installation of uniquely “framed” graphite drawings on school notebook pages, minimalist in their visual language. Drawings depict rescued fragments of found objects from specific life circumstances or geographical environments, baring them, somewhat ironically, as precious archival artefacts.

In the powerful installation that gives title to the exhibition, *Shifting Shelter*, found objects and furniture, painted in a somber black, function as a vehicle that favors the creation of unusual connections of expressive meanings, thus redefining the object's original use. In this piece, everything comes together in a conceptual framework where objects, space, and the audience can participate in a new compilation that re-contextualizes the everyday. In a laborious and imposing assembly, deceptively of a deconstructed shelter, delicate moments are revived through the interconnections between objects and mirrors. Balanced off each other with black lines drawn with elastic ribbon and tape coming off the wall in different directions, objects and their reflections in the mirrors mark subtle suggestions that things are to remain precarious and suspended in a state of uncertainty.

In *Timing is Everything*, we are asked to evaluate life and make hard choices; we are requested to take a look at the past and, at the same time, instate new assessments in order to face the future. To adapt to a society that does not belong to us and where we wish to succeed requires absolute assurances that we have *Nothing to Lose*.

The video *Welcome* beams with nostalgia and rejoices in the foreign lexicon of artist's friends at various stages of their lives, living in different places around the globe. On the screen, we observe the ripple of frequency that is drawn with voices that repeat the word “welcome”. The video picks up a cozy cacophony that suppresses the barrier of physical distance. The resonance and magnitude of the word “welcome” in the conglomerate of voices raise a point of connection between the familiar and the unknown.

There is no omission in *Shifting Shelter*, which is undoubtedly another impressive inquiry about the current history of migration by Vessna Perunovich. The artist displays poetic freedom of expression that demands our understanding and, at the same time, highlights her stamp that marks her honesty, impetus, and subtlety.

Perunovich's scenarios are part of the real world, which paradoxically play out in the zones of trance in which we walk cautiously like acrobats on a tightrope, looking for associations or responses that can pitch or eclipse aspects that affect the course of our own lives.

Vessna Perunovich's exclusive sensibility is the result of a holistic meta-artistic pattern, blurring the line between life and art, which uniquely and simultaneously perplexes and compels the viewer. The unusual arrangements in her installations look for plausible answers in a world of hybridity and confusion. Perunovich's reflections on her own life and the human condition universally endeavor to counteract and resist the setbacks of the present and offer a key contribution to discourses related to cross-cultural migrations.



## Magda Gonzalez-Mora nezavisna kustoskinja

# UTOČIŠTE U PROMENI: PUTOVANJE KROZ ISKUSTVO

*Shifting Shelter* je novo ostvarenje kanadske umetnice srpskog porekla Vesne Perunović, koja od 1988. godine živi u Torontu. Majstorstvo komunikacije obeležilo je čitavu njenu umetničku karijeru, posvećenu promišljanjima o raseljenju i tome kako se sučeljavaju stanja raspoloženja koja fizičku promenu prate – frustracija nasuprot nadi, povezanost nasuprot odsustvu – donoseći mirenje s promenom svesti pojedinca i njegovom/njenom odnosu prema prebivalištu.

Mada je stekla slikarsko obrazovanje, Vesna Perunović rano prihvata druge poetike i umetničke medije kao što su instalacija, video, fotografija, intervencije na korišćenom objektu i performans. Umetnica stavlja svoj rad u službu jedinstvene vizije o konstruisanju kanala koji obezbeđuju zonu intelektualnog kontakta, pružajući prostor za socijalizaciju. Njen pristup ukazuje na otvoren stav koji podrazumeva prihvatanje izazova i emotivno upoređivanje nametnuto jezičkim transformacijama, psihološko-emocionalnim asocijacijama, kao i u prilagođavanju novim modelima ponašanja.

*Shifting Shelter* nas promišljeno uvodi u politiku transkulturnih migracija u kolebljivom globalnom sistemu, na raskršću gde se raseljenje manifestuje kao jedna od glavnih geopolitičkih odlika živih generacija. Osećajući poziv da podeli svoje iskustvo, Perunovićeva nas poučava kako da se u svojim životima postavimo prema nekom mestu, gde se prošlost, sadašnjost i budućnost preklapaju, posmatrajući fenomen migracija kao neprekidnu dinamičnu liniju destabilizacije, puštanja korena i traganja, što se ispoljava kao potreba da se prošlo poveže sa sadašnjim.

Delo Vesne Perunović sistematski produbljuje istraživanje o procesima kretanja u savremenom društvu, od ekspanzije termina raseljenje, njegovih dimenzija u realnom i prostorno-geografskom smislu, do simboličkih konfiguracija. Izveden iz ličnih opažanja i estetskih predstava, njen rad preispituje kulturološke faktore i njihov uticaj na savremeno društvo.

*Shifting Shelter* na posebno pronicljiv način sakuplja trenutke odsustva i izazova u jednom pomirljivom prostoru koji zahteva prilagođavanje kroz vreme. Umetnica svesno podstiče strategiju asimilacije na ovom poprištu borbe, koja je posledica fizičkog i mentalnog raseljenja. Uz sveden izbor materijala, Vesna Perunović stvara dela koja kritički ispituju savremene uslove življenja. Umetnica ne upućuje na neku određenu lokaciju. Teritorija se u njenim radovima može nalaziti u porodici, u zajednici ili u onim simboličkim prostorima koji formiraju jednu kulturu, zajedničku nacionalnu pripadnost – čak i onu nostalgiju za nekom dalekom idealnom zemljom kojoj bismo, na izvestan način, svi hteli da pripadamo.

Ništa se u njenim delima nije desilo slučajno. Perunovićeva precizno bira naslove, uspevajući da ih tačno uskladi sa pojedinačnim radovima. Svaki naslov – između ostalih, *Shifting Shelter*, *Nothing to Lose*, *The Archive of Insignificant Loses*, *Timing is Everything*, *Welcome* – oživljavaju priče koje asimiluju razna iskustva, od kojih je svako mnogostruko, i to do najsitnijih nijansi koje doprinose jačanju identiteta koji postoji i izvan prebivališta.

*The Archive of Insignificant Loses* je instalacija koju čine crteži urađeni grafitnom olovkom na stranicama školske sveske i „uramljeni” na osoben način, svedeni u svom vizuelnom jeziku. Crteži prikazuju spasene fragmente pronađenih predmeta iz određenih životnih okolnosti ili geografskih područja, izlažući ih, pomalo ironično, kao dragocene arhivske artefakte.

U moćnoj instalaciji koja daje i naslov izložbi, *Shifting Shelter*, nađeni predmeti i nameštaj, obojeni turobnom crnom, služe kao sredstvo koje podstiče stvaranje neobičnih veza izrazitog značenja, redefinišući na taj način prvobitnu namenu predmeta. U ovom radu, sve se spaja u jedan konceptualni okvir u kom predmeti, prostor i publika mogu da učestvuju u novoj kompilaciji koja svakodnevicu stavlja u drugačiji kontekst. Ovaj zahtevni i impresivni sklop, prividno nalik na razmontirano sklonište, oživljava delikatne momente kroz međusobno dejstvo predmeta i ogledala. Postavljeni jedni naspram drugih pomoću crnih linija od elastičnih i lepljivih traka koje se odvajaju od zida u raznim pravcima, predmeti i njihovi odrazi u ogledalima suptilno sugerišu da su stvari i dalje nejasne i lebde u stanju neizvesnosti.

U radu *Timing is Everything*, od nas se očekuje da damo sud o životu i načinimo teške izbore; da pogledamo u prošlost i u isto vreme uvažimo nove zaključke kako bismo se suočili sa budućnošću. Prilagođavanje društvu koje nam ne pripada, i u kom želimo da uspemo, zahteva da budemo potpuno uvereni u to da imamo *Nothing to Lose*. Video *Welcome* zrači nostalgijom i sa radošću se susreće se lepezom stranih umetnika, prijatelja, u različitim životnim fazama, iz raznih gradova širom sveta. Na ekranu vidimo talasanje frekvencije koje iscrtavaju glasovi koji ponavljaju „dobro došli”. Video se pretvara u prijatnu kakofoniju koja potiskuje granice fizičke distance. U konglomeratu glasova, rezonanca i magnituda reči „dobro došli” omogućavaju da se uspostavi veza između poznatog i nepoznatog.

Ništa nije izostavljeno iz *Shifting Shelter*, koje bez sumnje predstavlja još jedno impresivno istraživanje Vesne Perunović o aktuelnoj istoriji migracija. Umetnica pokazuje poetsku slobodu u izrazu koji očekuje naše razumevanje, ističući istovremeno njen pečat oličen iskrenošću, poletom i suptilnošću.

Scenariji Perunovićeve deo su stvarnog sveta, iako se, paradoksalno, odvijaju u područjima snoviđenja, u kojima se krećemo oprezno poput akrobata na žici, tragajući za vezama ili odgovorima koji će podržati ili potisnuti aspekte koji utiču na tok naših života.

Izvanredna senzibilnost Vesne Perunović posledica je holističkog metaumetničkog obrasca, koji zamagluje granicu između života i umetnosti, u isto vreme zbunjujući i intrigirajući posmatrača na jedinstven način. Neobični aranžmani u njenim instalacijama zahtevaju valjane odgovore u jednom svetu hibridizacije i konfuzije. Promišljanja Perunovićeve o njenom sopstvenom životu i ljudskom postojanju uopšte nastoje da se suprotstave i odupru nedaćama koje donosi sadašnjost i daju važan doprinos diskursima vezanim za međukulturne migracije.

**Shifting Shelter (2017-2023)**

metal structure, second hand objects, used furniture, mirrors, toys, tools, black tape, black elastic ribbon, black chalkboard paint / metalna konstrukcija, polovni predmeti i nameštaj, ogledala, igračke, alati, crna traka, crni lastiš, crna boja za školske table

The immersive site-specific installation informed by the ongoing migrant crises, investigates the personal as well as universal experience of displacement as a space of both immobility and movement. Consisting of diverse materials, such as found objects, household items, furniture, mirrors, toys, tools, and elastic and tape, all uniformly black, the installation positions the notion of home as a flexible concept, a state between dismantling and rebuilding. Through materials and objects found or acquired at each new location, the installation offers new readings and narratives each time it is re-installed.

Imverzivna site-specific instalacija zasnovana na tekućim migrantskim krizama, istražuje lično i univerzalno iskustvo raseljenja kao oblast između mirovanja i kretanja. Konstruisana od raznih materijala, „second-hand“ kućnih predmeta i nameštaja, ogledala, igračaka, alata, kao i elastične trake, obojenih uniformno u mat crnu boju, instalacija posmatra pojam doma kao fleksibilan koncept, u stanju između izgradnje i demontaže. Koristeći materijale i predmete nabavljene i specifične za svaki lokalitet gde se izlaže, instalacija uvek nudi nov narativ sa svakom novom postavkom.



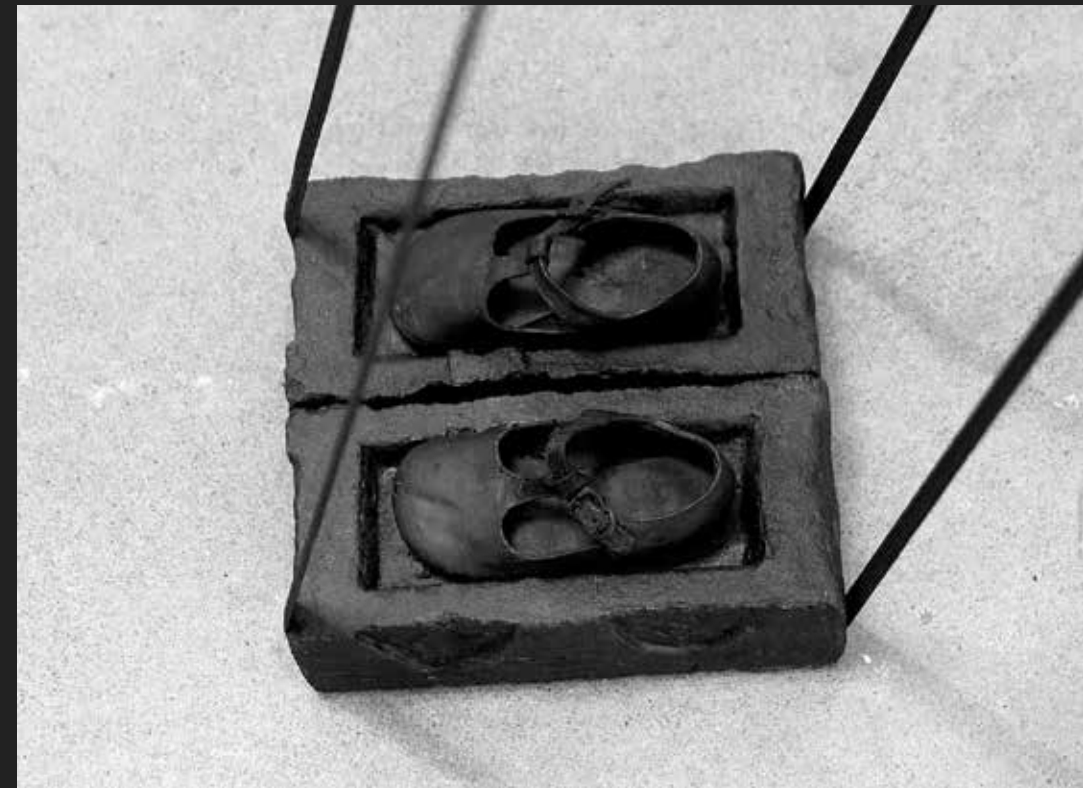
Napuštanje doma u izvesnom smislu znači i jednu vrstu ponovnog rođenja, pri čemu radamo sami sebe.

