

Jasmina Cibic: The Ambassadors

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Jasmina Cibic's new site and context specific work "The Ambassadors" has been conceived specifically for the framework of the exhibition, presented in a city that is positioned on the border between Slovenia and Austria. This performative installation proposed a mobile hunting hide placed in one of the central squares of the city, adorned by a monument of General Maister, a military officer and political activist who fought for the north Slovene border. He succeeded to annex Maribor to the newly formed State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs instead of Austria. Maister is celebrated in Slovenia but considered a controversial political figure in Austria.

Alongside the monument to General Maister, the square is also the home to the linden tree planted on the occasion of Slovene independence. These are both instances of unique manifestations of Slovenian nation-state mythmaking and emancipation.

Cibic's installation hosted a series of vocal performances of the rut¹, by the rut section of the Slovene and Austrian hunting associations. The hunters performed the rut in four categories, which are characteristic of the European championship that national hunting associations undertake each year. Slovene and Austrian hunters were imitating two diverse rut positions: one team was imitating the older stag that controls the territory, whereas the second team imitated the young stag – the attacker and the threat.

By inserting a symbol, which is equally representational and a noted cultural export of both Austria and Slovenia, Cibic pointed to the fact that the markings of territorial boundaries and their celebration within public sculpture, along with the latter's nation-state mythmaking tactics, are throughout centuries and countries following the same methodologies. What is of real interest here is the demystification of this pro-

¹ The rut is the mating season of deer, where the stag vocalizes the extent of his territory.

cess. By equalising two national teams and inserting them into the same object/architecture, making them play the same game, the staged action is disclosed to the spectator as a fiction which serves purely to illustrate the public sculpture's society forming strategies.

All public sculpture has strong political implications and it is always a product of an immediate situation. Political and economic shifts throughout history have continuously produced new street, square and building names and the removal of public statues dedicated to the figures of past regimes has become the norm. This tells us about how the monumentality of public sculpture is doubted a-priori and within the contemporary situation, of the economic and cultural crisis, it seems an extremely pertinent question, one that re-examines public sculpture's role within its current function and status within the neo-liberal stance.