



**Forum**

## **NAM Talks**

**Thursday, 2 September 2021**

**14:00–15:15**

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### **III INVISIBLE NON-ALIGNED: OMITTED HISTORIES**

***\*Presentations in English, conversation/discussion in English and Serbian.***

Talk participants: **Bojana Piškur**, PhD, MG+MSUM, Ljubljana; **Ana Sladojević**, PhD, independent curator/art & media theorist; **Lina Džuverović**, PhD, Birkbeck University, London

*Talk moderator: Emilia Epštajn (MAU)*

Participants will reflect on the ways they have worked with different archives (at different points in their careers) dealing with historical and other materials/documents which are part of the Non-Aligned Movement framework. Key words include: NAM, archives, written/unwritten & visible/invisible histories, women's history and roles of women in the NAM. The panel will reflect on current trends in dealing with NAM topics – all in the field of art theory, cultural history, media and representation studies, institutional/non-institutional curatorial practices, etc.

The panel will open with a direct example of the way histories, and in particular women's achievements are often and (rather nonchalantly "omitted"), with **Lina Džuverović's** focus on Olja Džuverovic, the former Head of the Commission for Assistance to the Liberation Movements at the Socialist Alliance of the Working People of Yugoslavia, Yugoslav diplomat, and key agent in Yugoslav support and solidarity with countries undergoing the process of decolonisation. Work on her own family archive – especially the blurring of lines between what is more often an utterly artificial delineation between *private/public*, will offer a broader exploration of the role of women in the Non-Aligned Movement whose often groundbreaking achievements may have been overlooked, or whose actions may not yet have received sufficient visibility. Džuverović will offer insight into her



current thoughts and reflections, methods and approaches to this specific type of archival work – on its path from private to public.

Following this first presentation, two presenters, theorists from the field of critical museum studies and practical curatorship Bojana Piškur and Ana Sladojević, will reflect on the notion of *omission* and *visibility* within the museum context.

In light of her pioneering work regarding the (re)affirmation of NAM values and practices (within the field of art, museums and activism), **Bojana Piškur** will offer a recap of her approach and methods, how they have changed through time and share her own impressions on the current rising popularity of “the non-aligned” in the field of art and culture; how the notion has been “commodified” and why today’s non-aligned (movement), when it “has the most members so far and still exists” – is often absent in serious consideration and actions.

Finally, based on her thorough and also pioneering work in and at the Museum of African Art in Belgrade, **Ana Sladojević** will reflect on her work on (re)discovering and (re)affirming the MAA in the process of its historization, in particular in her journey through the “secondary archive” (Zagorac/Pečar). Sladojević will shed some light on how archives are dealt with within/outside institutions; what are the implications of omitting (any/specific/NAM) histories, and also offer a critical overview of her current thoughts on the ways certain recent projects have dealt with NAM history(-ies) and its representations.

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### **YUGOSLAV-AFRICAN SOLIDARITY, WOMEN AND PERSONAL ARCHIVES: The Case of Olja Džuverović’s Archive**

**Lina Džuverović, PhD**



**Photo: Olja Džuverović at work (second from right), from the Yugoslav Non-aligned Movement Solidarity Archive, estate of Olja Džuverović, photographer unknown.**

In this talk Lina Džuverović will introduce a project in development which takes as the point of departure the archive of Olja Džuverović, the former Head of the Commission for Assistance to the Liberation Movements at the Socialist Alliance of the Working People of Yugoslavia, a Yugoslav diplomat, and a key agent in Yugoslav support and solidarity with countries undergoing the process of decolonialisation. Introducing this multifaceted and broad collection of materials ranging from conference notes, briefing documents and diplomatic correspondence to travel diaries, drawings and personal photographs, Džuverović will focus on methodological possibilities as well as challenges involved in working with archives which are



positioned at the intersection of the personal and the public/official. The Olja Džuverović's archive has also acted as a catalyst for a broader exploration of the role of women in the Non-Aligned Movement, pointing to often foundational achievements which may have remained overlooked, and to protagonists whose actions may not yet have received sufficient visibility. Drawing on her previous work with developing archives, in this talk Džuverović will introduce the Olja Džuverović archive, asking how we may galvanise the subjective, the incongruous and the personal, in bringing archives into the public arena.

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### WHY, ACTUALLY, THIS FASCINATION WITH NAM?

**Bojana Piškur, PhD**

I think it is very important to re-discover the legacy of the NAM in many possible contexts and I very much support the programs regarding the topic as proposed by the Museum of African Art. I'd say the reasons are many: disillusion in the current global world order, especially rapid neo-liberal globalization which has created huge problems, the inequality, the rise of new forms of economic and political dependency, the rise of right wing politics, including historical revisionism, neocolonialism, racism and so long, the list is endless.