Leaving home in a sense involves a kind of second birth, in which we give birth to ourselves.

Robert N. Bellah, sociolog

















**Napuštanje doma u izvesnom smislu znači i jednu vrstu ponovnog rođenja, pri čemu rađamo sami sebe.**

**Leaving home in a sense involves a kind of second birth, in which we give birth to ourselves.**

*Robert N. Bellah, sociolog*





**About Time** (2017)

four wooden panels, black chalkboard paint, white oil chalk / četiri drvena panela, crna boja za školske table, beli uljani kreon, 40 x 40cm

The collection of text works on a board stands for blackboard as an early educational tool teaching us about relationships to time and place.

Zbirka malih tekstualnih radova na tabli predstavlja školsku tablu kao obrazovno sredstvo koje rano oblikuje naš odnos prema vremenu i mestu.



**Welcome** (2017)

video, video loop 1:00 min. sound / zvuk

The video is composed of voice recordings of the word 'welcome' from the artist's friends living around the world. Gathered via messenger, a single word is recorded in 12 different languages overlapping in a cacophony of sound. The work revolves around the opposing attitudes toward migrants' acceptance into Western countries during mass migration.

Video čine glasovni snimci fraze „dobro došli“ koju izgovaraju umetničini prijatelji sa raznih krajeva sveta. Snimci fraze prikupljeni putem poruka na 12 različitim jezika preklapaju se u haosu zvukova. Rad se odnosi na oprečne stavove o prihvatanju migranata u zapadnim zemljama tokom masovne migracije.









*No End in Sight* (2018)  
video, video loop 3:15 min sound / zvuk





***The Archive of Insignificant Losses***  
(2014 - 2022)

drawing installation – detail (close to 1000 drawings in total – on view 265), graphite on school notebooks, plastic sheets, 30 x 20 cm each drawing / instalacija crteža – detalj (blizu 1000 crteža – u postavci se nalazi 265), grafit na listovima iz školskih sveski, plastične folije, 30 x 20 cm svaki crtež

An ongoing collection of graphite drawings on school notebook pages, accumulated over ten years, explores the meaning of objects, both real and imaginary, and meditates on experiences related to loss, transition, history, and memory of home.

Zbirka crteža grafitom na stranicama školskih sveski akumuliranih u poslednjih desetak godina, istražuje značenje predmeta, kako stvarnih tako i imaginarnih, promišljajući o iskustvima vezanim za temu gubitka, tranzicije, istorije i sećanja na dom.









*The Archive of Insignificant Losses*  
(2014 - 2022)

installation view / pogled na postavku

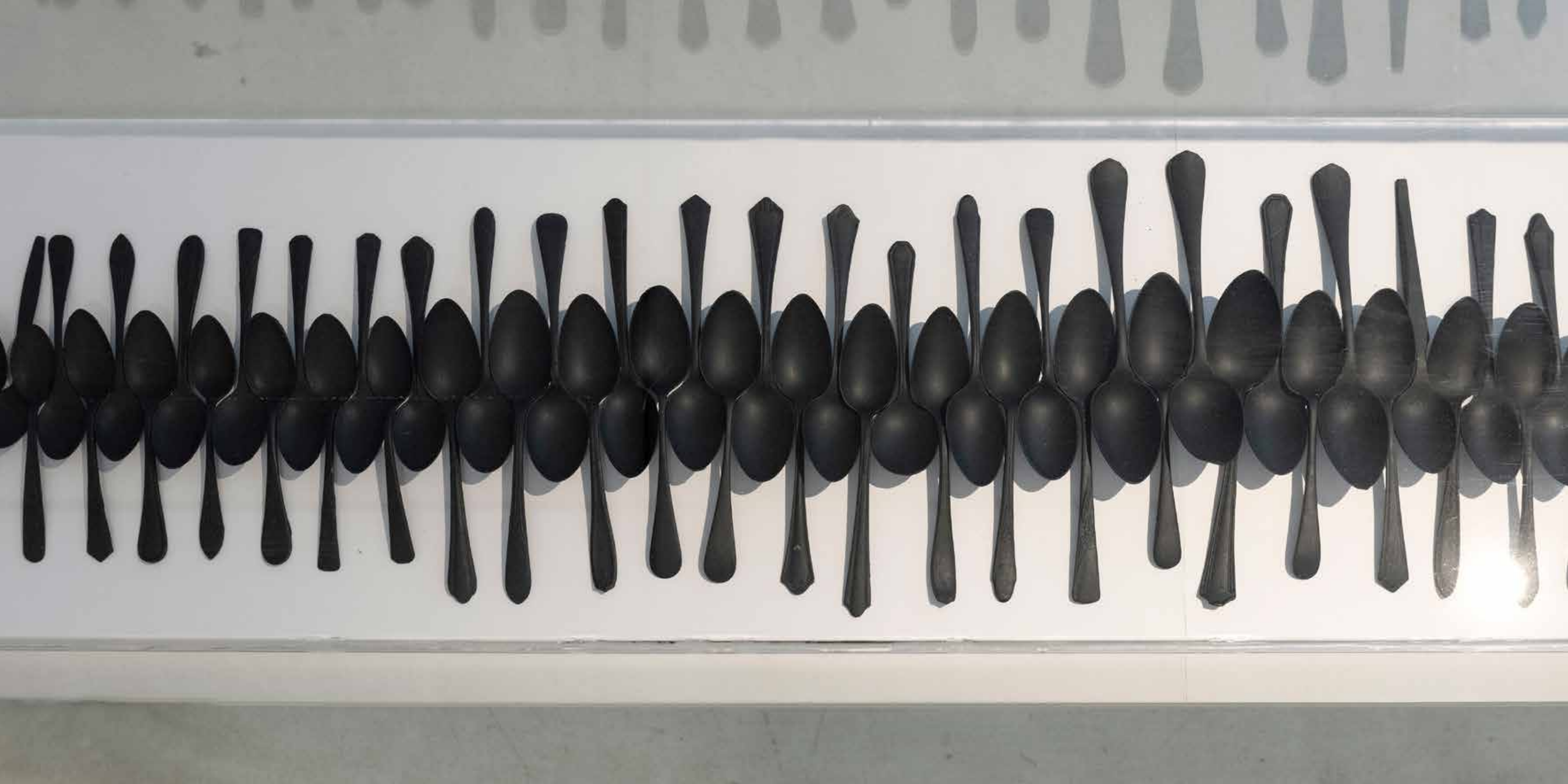




**Backbone** (2017 - 2023)  
Second hand spoons, matt black paint  
polovne kašike, crna mat boja, 211 x 36 x 140 cm

The work examines community, empathy and interdependence by looking at both fragility and resilience in the human condition.

Rad istražuje zajedništvo, empatiju i međusobnu zavisnost obrađujući teme krhkosti i izdržljivosti ljudskih bića.



## Corinna Ghaznavi writer and art critic

*You might feel that you have roots somewhere else, but in reality you are right here with us.*

*Grand Chief John Kelly, 1977*

**VESSNA PERUNOVICH  
“WE ARE HERE NOW”**

Over the last two years I’ve had recurrent dreams about crumbling homes. In one, I’ve built a new house but never moved in; as I wander through I find small issues that grow in dimension as the dream develops. In another I’ve acquired a yearned-for house knowing that the sprawling museum-like space is too large and full of structural problems that grow increasingly dire. In a third I try to access my former loft only to realize that it has been developed, sold, sectioned off into ghetto like spaces so that I finally find myself in only one derelict room. The support beams of the infrastructure of my life are crumbling, triggered by the death of my parents. As an immigrant, the absence of my parents leaves me an orphan alone in our adopted country. There is no question of returning ‘home’ as I am here now. ‘Home,’ my parents taught us, was a place we could all be together, safely. Without them home has become a shifting shelter with precarious walls and open, unsafe spaces that require constant re-imagining and rebuilding.

The immigrant experience entails a continuous settling and resettling, a negotiation with belonging and identity, a process that is open and ongoing. We simultaneously belong to several places and nowhere. Our experience includes a constant reckoning with who we are, not where we are from or where we have come to. This reality is perfectly summarized in Vessna Perunovich’s sculpture *We Are Here Now*: a globe that has been entirely covered with black chalkboard paint, the kind that sucks up all the light, onto which the text “we are here now” has been scrawled in provisional white chalk.

The complex installation *Shifting Shelter* reflects on what this means, where here is, how to build a home and renegotiate place. The structure is open, created with slim provisional beams, elastic ribbon, and black demarcation tape. The space is anchored and filled with a multitude of found objects, all painted in chalkboard black, a three dimensional drawing in space, precarious and speculative. Perunovich immigrated to Canada from the former Yugoslavia in the late 1980s. An immigrant to the richly diverse city of Toronto she experienced a double loss: not only did she leave her home country, but the country she left no longer exists. Her parents remained in Serbia, Perunovich raised her own daughter in Canada with her husband who had immigrated with her. As an artist, she travels extensively, doing residencies in a variety of places wherein she continues to research cultures, practices, and ways of making community. Her exploration of identity and home is wrapped up in her exploration of what it means to be an artist, and how material practices can make sense of the world. Perunovich’s work is complex and cannot be defined as one thing only: she addresses migration,

immigration, and settlement; she also speaks from a place of feminist practices, motherhood and the artistic; her work is about displacement, adaptation, risk and possibility.

The provisional structure *Shifting Shelter* posits that home is a flexible concept. <sup>(1)</sup> All the objects in the installation are found and reconfigured, demonstrating the ability to use what is at hand when starting anew, and how one thing can become another when all things are matte black and aligned in new ways. There are hooks and mirrors, broken furniture and suspended chairs, remnants of someone’s life now discarded. There is a small pair of shoes that might have been washed up from a refugee boat or a tsunami, there are tools and spheres and pulleys and a pair of high heels. If the objects had been left in their original state the space might have resembled a flea market or a room devastated by a hurricane or a bomb. The black chalkboard paint renders them open to interpretation, the objects take on new or shifting meaning depending on one’s path through the installation, or one’s state of mind and history.

Using found objects and juxtaposing them in unexpected ways to trigger psychological responses is a hallmark of Surrealism. The transformation of materials give them potential and contingency, with multiple stories spiraling out of the individual configurations. In utilizing surrealist strategies, Perunovich takes a decidedly feminist position alongside women Surrealists of the 1920s. As outlined by Lynn LaBate, Rachel Bernstein and Jennifer Reid, these artists differed substantially from their male counterparts:

*For them, surrealism became a means of gaining self-awareness, exploring their inner thoughts and feelings, dealing with their experience and locating or constructing their true identities. ... Women transformed the female body to a site of resistance, psychic power, and creative energy.* <sup>(2)</sup>

Carrying trauma on her own body as a way to find place and mark the migrant experience, Perunovich appears carrying a large mattress through the streets of New York City in the video *Unoccupied New York*. The thirteen-minute loop follows the artist as she criss-crosses the urban landscape from Brooklyn to 5th Avenue. Historically a place of entry on the one hand, and the city where “anyone could make it” on the other, the video forces issues of finding place, searching, and ultimately, never arriving. The chaos of the

city, teeming with unending activity, seemingly unaware of this woman burdened by a large mattress in search of home, stands as a metaphor for the individual’s struggle within a global context. As Adrienne Clarkson writes:

*What we have here is a collection of diverse traumas. That is part of the impossible sum of our traditions as well. We all know that we came from somewhere else originally, and we carry that history within us. It is part of our organism. Whatever country we originally came from, we cannot help but know within us, even several generations along, what kind of pain, loss, and injury we endured.* <sup>(3)</sup>

At a time when migrants and refugees cross borders in droves with nothing but a suitcase or duffel bag, the work is an apt reflection of the crisis that has developed in a world of inequalities, war and displacement. In an age of globalization and postcolonial reckoning we are confronted with the consequences of western capitalist exploitation and expansion. Migration has never been confined to any one group only. People have always moved through the world in search of safety, new frontiers, or a better life. In this we are all connected. Like Kwame Anthony Appiah writes, a well travelled polyglot is likely to be the worst off and the best off, hailing from a Shantytown or the Sorbonne. <sup>(4)</sup>

Perunovich also uses her body as a vehicle in the videos *No End in Sight* and *Descending Over The Wall*. In the former she is tethered to a long looped string as she traverses a barren grey landscape. The ambient sound and sparkle on the horizon suggests that she is at the edge of a large body of water but there are no defining landmarks, only the crash of waves and the clang of a locomotive. The sound track is slowed down, emphasizing the arduous labour of pulling a load and pushing forward. The figure moves slowly, alone and yet tethered to her responsibilities, until she finally disappears from the frame. The strings holding her are never broken suggesting that while she may be mobile to an extent she is never freed. In *Descending* she escapes. Within a lush garden surrounded by a high stone wall the figure approaches a ladder and slowly ascends it. We hear waves crashing in synch with rapidly moving clouds and can only guess at what lies beyond the wall. At the top the figure stops and gazes out into the world, then slowly bends down and fades, finally disappearing with a loud splash. Has she escaped or fallen into deep water? Has curiosity led her to new discoveries or to her death? Stepping into the unknown encompasses both these possibilities.



