

# Saša Tkačenko

## Ruins of Future Utopia

23 February 2018

Nostalgia certainly frames Saša Tkačenko's art, coming out both as a theme and a method of creation. Having belonged to a dead nation with a particular sense for utopia, the artist, like many of Yugoslavia-born from his generation, lives with phantom experiences that accompany real-time events. The word nostalgia contains the word *pain* in its Greek origin, therefore it is bound to have a direct connotation. Its hidden power, however, operates behind this supposition, which is why Tkačenko's work takes us by surprise as it renders nostalgic feelings as strangely inviting and affirmative.

Being either intuitive or skillful with language, the artist conceals the main word through the agency of ruins, utopia and future in the title. Just as ruins provide enough material to provoke memory and yet never permit the satisfaction of the complete image, Tkačenko's exhibition inspires a feeling that only becomes finished in personal recollection and imagination. The endgame is to always keep you coming back. The key here is that this is the same system that sustains nostalgia – the one that feeds on a realization that searching for the original feeling gives a new kind of sublime pleasure. As strange as it may be to speak of nostalgia in almost erotic terms, it depicts Tkačenko's new body of work as being simultaneously seduced by and in line with its own femme fatale.



The show opens with imagery and motifs that are on the verge between hedonism and romanticism, guiding the audience to a collection of *what-ifs*. Romantic ideas are given form through associations with the Venice Biennial, songs with elusive subtexts and soft colors. Wishful thinking culminates with the artist's own scaled rendition of the Yugoslavian Museum of Revolution crowned with an actual open flame, symbolizing eternal fire. By adding the flame to the icon of unrealized dreams, the eternally poetic unbuilt museum, Tkačenko magnifies his personal experience of melancholy to a point of explicit indulgence. Can we be this passionate about our own nostalgia?

Ruins of Future Utopia seem to ask that same question. Not only being concerned with nostalgia, but carrying the secret ingredient of nostalgia within, the show allows for a collection of completely contradictory terms to come together and somehow function with perfect sense. If the future utopia is already in ruins, somehow we must be able to sense a new kind of nostalgia for the time that hasn't even happened (yet).

Natalija Paunić



Saša Tkačenko was born in 1979 and currently lives and works in Belgrade. His artistic practice is based on appearances of spaces and their transformation when exposed to other media, as well as translating their architectural features to fields of sculpture and installation. Tkačenko's works thus create dynamic situations in which the audience plays a constituent part. Since 2008, he has participated in exhibitions in Serbia and abroad, including shows in institutions such as Centre Pompidou Paris, Museum of Contemporary Art Belgrade, mumok - Museum Moderner Kunst Vienna, Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb, MNAC - National Museum of Contemporary Art Bucharest, Times Museum Guangdong, Museum of Contemporary Art of Vojvodina Novi Sad, ACP - Australian Centre for Photography Sydney, Belgrade City Museum, Künstlerhaus Bremen, UnionDocs Center for Documentary Art New York, Castello di Rivoli - Museo di Arte di Contemporanea Torino. Tkačenko participated in artist-in-residence programs at ISCP in New York and T.I.C.A-AirLAB Tirana Institute of Contemporary Art. His works are in collections of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade and Telenor collection of contemporary Serbian art.

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