

# Non-Aligned Feminism

## Art and Politics of Unclassified Archives<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

#### Non-Aligned Feminism – Art and Politics of Unclassified Archives

The text deals with art geographies and politics of (non)belonging created through contemporary systems of classifying and curating art within geopolitically shaped archives. It explores the relation between old and new meanings of non-aligned geographies that have resisted historical and social power relations established through the uneven network of geopolitical identities. Focusing on several artistic and curatorial examples (Milića Tomić, Lina Džuverović, Lana Čmajčanin, Ana Hoffner ex-Prvulović\*) that go beyond already entrenched art cartographies, the text explores the (post-)Yugoslav space, by introducing the historical idea of non-alignment when it comes to the process of identification and classification of art today – in a feminist way.

**Key words:** non-aligned feminism, counter-archive, non-aligned movement (NAM), error-turn; art geographies.

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### Povzetek

Besedilo obravnava umetnostne geografije in politike (ne)pripadanja, ki jih ustvarjajo sodobni sistemi razvrščanja in kuriranja umetnosti v geopolitično oblikovanih arhivih.

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Raziskuje razmerje med starimi in novimi pomeni neuvrščenih geografij, ki se upirajo zgodovinskim in družbenim razmerjem moči, vzpostavljenim z neenakomernim omrežjem geopolitičnih identitet. Tekst se osredotoča na več umetniških in kuratorskih primerov (Milica Tomić, Lina Džuverović, Lana Čmajčanin, Ana Hoffner \*ex-Prvulović), ki presegajo že uveljavljene umetnostne kartografije, in raziskuje (post)jugoslovanski prostor, pri čemer uvaja zgodovinsko idejo neuvrščenosti, ko gre za proces identifikacije in klasifikacije današnje umetnosti na feminističen način.

**Ključne besede:** neuvrščeni feminizem, protiarhiv, neuvrščeno gibanje (NAM), error-turn; umetnostne geografije.

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## In Search of the Meaning of Non-Aligned Feminism

The notion of non-aligned feminism emerged from the exhibition *T-Errors Unclassified 00-XX*, which I curated at the Austrian Association of Women Artists VBKÖ in Vienna in January 2023. The focus was on geopolitical and other identification methods of classification, regardless of whether the archiving of art be local or international, institutional or non-institutional, universal or particular – even feminist. Dealing with art-based practices coming from mutually conditioned processes of becoming and erroring, the exhibition searched for ways of classifying unsettled art geographies through counter-archiving, feminist exhibiting and curating difficult knowledge about them. In search of new meanings of *non-aligned*, the idea of the exhibition was to interrelate diverse art positions that resist historical and social power relations established through the network of geopolitical identities. By focusing on individual/unique art practices that refuse or transgress geopolitically imposed archival cartographies, this curatorial approach took into account a new possibility – in order to remain unclassified within the arbitrary geopolitical identification of many recently established art-based archives. This curatorial intervention in the geopolitical processes of identification and classification within archival practices of contemporary art implies a counter-turn or error turn in which feminist non-aligned cartographies of art emerge (Petrović, 2023). More precisely, within this exhibition several

documentary interventions and artworks accompanied by curatorial annotations, termed *artography*<sup>2</sup>, were contextualised by a temporary counter-archive of post-Yugoslav women artists who are usually classified through assumed, imposed or never fully accepted geopolitical (post-)Yugoslav identities. Engaged with exhausted geographies<sup>3</sup> of non/belonging, the exhibition's artists – for whom Vienna was or still is a kind of contact zone – drew through this common feeling of geopolitical discomfort the idea of non-alignment through different approaches (some of the artists, Milica Tomić, Lana Čmajčanin and Ana Hoffner ex-Prvulović\*, specifically dealing with neglected archives, ideas, politics and failures of the Non-Aligned Movement). In other words, all art positions were shaped by overlapping zones of geopolitical discomfort, either in terms of the artist's (non) belonging to an implied identity or in the context of artworks which question the power relations of entrenched, hegemonic or compulsory identities (such as the ethno-national identities that were reclaimed through the wars in the 1990s). By delineating new 'non-aligned' geographical coordinates of political thought, movement, art and ultimately life, the exhibition's artists<sup>4</sup> overcame the (post-)transitional boundaries of identity politics, generating a new space for non-aligned cartographies of art with their feminist, political and aesthetic approaches.

Following the exhibition positions, in the search for the meaning of non-aligned feminism especially in the (post-)Yugoslav context, there are also three important premises coming from previous feminist practices: the first, which recognises the importance of Yugoslav feminism against the wars of the 1990s as well as ethno-nationalism (Iveković, 1993; Slapšak, 2000; Deschaumes and Slapšak, 2003; Papić, 2012; Arsenijević et al. 2009; 2011; Kobolt, 2016; etc.); the

2 Artography is a new term introduced by this exhibition to denote an experimental method of writing curatorial notations about art positions. It implies the politics/poetics of relation through which the meaning of the art-based work is described, understood, interpreted, exhibited or analysed within the archival, exhibition or other institutional art knowledge production. It consists of summarised texts (in the form of annotations) that can be repeated, recounted, rewritten, extended and rearticulated in different versions depending on the relational settings within the space of an art exhibition, archive or research. It consists of compendious texts (in the form of annotations) that can be repeated, recounted, rewritten, extended, and rearticulated in different versions depending on the relational settings within the space of an art exhibition, archive or research (Petrović, 2023).