In all these works there is a sense of search and reconciliation: of past and present, feminist and mother, artist and migrant and a transcultural existence. In *Time Will Tell* a small classroom desk is set up with the chair attached at an impossible distance, a span that suggests the impossibility of reconciling taught and lived experience. As one learns one adapts, as one lives one makes decisions and sometimes mistakes. Learning is ongoing and life is contradictory. In a time defined by transcultural experiences identity is mutable, simultaneously rooted and untethered, It is this experience, constant adaptability and shifting perspectives, that creates a contemporary community.

*Close Proximity/104550 Holes Too Many* is a bookwork into which Perunovich has burned holes into pages with incense. The action has caused the book to expand to such an extent that it no longer closes but rather bulges as a result of each new touch. Experience swells a life and changes us. Multiple contact zones mean shifting perspectives and the more these occur the less stable and invariant we are. But as Appiah points out, “we do not need, have never needed, settled community, a homogenous system of values, in order to have a home. Cultural purity is an oxymoron. The odds are that, culturally speaking, you already live a cosmopolitan life.”<sup>(5)</sup>

When my parents died I was a migrant left alone with nowhere to ‘return’ to. Perunovich addresses this state in all of her work, oscillating between an itinerant existence and a ceaseless, restless exploration of the unknown and what it may offer. An artist is inherently a risk taker, one who pushes beyond boundaries. She also has the work ethic of an immigrant, working harder to create a better life, and one who takes nothing for granted. Clarkson has written:

*We who have had everything taken away from us once, and sometimes twice, know what it means to begin that struggle and to continue it all our lives. And we can never listen to those who say their communities are fixed, their values forever, their identities unchangeable ... The shock of the loss of country and possessions, and status is what has informed us as human beings.*<sup>(6)</sup>

What we learn, Perunovich has said, is what we become, and this continues.<sup>(7)</sup> *Time Will Tell*, *Shifting Shelter*, *We Are Here Now* are all titles that summarize her search for place and meaning as a cosmopolitan citizen and artist.

## Corinna Ghaznavi *spisateljica i likovna kritičarka*

*Možda osećate da imate korene negde drugde, ali u stvarnosti upravo ste ovde sa nama.*

*Veliki poglavica Džon Keli, 1977*

**VESNA PERUNOVIĆ  
„SADA SMO OVDE”**

1. *Conversation with the Artist, February 1, 2019.*

2. Lynn LaBate, *Rachel Bernstein and Jennifer Reid. Excerpt from Wonderland: The Surrealist Adventures of Women Artists in Mexico and the United States. Los Angeles County Museum of Art. 2012.*

3. Adrienne Clarkson. *Belonging: The Paradox of Citizenship. Toronto: House of Anansi Press Inc., 2014. 182.*

4. Kwame Anthony Appiah. *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers. New York: WW Norton & Co. Inc., 2007. xvii.*

5. *Appiah 113.*

6. *Clarkson 182.*

7. *Conversation with the Artist, February 1, 2019.*

U poslednje dve godine stalno sam sanjala o kućama koje se raspadaju. U jednom sam izgradila novu kuću ali se nikad u nju nisam uselila; dok lutam nailazim na male probleme koji postaju veliki kako se san razvija. U drugom sam stekla kuću za kojom sam čeznula znajući da je ogroman prostor nalik muzeju prevelik i pun strukturalnih problema koji postaju sve više zastrašujući. U trećem pokušavam da uđem u svoje bivše potkrovlje shvativši da je prodato investitorima, podeljeno na prostore poput geta, i konačno se nalazim u samo jednoj napuštenoj i devastiranoj prostoriji. Noseće grede infrastrukture mog života se urušavaju, izazvane smrću mojih roditelja. Kao imigrantkinju odsustvo mojih roditelja ostavlja me siročetom bez igde ikoga, u našoj usvojenoj zemlji. Ne postavlja se pitanje povratka „kući” jer sam sada ovde. „Kuća”, kako su nas učili moji roditelji, bila je mesto gde bismo svi mogli da budemo zajedno, bezbedni. Bez njih dom je postao stanište u izmeštanju sa klimavim zidovima i otvorenim, nesigurnim prostorima koji zahtevaju stalnu reinenciju i ponovnu izgradnju.

Imigrantsko iskustvo podrazumeva kontinuirano izmeštanje i prilagođavanje, promišljanje o pripadanju i identitetu, procesu koji je otvoren i tekući. Istovremeno pripadamo brojnim mestima i nigde konkretno. Naše iskustvo uključuje stalno obračunavanje sa onim ko smo, a ne odakle smo ili gde smo dospeli. Ova realnost je savršeno sažeta u skulpturi Vesne Perunović *We Are Here Now*: globus koji je u potpunosti prekriven crnom bojom za školske table, onom koja upija svo svetlo, na kojem je provizornom belom kredom ispisan tekst „sada smo ovde.”

Kompleksna instalacija *Shifting Shelter* se bavi time šta to znači, gde se „ovde” nalazi, kako izgraditi dom i ponovo pregovarati o mestu. Struktura instalacije je otvorena, konstruisana od tankih metalnih „greda”, elastične i crne demarkacione trake. Prostor je usidren i ispunjen mnoštvom pronađenih predmeta, koji su svi obojeni crnom mat bojom; konstrukcija koja se čita kao trodimenzionalni crtež u prostoru, fragilan i spekulativan. Vesna Perunović je emigrirala u Kanadu iz bivše Jugoslavije kasnih 1980-ih. Kao imigrantkinja u bogatom i raznovrsnom gradu Torontu doživela je dvostruki gubitak: ne samo da je napustila svoju domovinu, nego i zemlja koju je napustila prestala je da postoji. Njeni roditelji su ostali u Srbiji, a Perunović je sa suprugom sa kojim je zajedno emigrirala odgajala svoju ćerku u Kanadi. Kao umetnica, ona često putuje, boraveći u umetničkim rezidencijama po svetu pri čemu nastavlja da istražuje kulture, prakse i načine stvaranja zajednica.

Njeno istraživanje identiteta i doma obavijeno je ličnim istraživanjem šta znači biti umetnik i kako materijalne

prakse mogu dati smisao svetu u kome živimo. Rad Vesne Perunović je složen i ne može se definisati samo jednom odrednicom: ona se bavi migracijama, izmeštanjem, egzilom; ona takođe govori iz pozicije feminističkih praksi, majčinstva i umetničke perspektive; njen rad je o raseljavanju, adaptaciji, riziku i mogućnosti.

Privremena struktura rada *Shifting Shelter* razmatra dom kao fleksibilan koncept.<sup>(1)</sup> Svi objekti u instalaciji su nađeni, odnosno „second-hand” i rekonfigurisani, ukazujući tako na mogućnost da se koristi ono što je pri ruci kada se počinje iznova, a takođe i to kako jedna stvar može da se transformiše u nešto drugo kada su sve obojene uniformno crno i postavljene u nove relacije u odnosu jednih na druge. Tu su kuke i ogledala, polomljeni nameštaj i obešene stolice, ostaci nečijeg sada odbačenog života. Pronalazimo i par malih cipela koje su mogle biti donešene na obalu sa izbegličkog čamca ili kao posledica cunamija, tu su i alati, kugle, čekrci i par visokih potpetica. Da su predmeti ostavljeni u prvobitnom stanju, prostor bi mogao nalikovati na buvlju pijacu ili prostoriju uništenu uraganom ili bombom. Crna mat boja čini ih otvorenim za tumačenje, i svakodnevni objekti poprimaju novo, promenjeno značenje zavisno od toga kako neko prolazi kroz instalaciju ili individualnog psihičkog stanja i lične istorije.

Korišćenje „second-hand” predmeta i njihovo jukstapoziranje na neočekivane načine kako bi se izazvala psihološka reakcija obeležje su nadrealizma.Transformacija materijala daje objektima potencijal i nepredvidljivost, sa brojnim interpretacijama koje inspirišu neuobičajeni spojevi i konfiguracije. Koristeći nadrealističke strategije, Perunović zauzima čvrstu feminističku poziciju zajedno sa ženama nadrealistima iz 1920-ih. Kao što navodi Lynn LaBate, umetnice Rachel Bernstein i Jennifer Reid bitno se razlikuju od svojih muških kolega:

*Za njih je nadrealizam postao sredstvo za sticanje samosvesti, istraživanje sopstvenih intimnih misli i osećanja, bavljenje iskustvima na način da lociraju ili konstruišu svoje prave identitete. ... Žene su transformisale žensko telo u mesto otpora, psihičku moć i kreativnu energiju.*<sup>(2)</sup>

Noseći traumu kroz vlastito telo kako bi obeležila migrantsko iskustvo, i traganje za domom, Perunovićeva u video radu *Unoccupied New York* se pojavljuje noseći veliki dušek ulicama New York-a. Trinaestominutni video u loop-u prati umetnicu dok hoda kroz urbani pejzaž od Bruklina do 5. avenije. Istorijski, s jedne strane

kao migrantsko mesto ulaska, i s druge, grad u kome bi „svako mogao da uspe” ovaj video ističe pitanja žudnje za pronalaženjem staništa, traganja i na kraju, nemogućnosti ostvarenja tog cilja. Gužva u gradu, koji vrvi od beskrajne aktivnosti, i koji naizgled ne registruje ženu pod teretom velikog dušeka u potrazi za domom, postaje metafora individualne borbe s tim problemom u globalnom kontekstu. Kako piše Adrienne Clarkson:

*Ono što ovde imamo je zbir različitih trauma. To je deo nemogućeg sažimanja naših tradicija. Svi znamo da smo došli odnekud izvorno, i mi tu istoriju nosimo u sebi. To je deo našeg DNK-a. Iz koje god zemlje da smo došli i ma koliko generacija unazad, imamo usađeno duboko u sebi spoznaju, kakav smo bol, gubitak i rane preživeli.*<sup>(3)</sup>

Vesna Perunović

U vreme kada migranti i izbeglice masovno prelaze granice bez ičega osim kofera i platnene kese, rad Vesne Perunović je adekvatan odraz krize koja je doprinela sve većoj nejednakosti, ratu i raseljavanju. U doba globalizacije i postkolonijalnog promišljanja,suočeni smo sa posledicama zapadne kapitalističke eksploatacije i ekspanzije. Migracija nikada nije bila ograničena samo na jednu grupu. Ljudi su se uvek kretali svetom u potrazi za sigurnošću, novim granicama ili boljim životom. Svi smo u tome povezani. Kao što piše Kwame Anthony Appiah, poliglota koji putuje svetom može da se nađe i u najgorem i najboljem položaju, bilo da je poreklom iz Shantytowna ili Sorbone.<sup>(4)</sup>

Vesna Perunović

Perunovićeva takođe koristi svoje telo kao sredstvo u video radovima *No End in Sight* i *Descending Over the Wall*. U prvom, ona je vezana za dugačku traku koju vuče za sobom prolazeći usporeno sivim horizontom. Ambijentalni zvuk i odblesci na horizontu signalizuju da je ona na rubu velike vodene površine, u pejzažu koji nije nikako drugačije definisan, sem udarima talasa i zvukom lokomotive. Usporeni zvučni zapis naglašava naporan rad vučenja tereta i teškoću kretanja unapred. Figura se kreće polako, sama, a opet sputana svojim odgovornostima, sve dok konačno ne nestane iz kadra. Veze koje je drže nikada se ne prekidaju što sugeriše da iako je mobilna do neke mere, figura nikad nije do kraja slobodna. U *Discending* ona uspeva da pobegne. Unutar bujnog vrta okruženog visokim kamenim zidom figura se približava merdevinama i polako se penje. Čujemo talase koji se razbijaju u sinhronizaciji sa oblacima koji se brzo kreću i možemo samo da nagađamo šta se nalazi iza zida. Na vrhu se figura zaustavlja i gleda preko zida u svet, zatim se polako saginje i bleđi, konačno nestajući uz glasni

pljusak vode. Da li je pobegla ili je upala u duboku vodu? Da li ju je radoznalost dovela do novog otkrića ili do njene smrti? Korak u nepoznato podrazumeva i jednu i drugu mogućnost.

