



Artist's father working with a colleague around 1982/84 in Novi Sad, former Yugoslavia (present-day Serbia).

NOVI is curated by Susannah Faber as part of the requirements for the master of arts degree at the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College.



Thanks to Leo Ramić, Anri Ramić, Edina Dedić, Enver Dedić, Snježana Pepić, Boro Obradović, Dijana Tankusić, Ranko Đavotekonović, Dennis Witkin, Branch Ashton Hudgins, and the faculty and staff at CCS Bard.

¹ To interface with the text in its expansive digital form, please visit <http://47.novi.computer>.

NOVI Adriana Ramić

April 7 – May 26, 2019



Hessel Museum of Art
Center for Curatorial Studies
Bard College

NOVI is the first institutional solo exhibition in the U.S. of work by Adriana Ramić (b. 1989) and features a newly commissioned installation. Questions of language and translation are central preoccupations within the artist's practice. She reconfigures and generates new language through the use of machine intelligence, rendering opaque outputs that obscure the original meanings of the text and sources used. Her work mobilizes these moments of illegibility as points of reflection and departure into larger narratives. For this exhibition, her considerations around language and communicability are expanded upon in conjunction with questions of history, memory, place, and image.

NOVI departs from a story about Ramić's father, who coded and printed a dot matrix image—a feat of computational technology at the time—while working as a computer programmer at the furniture factory Lignošper, in the former Yugoslav town of Bosanski Novi. Rather arbitrarily, he chose as his subject President Josip Broz Tito, who, by coincidence, died the following day, May 4, 1980. Shortly after, the police visited the factory to inquire whether there was any correlation between the production of his image and the death of the political leader. This moment, in which the capability of technological advancement was misunderstood and viewed with suspicion (even as a potential threat), became a catalyst for Ramić to reflect upon histories beyond that of any one image.

In the summer of 2018, Ramić traveled to Bosanski Novi—now Novi Grad in Bosnia and Herzegovina—to investigate the story of this image and whether any copies remained. While there, she conducted



Owl notebook containing source drawings for the *Encoded Image Memory* works and other notes, at Roštijnica i Pizzeria U.R. "MS" in 2018. Photo courtesy the artist.

interviews inquiring after people's memories of the incident. In doing so, larger histories and absences came forward. Ramić ran these conversations through Taxygen, an open source AI text generator that can produce a limitless output of new words. The computer is positioned as a mediator between Ramić and her subjects. Serving as an interpreter that veils the signs of human error, it also produces inconsistencies and lapses in meaning, revealing technology's failure to translate and communicate language. The text generator's infinite output is also self-referential, continually generating new information from a limited collection of material. From these conditions of impossibility and through seemingly unending computational translations, Ramić has drawn distinct moments from their residues. For *NOVI*, this new text will be presented on large scrolls of paper that wrap across the room as part of a large-scale installation titled, *I was in that part of the computer* (2019). She has also created a web app to accompany the exhibition, which allows visitors to interface directly with the text in its unbound form.¹

The exhibition also includes a letter from the local police explaining that all the department's archives from before the Bosnian War were burned in a fire in 1995. Ramić had previously written to inquire about the existence of any records relating to her father's story. The presence of the letter gestures to blockages around official and personal records that stem from the broader losses and dislocations from this period.

Two drawings from 2019, *Encoded Image Memory* (after Ranko Davotekonović) and *Encoded Image Memory* (after Boro Obradović), form further remainders of these conversations. Ramić asked people she met during her research to render her father's image of Tito based on their own memories of it. These were originally gathered in a notebook and have been re-drawn by the artist for the exhibition. These highly abstract drawings are each comprised of a sparse composition of lines and dots, rather than faithful depictions of her father's original image. Referencing the original computationally encoded image, the drawings render the idiosyncrasies of individual memory appearing in the space between a sensory recollection and a visual image.

A new sculpture, *windows think anything like that* (after structure of Lignošper) (2019), references the factory's windows by way of photographic depictions presented in a freestanding aluminum frame. Ramić's images capture the remains of the

Artist's approximation of original Tito prints, 1 May 1980 (after Leo Ramić), 2018. Installation view from obsequies curated by manuel arturo abreu. Photo courtesy AALA Gallery.



now-abandoned building: discarded tools, tables, and urinals are sprawled across dust-covered floors in the factory that was once one of the town's biggest employers. These photographs were taken through the windows of the factory and capture the reflection of the outside world. When positioned within the double-sided aluminum frame, the images are further obscured by a layer of tinted glass, modeled after Lignošper's windows. The production of these images might be understood in relation to Ramić's recursive digital treatment of text that builds upon and departs from an original source to simultaneously enclose and refract visual information.

The absence of the original image of Tito haunts the work in *NOVI*, which builds from its absence. The exhibition draws its title from the site of the image's appearance: the city is colloquially referred to as Novi, which means "new" when translated into English. The work in Ramić's installation reflects the malleability of memory and the passage of time, as they emerge with regard to place and technology. The memories that she uses and creates continually regenerate and unfold to reveal new possibilities for thinking through the past.