3 According to Irit Rogoff, exhausted geographies are shaped by the politics of identity and identification "as material manifestations of territorialities and territorial claims that cannot sustain themselves." Emerging from political, economic, climatic, war or other social crises, these geographies are defined as (semi-)peripheral by dominant and very often conflicting geopolitical discourses (Rogoff 2010).

4 Artists: Lana Čmajčanin, Marina Gržinić & Aina Šmid, Flaka Haliti, Ana Hoffner ex-Prvulović\*, Margareta Kern, Katalin Ladik, Svetlana Maraš, Red Mined, Milica Tomić (curated by Jelena Petrović). More at: <https://www.vbkoe.org/2022/12/26/t-error-unclassified-00-xx/?lang=en> (accessed 31 July 2023).

second, dealing with the post-socialist transitional question *What is left of the feminist left?* (Kašić et al., 2013); and the third, which investigates the distorted historical reality of the Non-Aligned through feminist lenses. If we leave aside the first two premises, on which a lot of work has been done during the last few decades, the third, more recent premise derives from a feminist, and in a broader sense politically engaged, approach to the idea of non-alignment. Although all of these premises have already brought together feminism and art in many different settings, there are women artists, curators and researchers who have been and still are engaged with all these interrelated issues in a cohesive and prolonged way. Departing from the notion of non-aligned feminism, this chapter thus points to several examples of post-Yugoslav art practices that, along with many others<sup>5</sup>, can contribute to the epistemic basis for the further development of the term itself, not only in the post-Yugoslav context, but also further afield.

## The Non-Aligned Movement as Historical Reference

The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was officially established as a geopolitical response to the Cold War, by offering a 'third way' of thinking about international and anti-colonial politics, beyond that of the Western and Eastern blocs. It emerged in the accelerated process of decolonisation following World War II (WWII), in a series of events that preceded the signing of its founding declaration at the First Non-Aligned Summit, in Belgrade in 1961. At the Asian-African Bandung Conference in 1955, the participating countries (many of whom had just won their independence) agreed on the fundamental political principles of the future joint movement (Final Communique Bandung 1955). Following the principles of these declarations, the Non-Aligned Movement was founded in Belgrade in 1961 under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito (Yugoslavia), Gamal Abdel Nasser (Egypt), Jawaharlal Nehru (India), Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana), and Sukarno (Indonesia), where its founding declaration was signed by representatives of 25 non-aligned countries and 3 observer countries. The very idea of non-alignment was based on the politics of planetary coexistence, which stood for solidarity, equality and active neutrality. The anti-colonial forces of new and

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5 A few of these are: Milica Tomić: *On Labudović: Cinema, School and the War of Independence* (2015–ongoing); Marwa Arsanios: *Al Hilal project* (2011–2015); Jasmina Cibic: *Spielraum* (2015); *In Rhythmic Affinity* (2022); *The Otolith Group: Gather round me, my writers, musicians, artists: My name is NAM* (2014) and *Nucleus of the Great Union* (2017); Adjie Dieye: *Red Fiver* (2018–ongoing); Christian Guerematchi *NAM Non-Aligned Movement* (2020); Nadiyah Bamadhaj: *Casting Spells for the Movement* (2021); etc.

socialist nations under the auspices of NAM articulated the project of political peace – as a form of material collective solidarity, according to the initial declarations (Bandung, 1955 and Brijuni, 1956), which were constituted and signed as the founding document of NAM during its first summit, in Belgrade (1961). The politics of active neutrality has recently been reactivated by many through works of art, interventions or research as *a political discourse of comportment, as a strategy, and as a historic geopolitical phenomenon, constitutive of philosophies of war and peace, or of inequality in conflict* (e.g. Vesić et al., 2016), despite the fact that the historical reality of NAM changed over time.

The reasons for the political and moral bankruptcy of the NAM, which had already started by the 1970s and was completed by the end of the Cold War, sprang primarily from the strong pressure that the Cold War superpowers put on non-aligned countries to make them take sides, but also from their own ideological shifts and mutual political conflicts after the anti-colonial struggles for independence (WGSF, 1997; Prashad, 2012, 2017; Dinkel, 2018). The fundamental idea of non-alignment, rooted in the socialist modernisation<sup>6</sup> of post-colonial society, was very soon appropriated by authoritarian socialist regimes on the one hand and by reactionary anti-socialist regimes on the other – ending mostly in bloody transitions into the neoliberal world. Despite all this, the NAM still officially exists as a union that includes a large number of countries of the so-called Third World.<sup>7</sup> Many countries that still remain members of the NAM have corrupted and changed the idea of non-alignment into conservative, reactionary and above all counter-revolutionary politics. Moreover, most of these countries have manipulated the historical role of the NAM in anti-colonial struggles, so as to serve the ‘post-historical’ purpose of the global/neocolonial logic of permanent war<sup>8</sup>, constantly shifting their own geopolitical positions from allies to enemies of the first or ‘former west’ world and *vice versa*. The counter-revolutionary politics of the NAM began, as in all significant social revolutions, with the

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6 The overview of the politics of the non-aligned from the Yugoslav perspective in its very conception could be reduced to the ideological equation: modernism + socialism = emancipatory politics (Piškur, 2015).