Vesna Perunović

U svim ovim radovima postoji osećaj traganja i pomirenja: prošlosti i sadašnjosti, feministkinje i majke, umetnice imigranta i njene transkulturalne egzistencije. U radu *Time Will Tell* mala školska klupa i školska stolica postavljeni su tako da su međusobno fizički povezane, ali pozicionirane na ogromnoj fizičkoj distanci, raspon između njih ukazuje na nemogućnost pomirenja naučenog i proživljenog iskustva. Kroz život učimo, prilagođavamo se, donosimo odluke i ponekad pravimo greške. Učenje nikad ne prestaje i život je kontradiktoran. U vremenu definisanom transkulturalnim iskustvima, identitet stalno mutira, istovremeno je ukorenjen i slobodan, i to iskustvo, stalna prilagodljivost i menjanje perspektive, određuje savremenu zajednicu u kojoj danas živimo.

Vesna Perunović

*Close Proximity/104550 Holes Too Many* je umetnička knjiga u koju je Perunovićeva tamjanom progorela više od hiljadu rupa na svakoj stranici. Ova repetativna aktivnost dovela je do povećanja volumena knjige u tolikoj meri da se više ne zatvara, već se i dalje širi kao rezultat svake sledeće intervencije. Iskustvo obogaćuje život i menja nas. Više kontaktnih zona znači pomeranje perspektive i što se više njih javlja to smo manje stabilni i više smo izloženi promenama. Ali kako Apija ističe, „ne treba nam, nikada nam nije ni bila potrebna, zajednica sa homogenim sistemom vrednosti, da bi imali dom. Kulturna čistoća je oksimoron. Šanse su da, govoreći u kulturološkom kontekstu, već svi mi živimo kosmopolitskim životom.”<sup>(5)</sup>

Vesna Perunović

Kada su moji roditelji umrli, ostala sam sama kao imigrantkinja koja nema gde da se vrati. Perunovićeva se ovim stanjem izmeštanja bavi u svim svojim radovima, oscilirajući između egzistencije nekoga ko stalno putuje i neprekidnog, neumornog istraživanja onog što je nepoznato i onoga što to nepoznato može da ponudi. Umetnik je po prirodi onaj koji preuzima rizik i ispituje gde su granice. Ultimativno, Vesna Perunović ima radnu etiku imigranta, onog koji konstantno radi na stvaranju boljeg života, i onoga koji ništa ne uzima zdravo za gotovo. Clarkson je napisala:

Vesna Perunović

*Mi kojima je sve oduzeto jednom, a nekad i dvaput, znamo šta znači započeti tu borbu i nastaviti je kroz ceo život. I mi nikako ne možemo da se složimo sa onima koji kažu da su njihove zajednice fiksne, njihove vrednosti zauvek ucrtane, njihovi identiteti*

Vesna Perunović

*nepromenjivi... Šok od gubitka domovine, imovine, i statusa je to što nas zauvek obeležava kao ljudska bića.*<sup>(6)</sup>

Vesna Perunović

Vesna Perunović

Ono što učimo na tom putu, i kako koristimo stečeno znanje kaže Perunović, je to kako se na kraju ostvarujemo. <sup>(7)</sup> *Time Will Tell, Shifting Shelter, We Are Here Now* su naslovi koji sumiraju njeno traganje za mestom i njena bivanja kao kosmopolitske umetnice i građanke.

Vesna Perunović

Vesna Perunović

Vesna Perunović

Vesna Perunović

Vesna Perunović

Vesna Perunović

Vesna Perunović

Vesna Perunović

Vesna Perunović

Vesna Perunović

Vesna Perunović

Vesna Perunović

Vesna Perunović

Vesna Perunović

Vesna Perunović

Vesna Perunović

Vesna Perunović

Vesna Perunović

Vesna Perunović

1. *Razgovor sa umetnicom, 01.02.2019.*

2. Lynn LaBate, Rachel Bernstein i Jennifer Reid. *Odlomak iz knjige Wonderland: The Surrealist Adventures of Women Artists in Mexico and the United States. Los Angeles County Museum of Art. 2012.*

3. *Adrienne Clarkson. Belonging: The Paradox of Citizenship. Toronto: House of Anansi Press Inc., 2014. 182.*

4. Kwame Anthony Appiah. *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers. New York: WW Norton & Co. Inc., 2007. xvii.*

5. *Appiah 113.*

6. *Clarkson 182.*

7. *Razgovor sa umetnicom, 01.02.2019.*



*Uprooted* (2022)

digital photography, dimension variable / digitalna  
fotografija, promenljive dimenzije













***I'm Still Traveling* (2020)**

video, 4:01 min, video loop, sound / zvuk

The work anchors the viewer to a place that is neither foreign nor familiar. Filmed in 2020 at the R.C. Harris Water Treatment Plant beside Lake Ontario, the video depicts the artist walking around this seemingly abandoned environment dragging the burden of a nautical Jacob's ladder. An ethereal soundscape composed around the industrial sound of a locomotive underlines the Sisyphean task the artist is engaged in, and contemplates places elsewhere.

Rad smešta gledaoca na mesto koje nije ni strano ni poznato. Snimljen 2020. godine na lokalitetu R.C. Harris Water Treatment Plant pored jezera Ontario, video prikazuje umetnicu kako hoda po ovom naizgled napuštenom okruženju vukući teret nautičkih Jakobljevih merdevina. Eteričan zvuk u pozadini, komponovan oko industrijskog zvuka lokomotive naglašava sizifovski zadatak kojim se autorka bavi i kontemplira mesta koja se nalaze negde drugde.





***Descending Over the Wall*** (2018)  
video, 3:30 min, loop, sound / zvuk

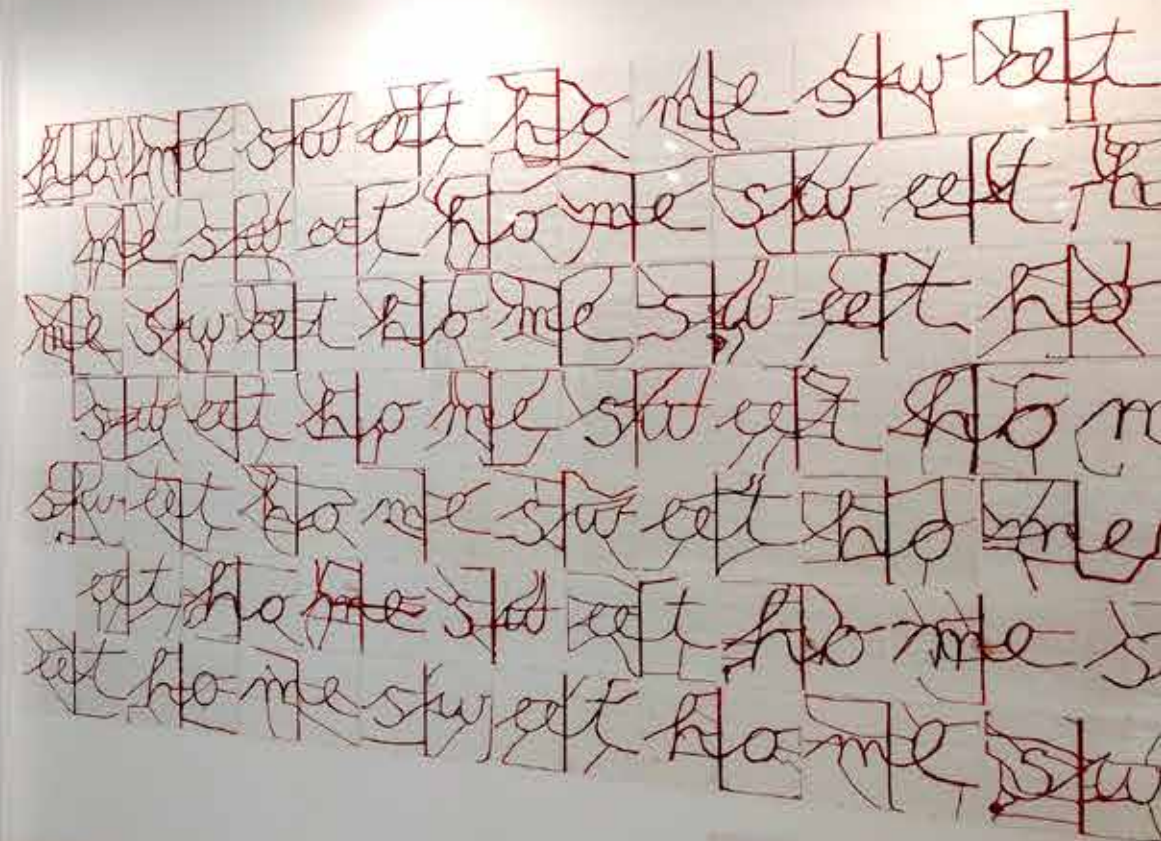
Filmed in Malta during the artist's Risk Change residency stay and in Toronto during the Pandemic in her place of residence, the triptych of video works (*Descending Over the Wall, No End in Sight & I am Still. Travelling*) utilizes the artist's body as a vehicle to portray the process of traveling, searching and exploring the possibilities and risks of leaving one's home and potential of finding a new one.

Snimljen na Malti tokom boravka u okviru programa Risk Change i u njenom stanu u Torontu tokom pandemije, triptih video-radova (*Descending Over the Wall, No End in Sight & I am Still. Travelling*) koristi telo umetnice kao sredstvo da bi prikazao proces putovanja, traganja i istraživanja mogućnosti i rizika usled napuštanja doma, kao i verovatnoću nalaženja novog.

„Dom”, učili su nas roditelji, bio je mesto gde svi možemo da budemo zajedno, zaštićeni. Bez njih je dom postao nestabilan prostor sa nesigurnim zidovima i otvorenim, nezaštićenim prostorima koja valja stalno iznova otkrivati i iznavijati.

‘Home,’ my parents taught us, was a place we could all be together, safely. Without them home has become a shifting shell with precarious walls and open, unsafe spaces that require constant re-imagining and rebuilding.

*Corinna Ghaznavi, likovna kritičarka*



*Home Sweet Home* (2022)  
drawing installation, individual notebook spreads, red ink, 68 pieces in total /  
instalacija crteža, duplerice iz sveski, crveni tuš, 68 komada, 30cm x 42cm



