

**Dejan Kaludjerović**

***Ora, a voi preparare il discorso funebre per me* (2019)**

The artistic practice of Dejan Kaludjerović refers to childhood as a process of political subjectivation. Through the inquiry into children's patterns of socialising and representations of social and gender roles, the artist exposes the complex macro structures, historical transformations and tensions that pervade the construct of childhood. Often deriving from his own experience of growing up in the socialist Yugoslavia, he refers to how children, being both playful and aggressive, rehearse societal patterns, but also subvert and undermine them. In his previous exhibitions – as in a small-scale experimental retrospective "*Algorithms of child play*"[1] curated by the algorithm under the supervision of Mohammad Salemy – the complicated relations between geopolitics, infantilization and immediacy, anthropology of aging and growing up have been uncovered.

In his earlier work "*The Future Belongs to Us*" (2002–2006) the artist presents a series of acrylic paintings, featuring the postures of children taken from the underwear advertisements from 70's shopping catalogues. Questioning the socially determined gender patterns and gestures, Kaludjerović takes the title from the "Cabaret" movie song (originally "*Tomorrow belongs to me*") sung by the Nazi youth. In historical fascism, children and youth were seen as the driving force of the ideology, their energetic bodies -- considered as ideological vessels or containers -- were supposed to enact its intensity and aggressiveness.

Similarly, the analysis of how fascism is inscribed into the mundane is present in his new work under the title "*Ora, a voi preparare il discorso funebre per me* (2019)", which is presented at Expo Gemeindebau in Waschhalle Wienerberg / George Washington-Hof, Vienna. It is based on certain aspects of Austrian and Italian history, antifascist struggles and political assassinations. Vienna is a city with a contested cultural heritage: under the burden of traumatic political changes, the urban topologies have been transformed many times. As part of Red Vienna's city planning, a newly established Gemeindebau was named in honour of Italian socialist Giacomo Matteotti in 1926 in order to celebrate the international antifascist solidarity.

Shortly after giving a speech in the Italian Parliament denouncing fascist violence and fascist-capitalist common economic interests in 1924, Matteotti, a socialist politician, was assassinated. Antonio Gramsci writing on the political situation of Italy of that time summed it up: "The terrain upon which the crisis evolves will continue to be the trial for Matteotti's murder[2]." Matteotti's speech saluted by his comrades ended up with an informal pessimistic conclusion – "Now, you will have to prepare the funeral speech for me", which Kaludjerović used as a title for his work.

Contesting the complex problematics of heritagization – the process through which values are attached to objects, practices and places and transformed into heritage, artist Dejan Kaludjerović refers to this particular historical case in his newly produced artwork. Taking courage not to follow the method of monumentalization, which often arrests the work of memory, Kaludjerović questions what might be the real face of fascism today. On the contrary, he creates a confrontational situation of looking straight into its eyes. The black-and-white embroidered portrait of the unknown person appears to be the face of Amerigo Dumini, the fascist hitman and leader of the group that kidnapped and killed Matteotti in 1924 supposedly under recordless confirmation of Mussolini himself. The embroidery, produced by the artist and his partner, with the help of their friends through a methodic time consuming labour, takes the aesthetics of popular culture and stresses the connection between kitsch, popular taste and populism. The political strategy of populism, according to Belgium political philosopher Chantal Mouffe, is based “on the establishment of a boundary between an “us” and a “them,” between the people and the establishment[3].” The specific construction of “us” and “them”, based on exclusion, xenophobia and restriction of democracy, is specific to right-wing populism. It is reflected in the face-to-face posture, as well as in the intentional misuse of the quote attributed to Matteotti: who is going to deliver a memorial address for whom?

The embroidery is presented on top of a red painted canvas through which Kaludjerović examines the overwritten and blurred layers of history. The canvas, plain red from a distance, appears to include pages from historical socialist proletarian press of the 1920s, reporting on fascist violence, as well as the notes of “Bella Ciao”, the song of struggle. These are the two crucial types of antifascist mobilization – printed word and music score. Their location in this work also mobilizes the viewer: the act of approaching the image shifts the very relation to a political moment. Connecting the notions of populism, kitsch aesthetic forms, and a contemporary vortex of political ideologies, the artist invites us to think about our own agency in historical processes, the position of a subject within them, and the recurring forms of oppression and struggle.

Aleksei Borisionok

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[1] Dejan Kaludjerović. *Algorithms of Child Play*. Bildraum 07, Vienna. 17.09–09.10.2019

[2] Antonio Gramsci. The Italian Crisis (1924). In *Selections from political writings (1921-1926)*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1978. P. 264.

[3] Chantal Mouffe. We urgently need to promote a left-populism in *Regards*, 2016.