7 Currently, the NAM organisation officially has 120 old and new member states (and 27 observer states), whose agenda has in the meantime become inverse and mostly reactionary in relation to the founding politics of socialist internationalism, which rarely surfaces with new leftist movements.

8 The Permanent War is defined through the politics of military interventions by the leading nations’ army forces, which have become particularly important after the terrorist attack in the USA on 11 September 2001 (also known as war on terror). The war is waged to preserve peace, liberty and democracy, in the sense given them by the West-centric politics, and it is in this effect different from the anti-colonial war of the Third World, whose final goal was permanent peace in the world and the end of the dominance of great forces (superpowers) and their armaments (Hass, 2001; Petrović, 2018a).

relativisation of women's struggle and their emancipation.<sup>9</sup> The proclamation of the end of women's struggle against patriarchy in the majority of NAM countries put a stop to the process of any further emancipation, under the excuse that it was no longer necessary because women had already won all their rights. In this proclamation of the end to one of the most significant (also, the largest) of women's revolutions, the reason and fundamental thread can be discerned of what today might be called non-aligned feminism as an anti-colonial, anti-racist form of women's struggle. It is not only about historical but also current feminist movements of resistance to the global world occupied by all the old hegemonic politics that at one point returned in new, more socially adapted hybrid forms. This is also the reason why many women's artists, researchers and others have begun to delve into the causes of the collapse of the NAM and to question women's struggle within it, especially at this moment when the idea of non-alignment reappears as a possibility of resistance to the (neo)colonial geographies of the current neoliberal world. It is precisely in the constant questioning of the subjugated position of women in relation to any system – either now or then – that the greatest potential of non-aligned feminism lies, which is to (re)establish the foundations of emancipation in every sense – economic, social, ideological, and (geo)political, regardless of divisions into East-West or North-South (Mee and Wright, 2009; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018; Vergès, 2021; etc.). More concretely, this potential lies in permanent resistance to racist, neoliberal economies of exploitation of human and especially female bodies, natural resources and land, which, as always, have led to such an uneven distribution of geopolitical power (Harvey, 2006; Gržinić, 2010; McIntyre and Nast, 2011; Gilmore, 2021; Gordon, 2023; etc.).

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9 The history of the socialist state, of its achievements and emancipation showed that the symbolic value of the *pater* and *patria* was, in socialism, appropriated by the party. In the case of Yugoslavia, the Antifašistički front žena (Women's Antifascist Front, or AFŽ) as the historically largest women's movement worldwide was (self-)abolished under the pressure of the party politics of classless society, which proved to be *de facto* false in its primary principle: the equality of men and women (Petrović, 2018b). According to the same principle, women's movements also disappeared in the non-aligned countries that, with their help, fought for independence from colonialism, only to be abolished with the same justification. These initial counter-revolutionary acts of abolition of women's movements led to the collapse of not only revolutions, but also to the violent systematic abolition of many already won freedoms (Bonfiglioli, 2007/2008).

## Art and Politics of Unclassified Archives

In the process of ideological (re)subjectivation of socialism, the idea of *non-alignment* as a part of the Yugoslav socialist heritage has become a topic frequently present in art, especially after the 2010s. In today's context of the neocolonial economy of racial, but also green, capitalism, which accompanies the active geopolitical maps of many current wars and conflicts, this idea reappears as a politically enraged thought not only in the post-Yugoslav space, but also in many other 'non-aligned' parts of the world (today united by the notion of the Global South; McDowell and Sharp, 1999; Flint and Taylor, 2018; Sajed, 2020; etc.). Through a counter-historical approach to the Non-Aligned, art finds itself this time in the middle of the changing politics, positions, and problems of the Third World, in search of the revolutionary anti-colonial heritage that this concept originally had. From the post-Yugoslav perspective of dealing with the art and politics of the NAM, several art-based practices which put this subject into question through different approaches to neglected archives, lost revolutionary politics and abandoned heritage are revealed as some of the substantial examples.

### *Travelling Communiqué*

The exhibition *Travelling Communiqué* (Museum of Yugoslav History<sup>10</sup>, Belgrade, 2014) introduced the idea and movement of the Non-Aligned to the contemporary, i.e. politically engaged, art after the fall of the Berlin Wall, maybe for the first time relating it to very recent and current conflicts and wars. Following the initiative of the Museum, which was at the time beginning the process of digitalisation of some 300,000 photographs from the presidential archive (1943–1980) of Josip Broz Tito, Armin Linke, Doreen Mende, and Milica Tomić initiated research into this photo archive, focusing on the global politics of the Cold War and the NAM. The trio went on to invite many authors, artists, architects, theoreticians and others<sup>11</sup> to collaborate and consider together the process of creating an exhibition and discursive event that would enable an insight into the emancipatory politics of the Non-Aligned through the use of this archive. Asking the basic question *Whom does this archive material address?* this group of project authors

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10 Basic information about the exhibition and a list of all the project and exhibition co-authors are available at: [www.travellingcommunique.net](http://www.travellingcommunique.net) (Accessed on 31 July 2023).