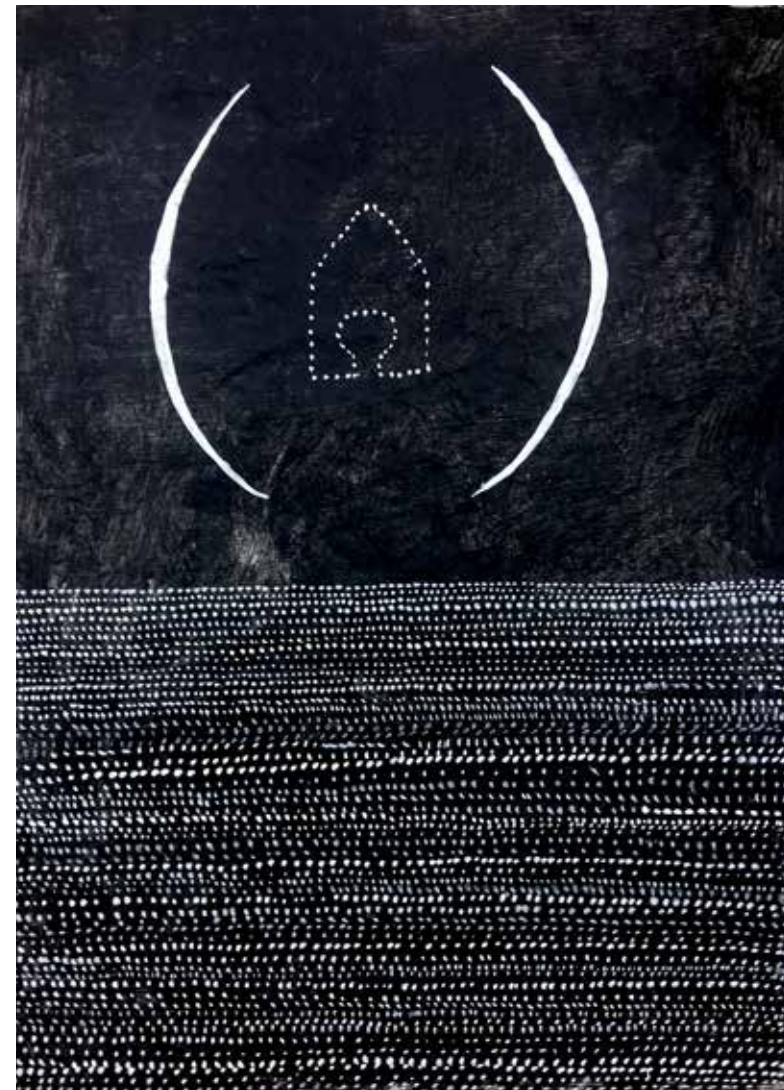


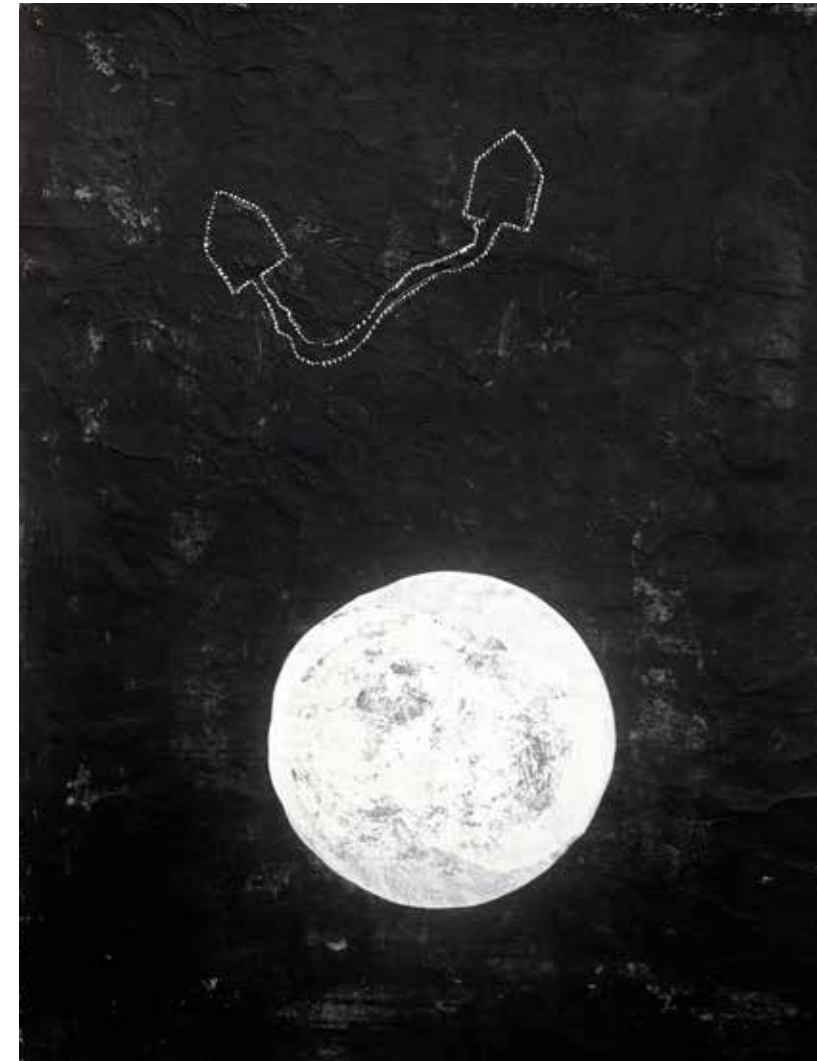


Handwritten cursive text in red ink on a grid background. The text is arranged in three rows and six columns, forming the words "The", "The", and "The".

h	e	l	s	u	e	t
h	e	l	s	u	e	t
h	e	l	s	u	e	t

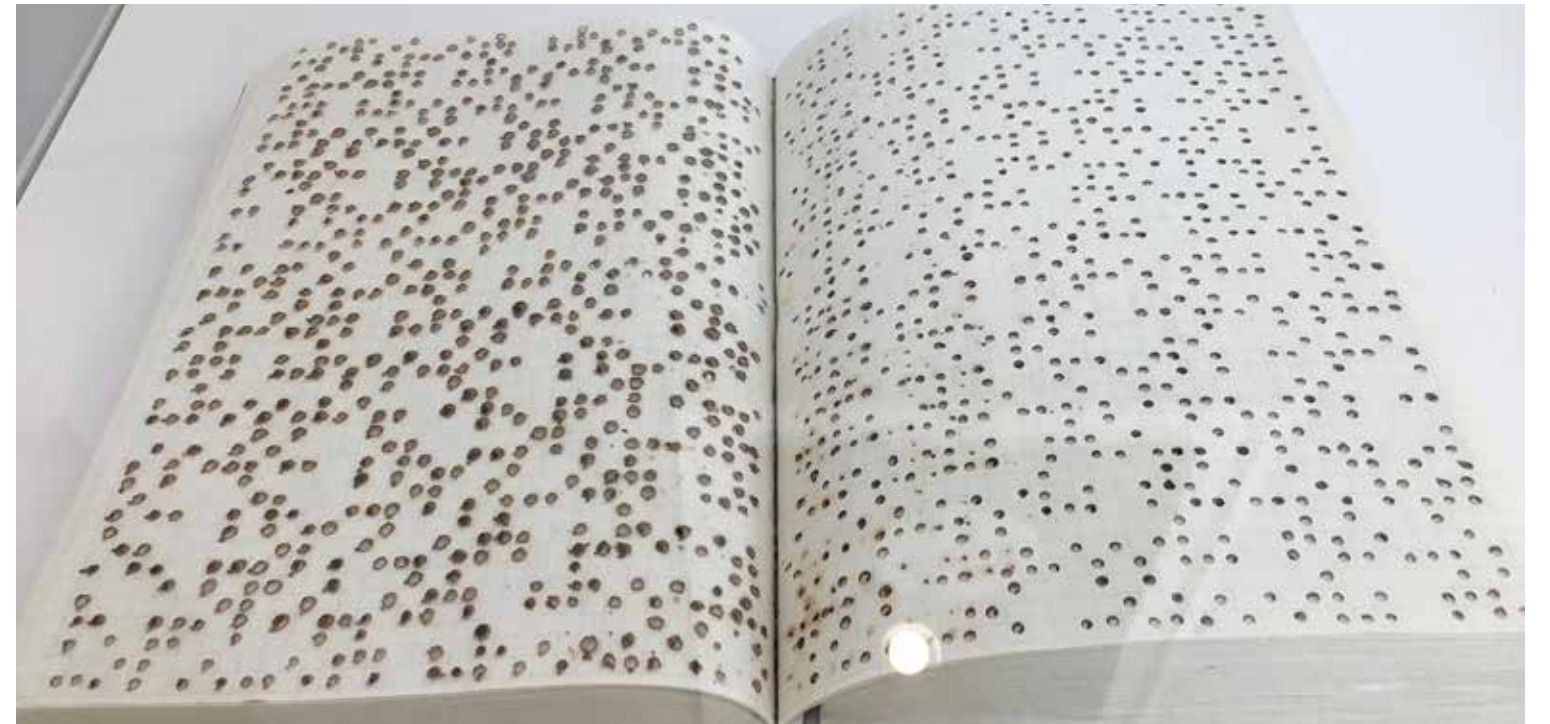
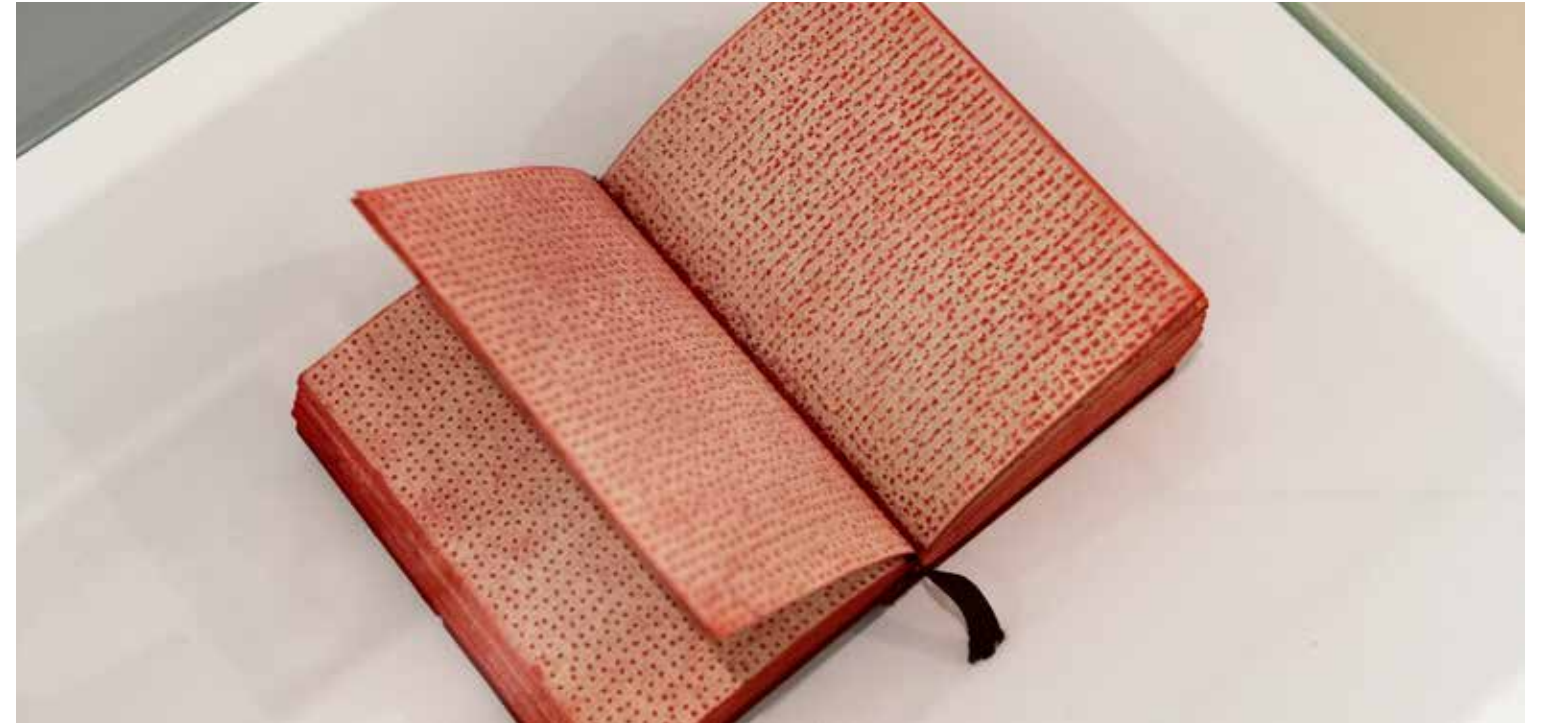






*Home Pieces* (2004)











