

shaved

performance

11 April 2003 — SKC Students' Cultural Center, Belgrade, SP — The April Meetings, international performance festival — curated by Slavko Tijmotijevic — Participants: M. P. — Duration: 60 min.

Background — The political situation in Serbia has intensified. President Zoran Djindjic is shot. A state of emergency is declared. Tanks and armed soldiers are positioned in front of all important buildings. Military units patrol the streets of Belgrade. For a long time, the Students' Cultural Center has been an important place for cultural movements. It was here that Marina Abramovic showed her performance Rhythm 5 in 1974. She poured oil over the outline of a star that had been laid out in wood, set it on fire, and then lay down inside it. April Meetings attempts to make connections to past activities that were interrupted by the Milosevic regime and the war.

Setting — A large building complex. Inside, a classical hall with a balcony at a height of seven meters. The foyer in front of the hall's entrance (no longer used).

Materials and Preparation — Assembled items of good and bad news from dobre vesti / lose vesti individually frozen in sheets of ice, 28 cm x 20 cm x 1.5 cm. Two cardboard boxes, each with five dividers. Inside, A4 plastic folders with the frozen slips of paper. A video projector hanging from the ceiling, directed at a linen cloth laid on the floor. A camera with a videotape of the performance dobre vesti / lose vesti, Odzaci, 2002. On the balcony, a table. In the foyer, a chair and shaving utensils.

Procedure — The audience assembles on the narrow spiral staircase in front of the door to the balcony. Carrying the cardboard boxes and their contents, X and Y press through the crowd. They open the door to the balcony, place the cardboard boxes on the table positioned near to the door, and distribute the sheets of ice to the audience as they enter, one per person. The audience is attracted by the video being projected vertically onto the floor of the great hall. A film sequence from Odzaci is being played. The sound—children's voices, twittering birds—and the light of the projection immerse the hall in a sunny, cheerful atmosphere. The video image shows wooden boxes and children busily filling out the slips of paper. The sound grows softer and softer. The sheets of ice, which people have laid on the balcony rail, begin to melt. Water drips into the hall. X and Y place the remaining sheets of ice on the rail. They go into the foyer. There, they cut off the twenty-year-old beard of Serbian composer and organizer of The April Meetings, M. P., and give him a shave. X and Y switch the camera, which until this time has served as a playback device, to live coverage of the shave. The audience, unable to access the foyer, follows the video transmission of the shave from the balcony. X and Y alternate between shaving and operating the hand camera. In the close-up footage, M. P. is unrecognizable. The performance ends with the switching off of the camera and the no-signal message of the video projector.

Results — M. P.'s daughter bursts into tears at the sight of her shaven father, whom she has never seen without a beard. In the days that follow, she cuts the hair from M. P.'s head and fashions it into a beard, which she hangs from her own chin.