11 *Travelling Communiqué* accessed the key textual documents of the Conference such as the collectively signed letter addressed to Kennedy and Khrushchev and the declaration of the Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Countries, from the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in Boston and the Archive of Yugoslavia in Belgrade (Eshun and Mende, 2016).

devoted special attention to the photographs taken during the founding summit of the NAM and the text of the Declaration which was then signed (Belgrade, 1961). Turning to the demands and decisions articulated in this document,<sup>12</sup> which were primarily addressed to Kennedy and Khrushchev as representatives of the two Cold War sides, one of the project authors – Branimir Stojanović – suggested that its points should be regarded from the present perspective, within the current political situation and the global world map. The question of the political purpose of *what this archive means today* thus became the basic question of its activation.



Milica Tomić: *On Love Afterwards* (2020). Art documentation of public montage by and with Milica Tomić et al. (Burgtheater/Kunsthalle Wien). A view of the exhibition *T-Errors Un-Classified 00-XX* (VBKÖ, 2023). Photo: Daniel Hill, Courtesy of VBKÖ.

In her performance *Purloined Letter*, which took place during the exhibition, Milica Tomić walked up the stairs through the garden connecting the Museum of Yugoslav History's building with Tito's Mausoleum, carrying a photograph,

<sup>12</sup> The exhibition, curated by Bojana Piškur, presented specific examples of collections, institutions and archives, in an attempt to relate art works and exhibitions from the Non-Aligned era to contemporary art practices. There were 26 positions (art-based works) included in the exhibition, revealing – in addition to researching, interpreting, and contextualising different examples from NAM art history – the extent to which this movement was in fact anachronous in its own time (Piškur, 2019).



enlarged to life size, of the leaders who founded the NAM (taken from the archive of the Belgrade Summit in 1961). Her intention was to indicate through this photo-performative act the possibility of activating the archive visually at that very moment, regardless of the previous meaning or function of the photograph itself, or the archive as a whole:

*Entering the archive and accessing this valuable material raised the issue of the relationship between the time when the photograph was made and us, artists who now have the right to exhibit this material and, decomposing it into fragments, change the significance of the original intention of the authors. The work Purloined Letter examines the fragmentation of great political narratives, raises the question of delayed audience and introduces Jacques Lacan's comment that a letter always arrives at its destination and reaches its addressee, regardless of the original intention of the sender (Tomić, 2022).*

With this performative action, Milica Tomić opened the art space for participative thinking about the politics of the Non-Aligned because a potential was seen in it to deal with the current situation by establishing a continuity between the Cold War and all the present wars, especially the permanent one. In addition to making visible the suppression of the politics of the Non-Aligned to the margins of the Cold-War era, such an approach pointed out a geopolitical turn that over time completely erases it: moving from the opposed blocs of the West and the East towards the division into the Global North and the Global South.

In the historical context of speculative geographies, the contradictory and disputable points of the NAM led – through this and other exhibition works, discussions, and interventions dealing with this archive – to considering the common idea of non-alignment as a process of unfinished decolonisation and lost social emancipation. According to one of the curators, Doreen Mende, through the *Travelling Communiqué* exhibition the digital archive of the Museum of Yugoslav History ensured the space and time for analysing and visualising the protocols that choreographed the images, speeches and texts of the First Summit of the NAM (Eshun and Mende, 2016). With the intention to approach archives across the Third World in a similar way in the future, changing the meaning and significance of the NAM in the process of state appropriation and reactionary revision, the *Travelling Communiqué* exhibition made proposals for the political articulation of its initial ideological concept. Comprising ideas suggested by numerous artists, activists, theoreticians and all the other contributors within the space of the Museum, these proposals were exhibited there in the form of printed bloc-

ks, each of which contained 1000 sheets, with the intention to jointly anticipate the extension of the *Travelling Communiqué* project and point out the continuity of the Non-Aligned politics – reactivated through the artefacts of this and other relevant archives. Besides this example, other art, exhibition and research projects about the NAM were developed in many post-Yugoslav locations, opening up a series of questions about the complex, paradoxical, and frequently misinterpreted revolutionary ideas preserved in official archives and collections. The following can be singled out as relevant examples of this renewed interest in the NAM: the exhibition *Southern Constellations: The Poetics of the Non-Aligned* dealing with its specific collections, institutions and archives (Museum of Contemporary Art, Ljubljana, 2019)<sup>13</sup>; various thematic collections, exhibitions and archives dealing with the project of the Third World<sup>14</sup> (Museum of African Art, Belgrade); long-term research on the cultural collaboration of the Non-Aligned at the Institute of Art History in Zagreb, in collaboration with the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Ljubljana<sup>15</sup>; the art-based project of *The Non-Aligned Art Collection Laboratory* (Centre for Contemporary Art in Podgorica), which activates the vast collection of the former Gallery of Art of the Non-Aligned Countries “Josip Broz