**Bookworks** (2012-2019)

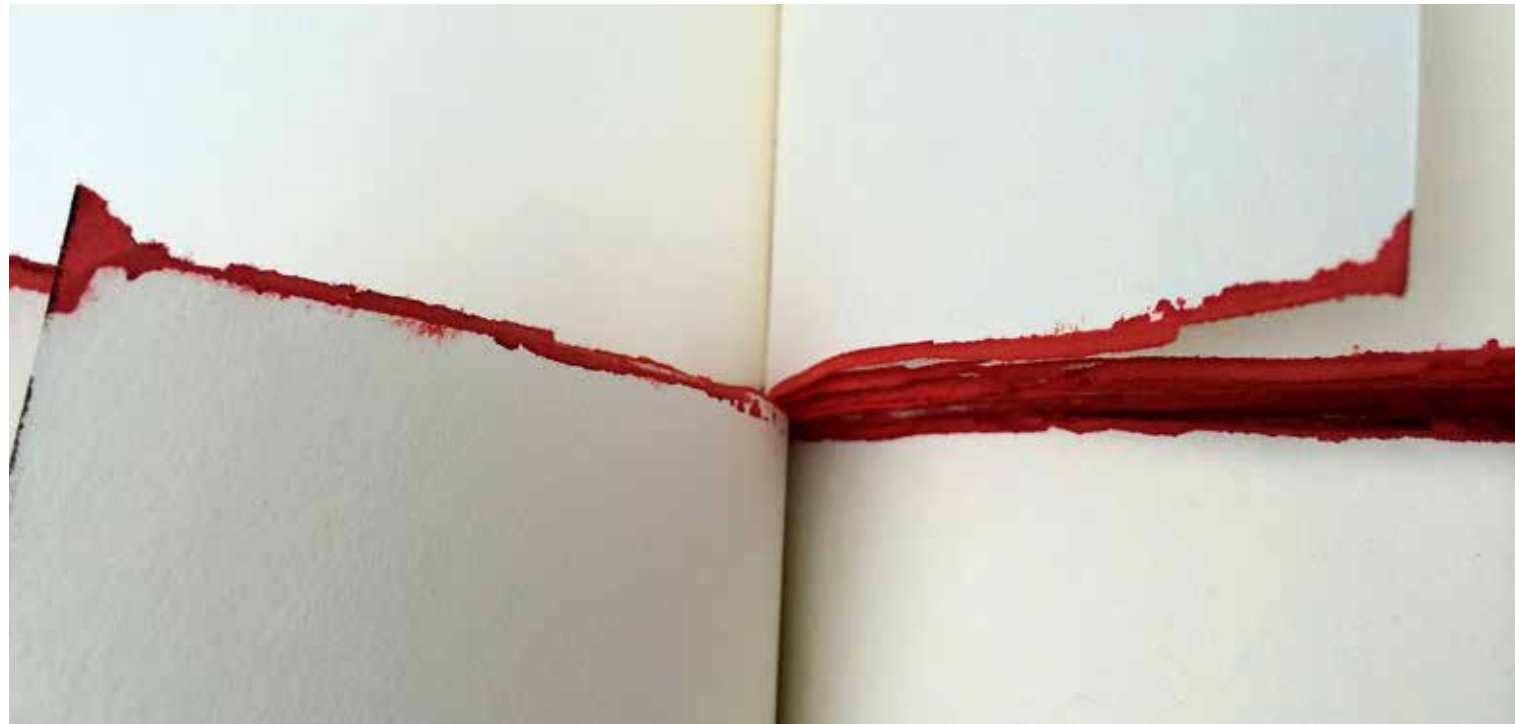
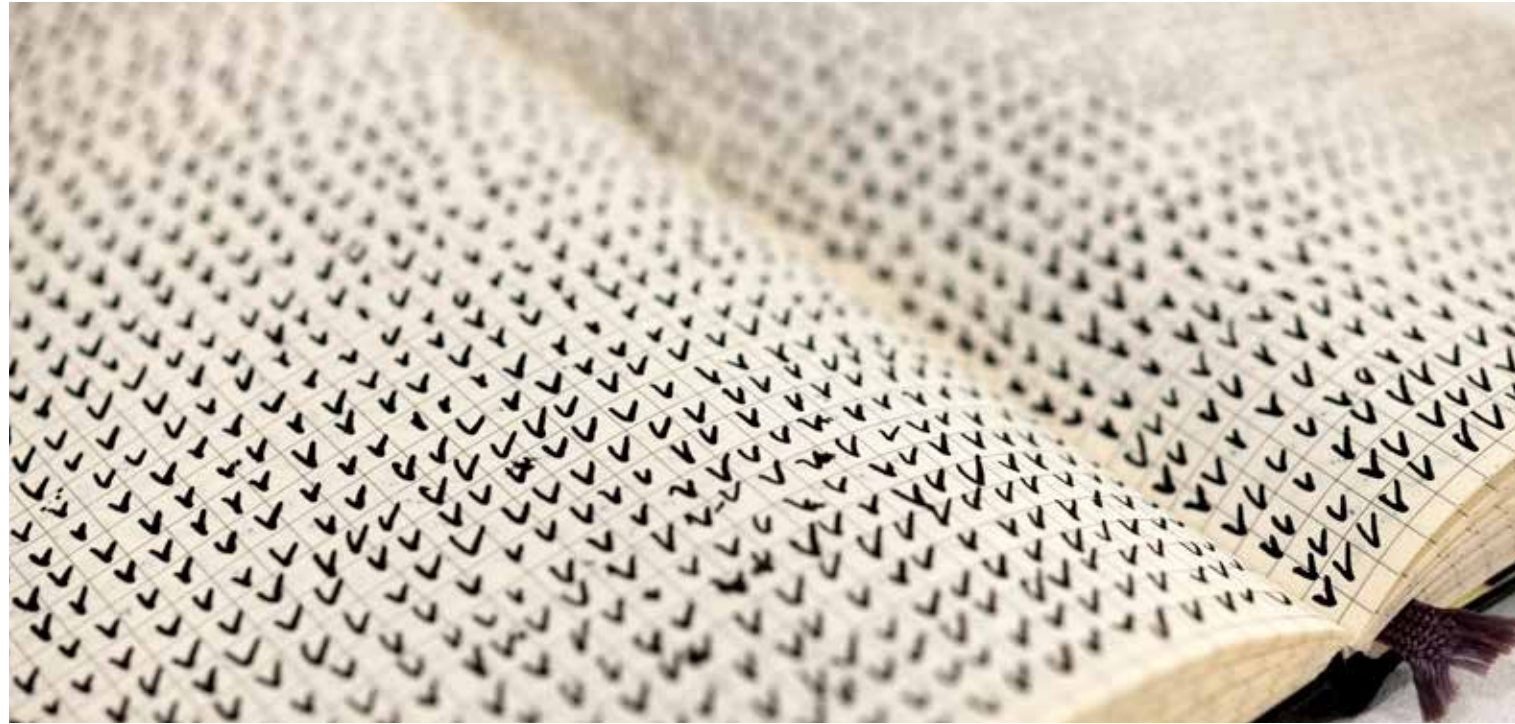
Ink on notebook pages, dimensions variable / tuš na stranama sveski, promenljive dimenzije

Through the process of mark-making, bookworks explore human emotions of love, loss, conflict and compassion as a form of personal diary suggesting a way of measuring time, labor and thought.

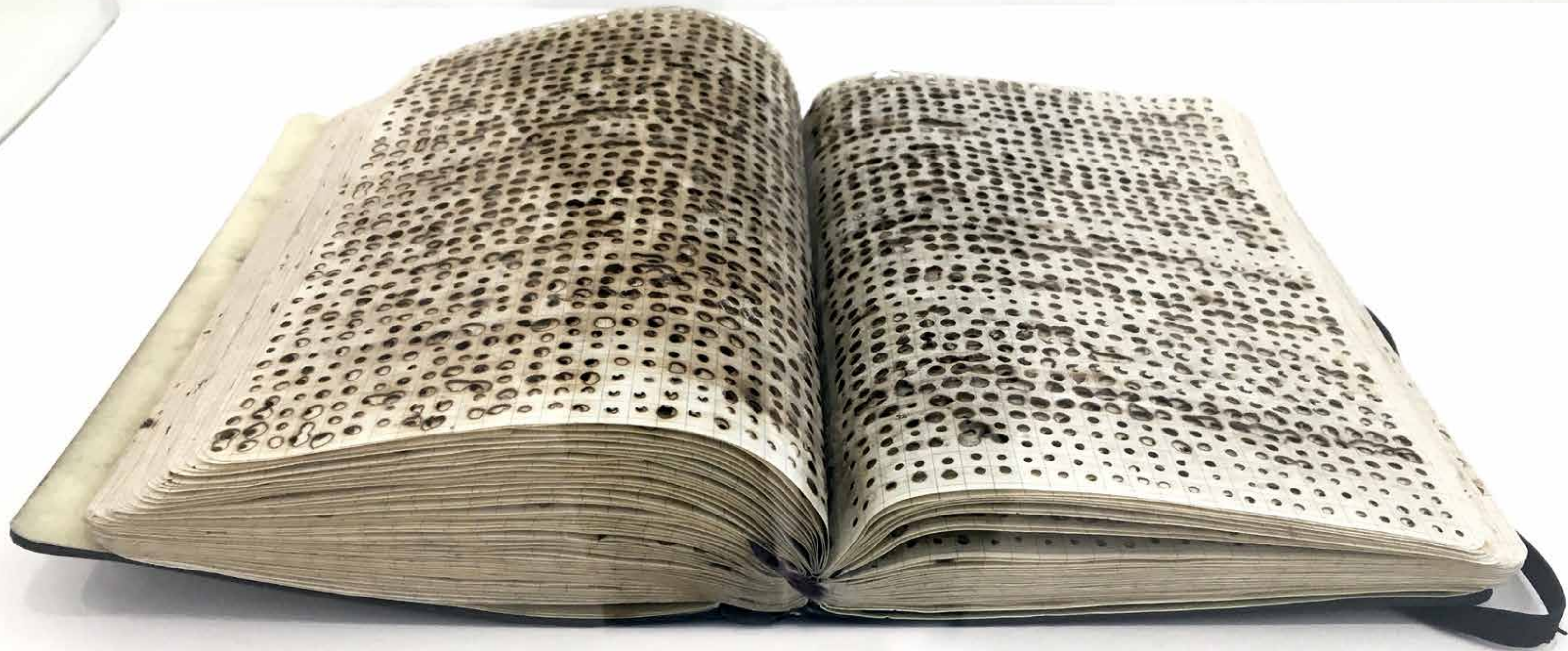
Kroz proces obeležavanja, rad ispituje osećanja ljubavi, gubitka, sukoba i saosećanja u formi ličnog dnevnika, ukazujući na jedan od načina za merenje vremena, truda i razmišljanja.



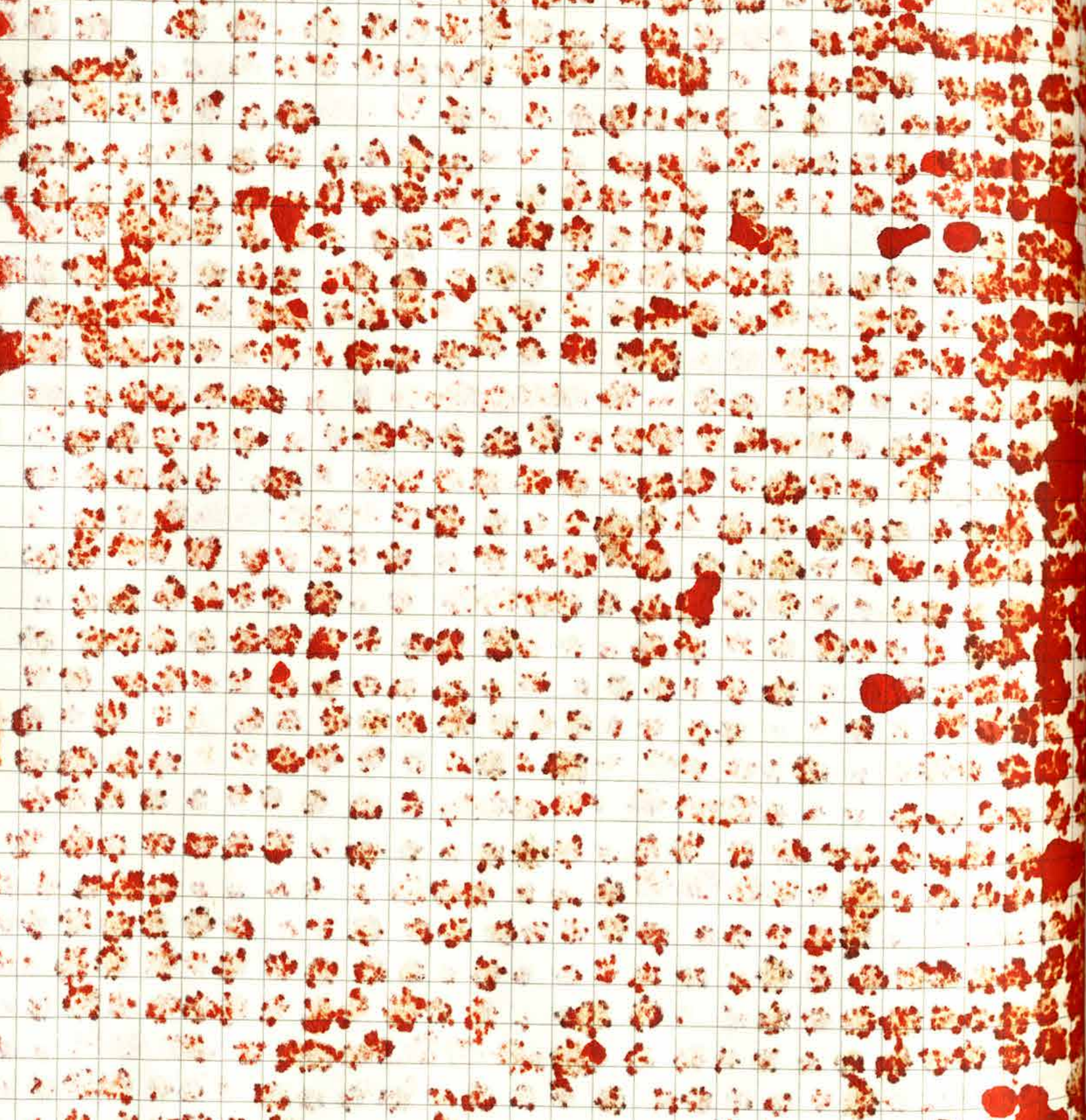
















Dom je bilo sa nevoljom, bio je mesto gde svi možemo da budemo zajedno, zaštićeni. Bez njih je dom postao nestabilan  
re-imagining public spaces, multiethnic spaces that require constant re-imagining and rebuilding.

Home, the place we thought we could all be together, safely. Without them home has become a shifting she  
public spaces and more, unsafe spaces that require constant re-imagining and rebuilding.





***Moving Monument*** (2012)

performance based photography series, digital print,  
dimensions variable / serija fotografija bazirana na  
performansu, digitalni print, promenljive dimenzije

Created during the ISCP Residency stay in New York,  
the work is a performance-based photography series  
that reflects on the notion of home and the search  
for settlement by juxtaposing a single mattress  
against the iconic NY cityscapes.

Rad nastao za vreme studijskog boravka u Njujorku  
u okviru programa ISCP čini serija fotografija  
zasnovanih na performansu i istražuje pojam  
doma i potragu za prebivalištem suprotstavljajući  
prepoznatljivim njujorškim prizorima jedan običan  
dušek.









***Unoccupied New York*** (2012)  
video 13:04 video loop, sound / zvuk

The video footage, recorded over 7 day period, depicts the artist walking through New York city's diverse areas, highlighting the issues of migration, displacement and homelessness.



Video-snimci beleže hodanje umetnice tokom perioda od 7 dana kroz raznolike krajeve Njujorka, ističući tako probleme u vezi migracije, izmeštanja i bezkućništva.









***Continuum*** (2012)

mannequin's arms, child's shoes, military boots, white chalk / ruke maneken lutke, dečije cipele, vojničke čizme, bela kreda, 50cm x 20cm x 30cm

The work speaks of family dynamics, life at home, and the passage of time by morphing children's shoes into adult ones.