The NAM has also been the topic of extensive researches, exhibitions, art works in the cultural





field. While I believe it is extremely important to focus on the historical heritage of the NAM I also believe that in the current political situation (especially in our region) we should, in the next step, move the attention beyond the research based solely of the NAM's historical role, beyond the aspect of solidarity as once was to today's situation and to propose a more radical cultural agenda, an agenda that could be based among other things also on some of the NAM's emancipatory ideas. But before we do that we need to re-think the meaning of non-alignment, solidarity (as in Nemanja Radonjić's text: *Non-Aligned Continuities*, in: *Non-Aligned World* exhibition catalogue) and humanism. For example, non-alignment in today's context could be easily understood as some kind of neutrality. And this, of course is problematic – and lately this has become quite an issue – for many institutions around the world to openly support political causes, movements, various social issues etc. This has been mainly due to the new right wing conservative cultural politics which demand art and culture institutions to be “neutral”. But this kind of false institutional neutrality prevents any criticism, dissent, or positioning within a museum and only keeps a status quo of an art institution as colonial institutions of exclusion (as in Laura Raichovich's book *Cultural Strike*).

The other point is the global (geostrategic) position of the NAM today; there are many states in the NAM that are quite far from the principles the movement promoted and still promotes, some states are repressive dictatorships, and quite few NAM states are currently at war or involved in some kind of armed conflict causing suffering, death, and millions of displacements. How we are also going to deal with these facts while at the same time we look at NAM's past emancipatory ideas with fascination?

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## CONTEXTUALIZATION OF THE RESEARCH, CURATORIAL AND ARTISTIC APPROACHES TO META-MUSEAL CONTENT WITHIN THE LONG-TERM MUSEUM RE- CONCEPTUALIZATION

Ana Sladojević



**Dejan Sretenovic\_Crno telo, bele maske/Black Body, White Masks, 2004. Photo by Ana Sladojević**

In the last seventeen years, starting with the publication and an exhibition “Black Body, White Masks” (2004) proposed by Dejan Sretenović, at the time the Chief curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade, a lot of effort was put into *theoretical reconceptualization* of the Museum of African Art – the Veda and Dr Zdravko Pečar Collection in Belgrade (MAA), in particular in regard to colonial and anticolonial legacy within this particular museum setting. In this *long-term process*, the *approaches of researchers, curators and artists* towards what I will generally call here *meta-museal content* that, even though present, was illegible, invisible and sometimes even purposely hidden, introduced the *dynamics of collaboration on the line inside/outside*. With the support from the Museum, some of these approaches were made visible, as they were *translated into practice, as talks, exhibitions and publication*, this way tackling more outward, representational domain of museum work, yet still failing to leave a longer lasting trail on museum methodology, systematization or strategy. At the very beginning of a *new collaboration* with the MAA this year, that is meant to take the ideas proposed in “Contexts and Representations” (2014) series of talks, and the exhibition and publication “*Nyimpa kor ndzidzi*, (Re)conceptualisation of the Museum of





Museum of African Art – the Veda and dr Zdravko Pečar Collection”, MAA, Belgrade (2017-2018); “Non-Aligned Modernisms”, Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade / ERSTE Stiftung (2011-2016).



**Dr Lina Džuverović** is a curator and Lecturer in Arts Policy and Management at Birkbeck College, University of London. Her research focuses on feminist art histories and ways in which the sphere of contemporary art can become a site of solidarity and community-building. Previously Džuverović taught at the University of Reading; at IZK – Institute for Contemporary Art, University of Technology, Graz; was Artistic Director of Calvert 22 Foundation; founding Director of the London-based commissioning arts organisation Electra, and has held curatorial roles at ICA and the Lux Centre, London; Momentum Biennial, Norway. She was awarded the 2006 Decibel Mid-Career Curatorial Fellowship by the Arts Council England. Selected curated and co-curated projects include “Monuments Should Not Be Trusted” (Nottingham Contemporary, 2016) - the largest UK exhibition of Yugoslav art practices to date, “Sanja Iveković – Unknown Heroine” (South London Gallery and Calvert 22 Foundation, 2012–2013), “IRWIN – Time for a New State” (Calvert 22, 2012), “27 Senses” (Chisenhale Gallery, London, 2010; Kunstmuseet KUBE, Alesund, Norway, 2009), “Favoured Nations” – Momentum, 5th Nordic Biennial of Contemporary Art (Moss, Norway, 2009), “Perfect Partner” by Kim Gordon, Tony Oursler and Phil Morrison (Barbican Centre, London and across Europe, 2005) and “Her Noise” (South London Gallery, 2005).