13 Belgrade’s Museum of African Art, which recently hosted the exhibition titled *Yugoslav Testimonies on the Algerian Revolution. Archival Omnibus* (18 March–10 June 2023), is a place where the history of the Non-Aligned is observed through the topical lens of anti-colonialism as the very basic policy of the Museum (some of the examples include the exhibition and programme titled *Anti-colonial Museum*, curated by Ana Sladojević at the end of 2022 and *The Non-Aligned World* by the Museum’s curatorial team at the end of 2021). More at: [www.mau.rs](http://www.mau.rs) (Accessed on 21 July 2023). In addition to the exhibition and discursive programme, the Museum also works on the accompanying publications, on systematising and presenting the archive, digitalising and improving the web-platform as an extension of the previous exhibition of the Non-Aligned, which transcends the content of the exhibition with a large number of cross-referential contributions: <https://www.nesvrstani.rs/nesvrstaniHomeEn.html> (Accessed on 21 July 2023)

14 Research within this yearslong project is organised in two parallel courses: one dealing with the cultural politics and new visual regimes of decolonisation and mutual cooperation among Third-World/NAM countries, the other dealing with the internal dynamics of the NAM, that is, the economic, social, and political frameworks of collaboration in the context of their present socio-cultural consequences. In addition to the publications and discursive programmes that deal, among other things, with analyses of historical and current exhibitions dedicated to the NAM, the project has also included a bibliography of cultural, political, and social aspects of the NAM in two rather comprehensive volumes. More at: [www.nam-globe-exchange.org](http://www.nam-globe-exchange.org) (Accessed on 21 July 2023)

15 The curatorial and conservation team of the Centre for Contemporary Art in Podgorica – Marina Čelebić, Anita Čulafić, Nada Baković, and Natalija Vujošević – initiated *The Non-Aligned Art Collection Laboratory* project. The aim of this project, which was launched in 2022, is to develop research and archival art practices which will relate the rich collection of the Non-Aligned at the former Gallery Josip Broz Tito to the international art context, historical as well as contemporary, through fresh readings, historiographic reviews, art works and interventions. More at: [www.csucg.me](http://www.csucg.me) (Accessed on 21 July 2023).

Tito”,<sup>16</sup> among others. Mutual collaboration on and connections made through these projects have led many to engage with the possibilities, problems and limitations of decolonial art and curatorial practices by addressing the issue of the lost and/or mis-historicised revolution of the NAM. In the process of knowledge production, the *Southern Constellations: The Poetics of the Non-Aligned* exhibition, as well as the other mentioned examples, has significance because it opens a dialectical field in which new art practices can be found, with the potential to articulate the politics of new social reality in the way that the *Travelling Communiqué* exhibition did, or in the way it was achieved with the new art and curatorial interventions within the project *The Non-Aligned Art Collection Laboratory*.

## Yugoslav Non-Aligned Movement Solidarity Archive

The next important question: *Why do women’s struggle, solidarity and testimonies remain outside institutional collections and archives?* brings into focus the sensitive methodology of feminist curating, which does not occur as a consequence of semiotic instability, but rather of a material urgency (Dimitrakaki and Perry, 2013), especially when one bears in mind the permanent (geo)political, economic and systemic crises that constantly push feminism to the background, which is also the case with the NAM. Researching counter-, inter- or live archives or rare artistic and curatorial projects, like those mentioned, changes the official narrations of revolutionary ideas, attempting to de-romanticise their past and to reactivate them today without illusions or nostalgia. Within these art-based practices, the sensitive feminist methodology is quite often linked to private archives wherein lies a potential for changing any institutional or dominant discourse. In her curatorial research of the *Archive of Solidarity of the Yugoslav Non-Aligned Movement* (2022-ongoing), Lina Džuverović follows this red thread of interweaving the personal and the political in a feminist process of the creation and activation of an NAM archive.

Through this process, she is researching the personal archive of her aunt, the Yugoslav political worker Olja Džuverović (1947–2006) who was first active in the leadership of the Liberation Movements’ Support Committee of the Socialist

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16 Lina Džuverović, in addition to growing up, due to her aunt Olja Džuverović, in a politically engaged environment regarding the Non-Aligned, is also one of the many children that were born, in the decades after the NAM’s foundation, in so-called ‘non-aligned’ marriages between Yugoslav citizens and citizens of African, Arab, or other countries belonging to the movement.

Union of the Working People of Yugoslavia, and then, until the end of her life, engaged in diplomacy in non-aligned countries of Africa.



Olja Džuverović (the only woman in the picture) at an assembly in Libya (circa 1969). From Lina Džuverović's Archive of Solidarity of the Yugoslav Non-Aligned Movement. Photo: Courtesy of Lina Džuverović (photographer unknown).