Rad govori o porodičnoj dinamici, životu kod kuće i prolasku vremena time što pretvara dečije cipelice u obuću za odrasle.





***Finding Love*** (2012)

video, 3:03 min video loop, sound / zvuk

Filmed in the artist's studio, during her residency stay in New York, the video addresses the aesthetic and emotive potential of the window-scape and a fundamental human desire to belong, to love and be loved.

Snimljen u umetničinom studiju, za vreme njenog rezidencijalnog boravka u Njujorku, video istražuje estetski i emotivni potencijal koji nudi pogled s prozora kao i iskonsku čovekovu želju da pripada, voli i bude voljen.



To je jedna od nemogućih stvari za kojima čovečanstvo najviše žudi: da se učinjeno može poništiti, da se može vratiti u netaknut prethodni dan. Prema zakonu fizike koji danas važi, činjenica da se vreme ne vraća nije nominalna. Mi samo znamo za nju jer, uprkos našim naporima, razbijeno jaje nikad niko nije sastavio, niti je neki sudar sprečen kretanjem unazad, niti je lio uspeo da oživi voljenu osobu koja je stradala. Ako bi se mogla stvoriti kritična masa, Hirošima bi opet izrasla kao kristal i dobili bismo još jednu priliku da izgubljenom detetu kažemo: „Čekaš, idem s tobom danas.“

This is one of mankind's most longed-for impossibilities: to be able to undo what is done, to return to the intact day before. According to currently known physical law, time's lack of reversibility isn't a forgone conclusion. We only know it because all our efforts, the egg has never been unbroken, the crash reversed or the loved one de-killed. If a critical mass could be reconstituted, then Hiroshima would grow back like a crystal, and one would have another chance to say to the lost child, "wait, I'll walk with you today."

Debbie O'Rourke, umetnica i spisateljica







**Sava** (2019 - 2023)

home movie, video loop 0:49 min, sound / zvuk

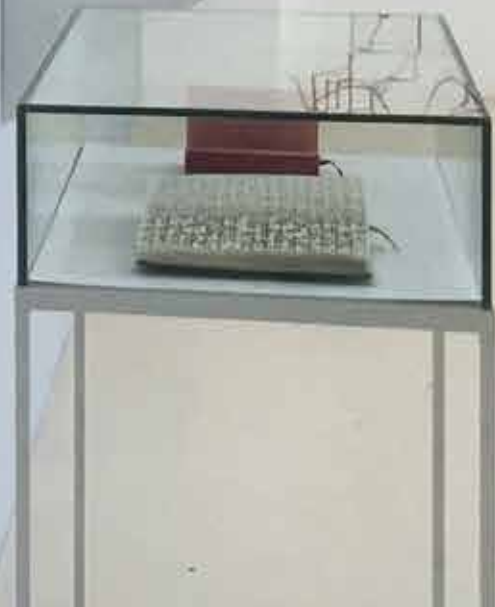
The movie, filmed at the artist's home shows a 3-year old child, Sava, the artist's granddaughter, jumping for joy. The video work involved four members of the artist's family in the production process.

Film, snimljen u umetničkoj kući prikazuje trogodišnje dete Savu, umetničinu unuku, kako poskakuje od radosti. U produkciji ovog video rada učestvovala su četiri člana umetničine porodice.

no može  
arias važi,  
našim  
ajeni unazad,  
ritična masa,  
detetu.



the sweet home sweet home  
sweet home sweet home  
sweet home sweet home  
sweet home sweet home  
sweet home sweet home  
sweet home sweet home  
sweet home sweet home  
sweet home sweet home





## Debbie O'Rourke

A child is singing. A mother's voice entwines with hers in an aural helix that seems to inspire a flame to dance. Through the magic of projected video, this flame is suspended in mid-air above a child's crib. It burns quietly, reassuring like the first flame tamed to pierce the darkness of mankind's long nights.

The quiet night bursts into a wall of yellow flame that gives way to explosion after explosion. As the gallery blazes, feather-shadows tremble against the flames as if in that millisecond on the very edge of the atomic shock wave that follows the flesh, the edge of the End of Everything. The voices continue their loving song under the dance of shattered atoms.

The explosions reverse, flames sink into the floor where white balloons huddle like sheep around the legs of the crib. High above, like the mobiles we hang for baby's amusement, the large white feathers rotate unharmed.

This is one of mankind's most longed-for impossibilities: to be able to undo what is done, to return to the intact day before. According to currently-known physical law, time's lack of reversibility isn't a forgone conclusion. We only know it's so because despite all our efforts, the egg has never been unbroken, the crash reversed, or the loved one de-killed. If a critical mass could be reconstituted, then Hiroshima would grow back like a crystal, and one would have another chance to say to the lost child "wait, I'll walk with you today."

Those in the know are aware that the voices of the child and mother in this installation both belong to artist Vessna Perunovich, recorded at different speeds. The artist caught my eye in 1998, with constructions that seemed to focus on the theme of domesticity and intimacy but were already politically loaded. In her work, a bed is also a body, a relationship, a country. Her visual language has an archetypal simplicity and universality, employing a simple palette of white, red and black.

Through all the depth, and at times, the horror that Perunovich touches upon, a sense of play is constant. Elements are mixed and matched, concepts constantly reconstructed and refocused. An elegant optimism infuses her work. As an artist Perunovich is a model of emotional health. She is able to face truths both horrific and transcendent: the horror of mankind evolving into the agent of its own impermanence and the daily miracle of waking up on a living blue planet.

Human invention and cooperation could create the next big extinction. Or, if used to nudge away the periodic fallen asteroid that blasts away all larger life forms, it could give mammal-kind an extra few million years to play. Whether we end up shortening or extending our sojourn here, this existence is a miracle. Perunovich's *Cradle* reminds us that our kind is only a brief interlude of tender mammal noise between the flames.

*Debbie O'Rourke is an artist and writer who lives in Toronto. This text is a revised version of the essay Vessna Perunovich: Artworks 1998-2004, published in Espace Magazine in the Fall of 2004.*

**VESSNA PERUNOVICH:  
ARTWORKS  
(1998-2004)**



## Debbie O'Rourke

Dete peva. Majčin glas prepliće se sa njegovim u zvučnoj spirali koja naizgled podstiče plamen na ples. Zahvaljujući čaroliji projektovanog videa, čini se kao da taj plamen levitira u prostoru iznad dečije kolenke. Gori mirno šireći osećaj sigurnosti poput prve vatre koju je čovek ukrotio da rastera tminu dugih noći.

A onda se mirna noć rasprsne u zid od žutog plamena koji donosi sa sobom eksploziju za eksplozijom. Dok galerija bukti, pera i njihove senke podrhtavaju iznad plamena kao da u toj milisekundi lebde na samoj ivici atomskog udarnog talasa, posle bljeska, na ivici Sveopšteg Kraja. Uprkos svemu glasovi i dalje nastavljaju svoju nežnu pesmu prateći ples raznesenih atoma.

Eksplozije zatim počinju da se preokreću. Plamenovi tonu u hladni pod na kom se beli baloni, kao ovčice okupljaju oko nogu kolenke. Visoko nad njom, poput vrteški koje kačimo da se bebe zabave, velika bela pera nastavljaju da se vrte, netaknuta.

Ovo je jedna od najvećih neispunjenih želja za kojom čovečanstvo žudi: moć da se poništi ono što je učinjeno, da se vratimo u netaknuti prethodni dan, pre nego se išta dogodilo.

Fizičari nagađaju da možda nije sasvim nemoguće da se vrati vreme. Mada za one koji tuguju, jeste. Jer, uprkos svim našim naporima, razbijeno jaje ostaje razbijeno. Sudar je nemoguće preokrenuti ili izbeći, voljena osoba se ne može oživeti. Kada bi se ponovo stvorila kritična masa, Hirošima bi ponovo izrasla kao kristal, a mi bismo dobili još jednu priliku da izgubljenom detetu kažemo: „Čekaj, danas ću prošetati sa tobom”.

Oni koji su upućeni znaju da oba glasa, i deteta i majke u ovoj instalaciji pripadaju umetnici, Vesni Perunović, snimljeni u različitim brzinama. Umetnicu sam zapazila 1998. godine. Njene konstrukcije za koje se činilo da su fokusirane na teme domaćinstva i intimnosti, već su bile politički obojene. U njenom radu krevet je istovremeno i telo, i intimni odnos i domovina. Njen vizuelni izraz je arhetipski jednostavan i univerzalan, uz svedenu paletu boja koju čine bela, crvena i crna.

Kroz svu dubinu, a ponekad i užas koji Perunović dotiče, osećaj za igru je konstantan. Elementi se mešaju i usklađuju, koncepti se stalno rekonstruišu i re-fokusiraju. Njen rad uliva elegantan optimizam. Kao umetnica, Vesna Perunović je primer emocionalno zdrave osobe. Ona je u stanju da se suoči kako sa strašnim tako i sa prolaznim istinama: sa užasima ljudske rase koja evoluirala u agenta sopstvenog izumiranja i svakodnevnim čudima buđenja na živoj plavoj planeti.

Ljudski izumi i kooperacija mogli bi dovesti do sledećeg velikog uništenja. Ili, ako se koriste da odvrte pale asteroide koji povremeno raznesu sve velike formacije, mogli bi ljudskoj vrsti dati nekoliko dodatnih miliona godina za igru. Bez obzira na to da li ćemo na kraju skratiti ili produžiti svoj vek ovde, činjenica je da je naša egzistencija jeste kratkotrajno čudo. *Cradle* Vesne Perunović podseća nas da je naša vrsta tek kratak intermeo sačinjen od nežnog mrmora nas sisara u igri između plamenova.

*Debbie O'Rourke je umetnica i spisateljica koja živi u Torontu. Ovaj tekst je revidirana verzija eseja Vesna Perunovich: Artworks 1998-2004, (Vesna Perunović: Umetnička dela 1998-2004) objavljenog u časopisu Espace na jesen 2004.*

**VESNA PERUNOVIĆ:  
UMETNIČKA DELA  
(1998-2004)**







***Tiny Deaths* (2000)**

sculptural installation, small wooden drawer, light bulb, red nylon, child's mannequin hand / skulptorska instalacija, mala drvena fioka, sijalica, crveni najlon, ruka dečije maneken lutke, 5cm x 6cm x 11cm

The work reflects on the crises that had developed in a world of inequalities, war and displacement, highlighting the division between the powerful and the victimized.

Rad čine razmišljanja o krizama proisteklim iz sveta nejednakosti, ratova i raseljenja, ističući jaz između moćnika i obespravljenih.



**Cradle (2004)**

video and sculptural installation, white wooden cradle, white ostrich feathers, balloons, video projection, 4:03 video loop, sound, dimension variable /  
video i skulptorska instalacija, bela drvena kolevka, belo nojevo perje, baloni, video projekcija 4:3, video loop, zvuk, promenljive dimenzije

The work involves moving images and the sculptural component in a mutual dialog around the notion of creation and destruction. In playing with symbols of birth and death, the multi-layered installation poses a question of the existence of humankind and its survival.

Rad obuhvata pokretne slike i skulpturalnu komponentu u dijalogu koji se tiče pojma stvaranja i razaranja. Poigravajući se simbolima rođenja i smrti, ova višeslojna instalacija pokreće pitanje postojanja i opstanka ljudske rase.





















## VESSNA PERUNOVICH

Vessna Perunovich (1960) is a Yugoslav born, Canadian artist, based in Toronto and Belgrade. She obtained her Bachelor's and Master's Degrees at the Faculty of Fine Arts Belgrade in 1987 and immigrated to Toronto, Canada, in 1988. Her interdisciplinary practice involves a wide-range of media including painting, drawing, sculpture, photography, video and performance, which are manifested jointly in an installation format.

During her 35 yearlong career, Perunovich has shown her work in over 100 solo and group projects presented in Canada, the United States, Europe, South America and Asia. Her recent projects include *Home paradigm: A New Place of Belonging*, Museum of Contemporary Art Belgrade, Gallery-Legacy Zorić / Čolaković (2023); *Untitled: Sculpture After Sculpture, Cazarma U*, Timisoara Romania (2023); *Home Fragments*, In-situ residency and exhibition, La Chambre Blanche, Quebec City, Quebec (2022); *Here. In Absence*, University of Waterloo Art Gallery, Ontario, Canada (2022); *Imperfect World*, Salamander Gallery Miami, coinciding with the Miami Basel Art Fair (2022); *On the Road to Freedom, Feminist Avant-Garde*, Museum of Contemporary Art Vojvodina, Serbia (2022); *Fragments of a Whole*, Contemporary Art Gallery Zrenjanin and Contemporary Gallery Pančevo, Serbia (2021); *South, South, Let's go South*, 30th Memorial Biennial, Nadežda Petrović Gallery, Čačak, Serbia (2020); *Destruction and Recovery critic's choice*, Cultural Centre Belgrade, Serbia (2020); touring project *Shifting Shelter*, Goethe Institute Belgrade Serbia (2019) and Illingworth Kerr Gallery, Alberta University of the Arts, Calgary Alberta (2019); *So-Called Reality*, Risk Change Project, National gallery of Montenegro Podgorica (2019); *Ad Infinitum*, Arsenal Habana, 13th Havana Biennial, Cuba (2019) *Perceptions, British Council in collaboration with 5 art institutions from the Western Balkan' countries* (2019); Cargo East, touring exhibition, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taichung City, Taiwan, Republic of China; Košice, Cultural Centre K13 Košice Slovakia; Museum of Contemporary Art Republic of Srpska, Banja Luka (2014-2016).