Bearing in mind the family ties and the combination of many circumstances<sup>17</sup>, the curatorial work on cataloguing, reading, exhibition and activation of this archive to the wider public becomes in itself a political question. In this process, Lina Džuverović faces the problems of feminist ethics and of the (im)possible methodological approaches to her aunt's archival material in which she also becomes personally entangled, considering the fact that her family history involves responsibility for understanding of the politics of the NAM:

<sup>17</sup> In 2016, the museum was renamed from the Museum of the History of Yugoslavia to the Museum of Yugoslavia. More at: [www.muzej-jugoslavije.org/en](http://www.muzej-jugoslavije.org/en) (Accessed on 21 July 2023).

*At what point does a collection of materials become an archive? When does somebody's life and work, their books, papers, photographs, informal handwritten notes and objects become of interest and value to others? Who is in a position to make a decision about turning somebody else's belongings into a public resource? What about privacy? What about things the person was uncertain about, possibly not happy with, that can be gleaned from the materials that survive them? What to edit out and what to leave in? What are the ethical decisions along the way and how much intervention and interpretation is necessary for the material to make sense and be meaningful to others? Most importantly – what would this person, no longer there, say about this new publicness? (Džuverović, 2021).*

The political, social, and primarily personal reasons for Lina Džuverović's confrontation of the private, but also documentary 'material' of Olja Džuverović occur in the moment when this material is communicated and interpreted into publicness, in the (auto)biographical format of an archive that indicates possible political re-articulations of the Non-Aligned ideologies. By using the feminist method of breaking down the boundaries between the personal and the political while working on the archive's contents (through a collective/participative reading), Džuverović, from her curatorial perspective, opens up space for political memory and reactivation of the non-aligned discourse 'off frame'. Such an approach, inter alia, testifies to the need for feminist intervention in the official narratives of the non-aligned revolution: the inter-subjective process of this archive's creation and its exhibition in public space is shaped collectively, through solidarity – in the historical, as well as contemporary (institutional) context. Mutually connected personal, family, institutional and political histories of the non-aligned countries within Yugoslavia thus become a common location of a living archive about the revolutionary politics of the NAM. In different and wider international settings, this living archive, in addition to activating the working materials of Olja Džuverović by collective reading and exposure, also rearticulates the idea of non-alignment politically, giving to this notion a critical, decolonial and feminist but also epistemological potential.

## Once We Were Brothers

The case of geopolitical and feminist zones of discomfort when it comes to the NAM is also raised by artist Lana Čmajčanin in the work *Once We Were Brothers* (2021–2023). Addressing today's difficult questions – the violent and warlike

processes of global migrations, climate pollution, and techno-colonialism – this research-based practice explores the common ground of interweaving the peace politics, art, and technology of the non-aligned world.

Following in the process the popular slogan of the Union of Communists of Yugoslavia *Brotherhood and Unity* (which originates from the National Liberation Struggle of Yugoslavia during the Second World War, as a guide for the socialist coexistence of different constituent peoples and their nationalities within one common post-war state), this artwork is conceptually based on the Yugoslav aspiration for the solidary co-establishment of the international union of the NAM – under the same slogan. The revolutionary concept of the NAM in Yugoslavia, consisting of national independence, international solidarity, and permanent peace, was developed accordingly within the political metaphor of ‘brotherhood and unity’, which remained deeply patriarchal, despite all kinds of emancipation during socialism, including that of women.

Besides political, economic and social relationships among non-aligned countries, cultural ties have also played an important role, as many grandiose examples show. Based on modernist trends in architectural production, industrial design, and contemporary art, a large number of cultural, activist and artistic events, manifestations and programmes were internationally organised during this time, not only within Third World countries but also beyond (the Venice Biennial in 1974, and Orzes 2022 among others). In addition, a revolutionary techno-scientific approach to non-aligned art also embraced modern technology, with an interest in constructivism as well as optical and kinetic art. Referring to this, Lana Čmajčanin traces the forgotten algorithms of pioneering digital/computer art by exploring the remarkable – and today very recognisable – poster design for the 6th International Exhibition of Graphic Arts in Ljubljana in 1965 (the work of Ivan Picelj, a member of the Yugoslav non-aligned modernist art movement *New Tendencies*). This international exhibition, exhibiting “basically everything, the whole world,” created a new geopolitical landscape of the art world in which countries outside the Western canon participated on an equal footing for the first time (Grafenauer 2013). The 1965 poster produced for this occasion accordingly displayed geometric design created to reflect the presence of freedom, modernity, equality and solidarity as well as to anticipate the future of civilisation using new (computer) technology. In the period between 1961 and 1973, this art movement organised five international exhibitions in Zagreb under the title *New Tendencies*, one of which, *Tendencies 4*, devoted its entire programme to the computer as a medium of artistic research and work (Zagreb, 1968). These pioneering Yugoslav algorithms and graphics of the non-aligned world paved the way for the upcoming cyber-geographies which today reproduce nothing more than the neoliberal logic of artificial, algorithmic, or even bug

or virus identification with NAM revolutionary past (in which, at least for a while, colonial power was halted). These and other recognisable accomplishments and futuristic metaphors of the NAM, which today have been appropriated by neoliberal capitalism, have lost their ideological dimensions of solidarity and freedom over time. Becoming the new, neo-colonial signifiers of the Global South, the NAM countries, instead of experiencing a progressive future, are today mostly surviving wars, oppression, exploitation, migration, terror, crises, xenophobia, racism and more.



Lana Čmajčanin: *Once We Were Brothers* (2021-2022). Photo: Courtesy of the Artist.

In Lana Čmajčanin's work, this reversal is indicated with a blue neon sign that, with its Arabic calligraphic inscription *Once We Were Brothers* and its coat-of-arms colour Pantone Reflex Blue, returns the political aesthetics of the NAM to the post-Yugoslav space – which has become one of the most brutal migration routes from the non-aligned East to the EU West. Paradoxically, that same blue colour is today the main colour representing the EU and its democracy, thus completely erasing the fact that it once symbolically signified the revolutionary union of three quarters of the world. Facing the post-Yugoslav fear (Islamophobia/xenophobia) of those with whom the Yugoslavs once built a revolutionary union under the slogan of 'brotherhood and unity', freeing the world from centuries-old

colonialism, this neon light, behind which op-art techno-design looms, returns the NAM to its initial positions – to the futuristic desires to create an evenly developed techno-natural geography of a peaceful, equal and solidary world.

## Spiritual Decolonisation

Finally, in the search for the lost feminist revolution in the process of NAM decolonisation, the archives of the Non-Aligned did not uncover much; nevertheless, it could thereby be concluded that this process of building peace and solidarity was enabled precisely by women, with their often historically invisible contribution. Similarly, the manner of managing the ‘non-aligned’ art institutions like galleries and museums, as well as the contents of their historical collections and current exhibitions, reflected this marginalised position of women in that system, even though they were largely continuously present in it through the politics of care. As one may conclude from the art examples concerning the institutionalisation of non-alignment that are provided in the earlier section, creativity and spirituality were important symbolic bonds for Third World countries, and consequently also representative activities that occupied the masculine system of power. With the lessening of the Non-Aligned influence, and simultaneously of the positions that the ‘non-aligned’ art institutions and collections occupied in social and international cultural politics, it is mostly women who have attempted to preserve this heritage to this very day, though in very poor, impoverished working conditions. Therefore, it is not accidental that many women curators and artists revisit the question of the presence of women in different non-aligned political ideas and movements, searching for continuity and instrumentalisation of their positions and roles.

Taking the aforementioned Gallery of Art of the Non-Aligned Countries “Josip Broz Tito” in contemporary Podgorica (formerly Titograd) as her starting point, artist Ana Hoffner ex-Prvulovic\* facilitates a somewhat different perspective on the politics of the NAM, by the blurring of borders between fiction and reality, and between art and politics. As the title of her work, she took the phrase *spiritual decolonisation*, which was used to describe the need for and the goal of non-aligned art on the occasion of the founding of this Yugoslav gallery in 1984 in Titograd, to point to what is already evident from the official history of the NAM: the absence of women, despite their presence. Internalised by all revolutions in history, such a patriarchal oxymoron reiterates that all feminist struggles are always trivialised and erased in the same way. Intervening with fiction, humour, historical facts and feminist criticism into the official revolutionary narrative



of the history of the NAM, Ana Hoffner ex-Prvulovic\* simultaneously points to various women's international alliances and feminist networks that have actively dealt with issues of (geo)political, social, cultural, economic and every other kind of emancipation. Solidarity, peace, freedom and equality were just some of the concepts used in building the non-aligned ideology of non-belonging to any hegemonic system of social subjugation or human exploitation. This kind of ideology, which stood for socialism and modernism, also marginalised the question of women's emancipation because it was taken for granted as a result of socialist and decolonial efforts. This is easily visible from the fact that, with a few exceptions, after the liberation, the leading, powerful and important positions in society, politics and art were occupied exclusively by men.

Searching for feminism within the NAM, Ana Hoffner ex-Prvulovic\* through her art installation *Spiritual Decolonisation II* (2021) historically refers to several Yugoslav women artists who participated in non-aligned international exhibitions. Based on selected artworks by three of them: Ankica Oprešnik, Zdenka Glob and Tinca Stegovec, Ana Hoffner ex-Prvulovic\* created a series of drawings that reflect this non-aligned time in a feminist way. Drawings and textual interventions, divided by this space installation on front and reverse sides, correlate visual and narrative, real and fictional, serious and humorous as well as lost and found parts of women's emancipation in the non-aligned era.



Ana Hoffner ex-Prvulovic\*: *Spiritual Decolonisation II* (2021). Art documentation of textual interventions. A view from the exhibition: *T-Errors Un-Classified 00-XX* (VBKÖ, 2023). Photo: Jelena Petrović

The drawings are also interconnected with hanging sculptures made of industrially produced wire and wool, which point not only to the structural, but also the relational forms of non-aligned modernism. Manufactured with a political reference to industrial design, these sculptures rely on the aesthetics that link women's production (within textile and other weaving factories, domestic and reproductive labour), as well as women's public presence in the ruling and decision-making positions, to the non-aligned politics of art. The textual intervention on the back of one of the drawings strongly expresses this feminist statement with the following text, which through such an artistic process becomes a fictional document of the time:

NO FATHER

NO NATION

NO SUBORDINATION

*Art against Patriarchal Reproduction*

*We face the end of colonialism, but the sexual division of labour has not yet been abolished. Women's history is class history. We have to analyse 'woman' and all activities associated with 'reproduction' as a crucial ground of anti-colonial struggle for women. Our goal is to transcend 'woman' and colonialism. We need steps towards global feminist movements, a world in which we won't be addressed any more as the mothers of new nations but be free to create our lives without obligations and duty.*

*Gallery of Art of the Non-Aligned Countries Titograd March – June 1984*

*(Hoffner ex-Prvulovic\*, 2021).*

The first part of *Spiritual Decolonisation* (made after the second one in 2022) was created as a film assemblage (or a poetic video essay) set in today's almost abandoned "Josip Broz Tito" Gallery (integrated into the Centre for Contemporary Art of Montenegro in 1995). Today, the four women (in the positions of director, art historians and/or curators) responsible for running this gallery have been managing to resist the revisionist times, but still this collection of non-aligned art, as well as its home institution, can barely survive in the current neoliberal and state politics of art. Navigating the space, inside and outside the gallery building, in conversations with these four guardians of the art collection of the Non-Aligned (which itself faces an uncertain future), the artist – in this slowed-down pre-apocalyptic atmosphere – introduces parts of the epistolary correspondence

of a female friendship from the non-aligned past. Through this female and political friendship, between the WWII anti-fascist revolutionary and simultaneously rare Yugoslav female politician, Vida Tomšič, and Indian academic, left-wing activist and feminist Vina Mazumdar – one can feel how much the emancipation of women within the revolutionary struggle broke against patriarchal walls and how common that experience has been for all women of the (non-aligned) world.

Blurring the historical boundaries between reality and fiction and imagining a realised politics of equality that could have happened in the past, this artwork by Ana Hoffner ex-Prvulovic\*, with its historically and geographically interweaving threads, gives hope that the activation of an unfinished feminist revolution is still a global possibility despite the pervasive feeling of depression and loss. Even though all these places that still preserve the need for – as well as traces and dreams of – such a world seem to be forgotten, abandoned or erased, the potential of a non-aligned politics of coexistence outside the hegemonic politics of the world still exists. *Spiritual Decolonisation*, instead of resentment or resignation towards the failure of the NAM, activates another non-aligned struggle by means of humour, which appears as the most powerful means of feminist courage in facing the lost efforts of the revolutionary past in the still-patriarchal world. From this point of ideological failure, the return to the final decisions on the basis of which the Non-Aligned Movement was founded (Final Communique Bandung 1955 and First Summit of NAM 1961) is a turning point for those without whom this movement would never have had the chance to come true. In this sense, perhaps the future definition of non-aligned feminism, the one imbued with the humour of an invented or desired past, can be glimpsed on the reverse of one of the drawings comprising the work by Ana Hoffner ex-Prvulovic\*:

#### THE ROAD FROM BANDUNG TO BEOGRAD 1955–61

##### *Reflecting the Bandung Conference and the Beograd Summit*

#### PART ONE

##### FEMINIST REARTICULATIONS FOR GLOBAL INDEPENDENCE OF WOMEN

##### 1<sup>st</sup> Conference on Art and Non-aligned Politics

*Our nations and countries are colonies no more. Now we are free, sovereign and independent. We are again masters in our own house – but we don't need men to dictate our lives, our fantasies and our expressions! We won't be separated in nation-states. Being non-aligned means to us keeping a distance from the dominant institutional and social blocs, as well as from (petit) bourgeois culture and heroic modernism (Hoffner ex-Prvulovic\*, 2022).*

## From Unclassified Archives to Non-Aligned Feminism

Guided by an idea of non-alignment, previously introduced art positions recognise the troubles and errors of the historical reality of the NAM and at the same time anticipate new possibilities of imagining non-aligned feminism, placing it inside aesthetic formats of experiencing discursively open art works and/or continual art-based practices, especially archival ones. Such a feminist process of producing and engaging art enables a relational shift from the contested (counter-)historical narratives of the NAM to radical visual, research and participative practices that politically rearticulate the non-aligned cartographies of art, dealing with both the ideology and the historical reality of the Non-Aligned. On the one hand, they point out the anti-colonial politics of resistance, which has the potential to intervene into the neoliberal politics of the neocolonial era, while on the other they disclose the abyss of structural nostalgia, which blurs insight into the authoritarian and patriarchal ways of realising this idea. In doing so, they are also rediscovering ways of affirming the strong influence of the Cold War superpowers, which ultimately led to the ideological and consequently final collapse of the emancipatory politics of the NAM. By putting into question the fundamental concepts of repressive and violent geopolitical relations, including the existence of nation states in the historical and contemporary circumstances of their alliances and roles, the notion of non-aligned feminism in the given context emerges as a possible signifier of planetary politics of coexistence. The idea of 'non-aligned' re-emerges and delves into *pluriversal genealogies of aesthetics* (Vazquez, 2020) with the potential to create demanding but necessary knowledge for understanding the meaning of decoloniality, through resistance to the continual uneven development of the globalised world – in a feminist way.

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