Perunovich's work was included in international biennial exhibitions in Cuba, Albania, England, Portugal, Yugoslavia and Greece. She has completed numerous international art residencies worldwide including: Banff Residency in Alberta (2004), Glogauar Residency in Berlin, Germany (2009), the ISCP in New York, USA (2012), Red Gate in Beijing, China (2014), Risk Change in Zejtun, Malta (2017), Gallery Miz Residency, Istanbul, Turkey (2018), and La Chambre Blanche, Quebec City, Canada (2022). Her interdisciplinary survey exhibitions *Emblems of Enigma* (2007-2009) and *Borderless* (2010-2011) have toured public galleries and art museums across Canada, and the Western Balkans.

Perunovich has received T.F.V.A.-Toronto Friends of the Visual Arts Award (2005), Chalmers Fellowship Grant (2019) and Chalmers Development Grant (2011), as well as numerous grants from Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario Arts Council and Toronto Arts Council. Vessna Perunovich's art practice is featured in two comprehensive monographs: *(W)hole*, 2004, and *Emblems of the Enigma*, 2008.

**SHORT BIO**







## VESNA PERUNOVIĆ

Vesna Perunović (1960) je kanadska umetnica rođena u Jugoslaviji, koja živi i radi na relaciji Toronto / Beograd. Diplomirala je i magistrirala na Fakultetu likovnih umetnosti u Beogradu 1987. godine, a 1988. emigrira u Toronto u Kanadi. Njena interdisciplinarna umetnička praksa inkorporira širok spektar medija, uključujući sliku, crtež, skulpturu, fotografiju, video i performans, koj se zajedno manifestuju kroz format instalacije.

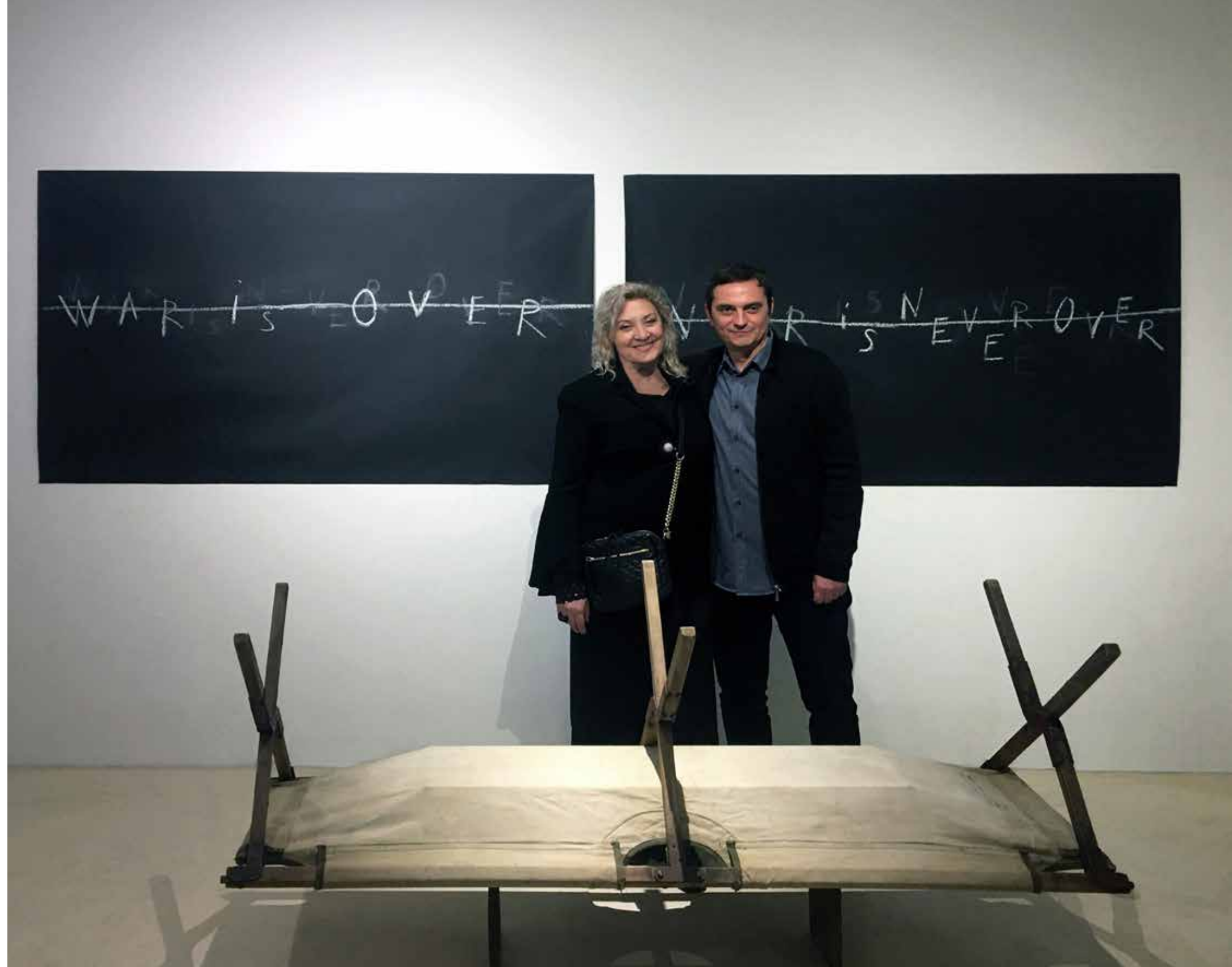
Tokom karijere duge 35 godina, Perunović je učestvovala u preko sto samostalnih i grupnih projekata predstavljenih u Kanadi, Sjedinjenim Državama, Evropi, Južnoj Americi i Aziji. Njeni noviji projekti uključuju: *Home Paradigm: A New Place of Belonging*, Muzej savremene umetnosti Beograd, Galerija-legat Zorić / Čolaković (2023); *Untitled: Sculpture After Sculpture, Cazarma U*, Temišvar, Rumunija (2023); *Home Fragments*, studijski boravak i izložba, *La Chambre Blanche*, Kvebek Siti, Kvebek (2022); *Here. In Absence*, University of Waterloo Art Gallery, Ontario, Kanada (2022); *Imperfect World*, Salamander Gallery Miami, u okviru sajma umetnosti Art Bazel u Majamiju, SAD (2022); *On the Road to Freedom, Feministička avangarda*, Muzej savremene umetnosti Vojvodine, Srbija (2022); *Fragments of a Whole*, Galerija savremene umetnosti Zrenjanin i Savremena galerija Pančevo, Srbija (2021); *South, South, Let's Go South*, 30. Memorijal Nadežde Petrović, Galerija Nadežda Petrović, Čačak, Srbija (2020); *Izbor kritičara Destruction and Recovery*, Kulturni centar Beograd, Srbija (2020); putujuća izložba *Shifting Shelter*, Goethe-Institut Beograd, Srbija (2019) i Illingworth Kerr Gallery, Alberta University of the Arts, Kalgari, Kanada (2019); *So-called Reality*, Risk Change Project, Nacionalna galerija Crne Gore, Podgorica (2019); *Ad Infinitum*, Arsenal Habana, 13th Havana Biennial, Kuba (2019); *Perceptions*, British Council u saradnji sa pet umetničkih institucija iz zemalja Zapadnog Balkana (2019); *Cargo East*, putujuća izložba, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taičung Siti, Tajvan, Republika Kina; Košice, Cultural Centre K13 Košice, Slovačka, Muzej savremene umjetnosti Republike Srpske, Banja Luka, Bosna i Hercegovina (2014–2016).

Dela Vesne Perunović bila su prikazane na međunarodnim bijenalima na Kubi, u Albaniji, Engleskoj, Portugalu, Jugoslaviji i Grčkoj. Učestvovala je na brojnim međunarodnim umetničkim rezidencijama širom sveta, među kojima su Banff Residency u Alberti (2004), Glogauar Residency u Berlinu, Nemačka (2009), ISCP u Njujorku, SAD (2012), Red Gate u Pekingu, Kina (2014), Risk Change u Zejtunu, Malta (2017), Gallery Miz Residency u Istanbulu, Turska (2018) i La Chambre Blanche u Kvebek Sitiju, Kanada (2022). Njene retrospektivne izložbe *Emblems of Enigma* (2007–2009) i *Borderless* (2010–2011) gostovale su u umetničkim galerijama i muzejima širom Kanade i Zapadnog Balkana.

Vesna Perunović je dobitnica nagrada T.F.V.A. – Toronto Friends of the Visual Arts Award (2005), Chalmers Fellowship Grant (2019) i Chalmers Development Grant (2011), kao i brojnih grantova Kanadskog saveta za umetnost, Saveta za umetnost Ontarija i Saveta za umetnost Toronta. Umetnička praksa Vesne Perunović predstavljena je u dve obimne monografske publikacije (*W*)hole, 2004, i *Emblems of the Enigma*, 2008.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my gratitude to the Museum of Contemporary Art Belgrade, MSUB / MoCAB and the director Marijana Kolarić for organizing and presenting my solo survey exhibition *Home Paradigm: A New Place of Belonging*. I owe special thanks to the exhibition curator Miroslav Karić whose professionalism, work ethic, and understanding, along with his passion for art made this project one of the most fulfilling and rewarding experience in my artistic career. Huge thanks to the museum staff and everyone involved in the production and the promotion of this project: Nikola Cvetković, Dragan Stošić, Zoran Jakovljević, Saša Sarić, Vlada Vidaković, Dejan Klajić, Aleksa Spasić, Pavle Čurčić, Nenad Avramović, Jelena Mirković, as well as Bojana Janjić, Marko Prokić, Monika Husar, Minja Velemir and Danica Đorđević. Their enthusiasm, dedication and skillset contributed greatly to its success. Special thanks to Barbara Garčević and her team for generating extended media and public interest in this exhibition. I owe huge gratitude to my life partner Boja Vasić and my daughter Vanja Vasić for their love, support and contribution towards the production and realization of this project. I extend my gratitude to Ontario Arts Council – Conseil des arts de l'Ontario, Toronto Arts Council and Canada Council for the Arts | Conseil des arts du Canada for their continuing support over the years and especially for their generous contribution towards this particular project. Thank you as well to Embassy of Canada to Serbia, North Macedonia and Montenegro in Belgrade and especially to the Canadian cultural attaché Olgica Marinković, who has been following and supporting my projects in the region for the last 20 years. Thank you to my home city of Belgrade: my family, friends, artistic community and numerous audience members who visited the exhibition and expressed their support; you made my 'Home Coming' experience unforgettable! It takes a community to realize one's dream! THANK YOU!







**IZDAVAČ / PUBLISHER:**

Muzej savremene umetnosti / Museum of Contemporary Art  
Ušće 10, Blok 15, Novi Beograd, Serbia  
www.msub.org.rs

**ZA IZDAVAČA / ON BEHALF OF THE PUBLISHER**

Marijana Kolarić, direktorka / director

**KUSTOS IZLOŽBE / EXHIBITION CURATOR**

Miroslav Karić

**UREDNICI / EDITORS**

Vesna Perunović, Miroslav Karić i Božo Vasić

**PRODUKCIJA / PRODUCTION**

Teodora Jeremić

**ODNOSI S JAVNOŠĆU / PR**

Monika Husar Tokin · KomunikArt, Barbara Garčević - Preventer

**PREVOD • LEKTURA /  
TRANSLATION • PROOFREADING**

Maja Vojvodić Jovanović, Vesna Perunović

**TEHNIČKA REALIZACIJA / TECHNICAL REALIZATION**

Nikola Cvetković, Dragan Stošić, Zoran Jakovljević, Saša Sarić,  
Vlada Vidaković, Dejan Klajić, Aleksa Spasić, Pavle Ćurčić;  
Jelena Mirković, Nenad Avramović

**KONZERVACIJA / CONSERVATION**

Biljana Šipetić · Tamara Karajčić · Marko Božović

**FOTOGRAFIJE / PHOTOS**

Bojana Janjić, Boža Vasić, Vesna Perunović, Branislav  
Dimitrijević

**DIZAJN / DESIGN**

Marko Prokić

**ŠTAMPA / PRINTED BY**

Publikum · Beograd / Belgrade

**TIRAŽ / PRINT RUN**

300





Conseil des arts  
du Canada

Canada Council  
for the Arts



ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL  
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO  
an Ontario government agency  
un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

Canada

TORONTO  
ARTS  
COUNCIL

FUNDED BY  
THE CITY OF  
TORONTO