

MARKO TADIĆ
IMAGINE A MOVING IMAGE

LAURA BULIAN GALLERY

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critical essay by **ANA DEVIĆ**

Member of What, how
and for whom / WHW

The exhibition *Imagine a Moving Image* by Marko Tadić gathers together a number of his recent collages, artist's books, video-animations, objects and display models that weave together a vast visual and mental imagery, blurring the lines between fiction and documentary, memory and history, past and future. Regardless of the medium, his works can be seen as a continuous effort to initiate a potential new beginning, often building on the ruins of times past. Combining a *Wunderkammer* atmosphere with modernist-like displays, in this exhibition Marko Tadić has created a specific set up that, in its dense spatial arrangement, transforms the gallery space into an open studio that appears to be a testing ground; or rather a play ground, as many of his works are light-heartedly fuelled with a tireless imagination that actualizes the utopian potentials of play as a political, historical and collective asset. The relationship between static and animated images is the topic of a series of collages and drawings entitled *Imagine a Moving Image* (2013), the objectives of a cinematographer are applied to different situations and contexts to examine various aspects of cinematic procedures. Borrowing this title to name the entire exhibition, a major retrospective of his work so far, indicates how central this theme is to the artist's work. In this magical dialectic of static and moving images, flickering rhythms and sliding boundaries are imbued with protean creations. It is driven by an impulse to keep producing films through different means of collecting, drawing, intervening.... or just by watching.

Intervening on found materials such as vintage postcards, notebooks or personal photo archives, mostly obtained from the flea markets or salvaged from garbage, Tadić's works leap into loosely structured fictional narratives open to different interpretations. Their references — spanning from literature, film, and art history to radio programs and popular culture — become triggers that enable a process of free associations, an endless manual research-in-progress that operates through the obsessive and everyday acts of drawing, doodling, experimenting with the very “unconscious” of the material and the potential forms and meanings it can generate. Through a gradual process of accumulation, Tadić often uses small scale formats, such as artist's books or collages, that evolve into larger archives or animated film sequences grouped around certain topics or leitmotifs.

The earliest work in this selection *I speak true things* (2009), consists of collages, a constructed wooden display and an animated film. It was a turning point in his practice and established the procedure described above. Geographical maps from a variety of historical periods are interrupted with mystical calculations and wondrous symbols; alongside an animation they retell the story of a utopian Atlantis-inspired Island. Though the mystical Island remains intangible, *I speak true things* charts a landscape of artistic imagination and creative processes as truly ideal places where everything is possible.

We used to call it: Moon, (2011/2012) is a kindred work that encompasses a number of collages and objects used as a background for a stop animation. Referring to several SF literary classics¹, which mention the phenomenon and discovery of the then unknown planet — the second moon — a series of maps illustrates how this discovery might have been passed on to, or omitted from, the collective imagination and how, as an invisible catalyst, the alleged moon might still determine our future.

Tadić reworks a given topic to the point of collapse or exhaustion, just so his continuous flow of work migrates to yet another analogous topos. The series of collages *Accumulation of the images from below* (2013/2014) is first of his works that delves into a world of remnants of the modernist heritage and its possible reinterpretations; this field of reference still determines the artist's work. The title is inspired by Gordon Matta-Clark's observations on a loss of a perspective experienced while observing his own *Conical Intersect* (1975), a large hole cut through a housing block in Paris, just before being demolished to make way for the Pompidou Centre.

1. Such as *The Invention of Morel* by Adolf Bioy Cesares and *From the Earth to the Moon* by Jules Verne.

Echoing that sudden change of perspective in a familiar terrain as well as the rapid replacement of dominant paradigms, so poignantly addressed by *Conical Intersect*, Tadić's *Accumulation of the images from below* revisits the remnants of the heritage of modernism, and in particular that of socialist modernism in Yugoslavia. His approach is neither an academic, historical nor theoretical perspective, and it is devoid of any fetishistic nostalgia. By cutting a metaphorical peep hole into the past seen as a "foreign land"², this series – and a related work *Table of Contents* (2015/2016) that employs modernist-like exhibition displays and smaller models – looks back at the record of the local modernist condition that was determined by contradictory processes of endless perpetuation oscillating between forgetting, depoliticization, devaluation, idolatry, overuse and monetization. Marko de- and re-constructs a modernist vocabulary from a formalist perspective, using it as the research polygon for a new genesis: looking awry into a vast pool of ruins as well as seeing new potential constructions. *Accumulation of the images from below* and *Table of Contents* (2015) work, therefore, primarily through visual elements, playing with the remnants of constructivist and universalist ideas in housing, design, science, everyday life and linked in particular to modes of exhibiting. This is visible in the artist's "pocket size" galleries, screening structures or display models in which fragments from the socialist modernist project, often retrieved from garbage, are presented as artworks: the cover of a book designed by the Croatian sculptor Ivan Kožarić for example or Tadić's own *grattages* on found photographs. Creating such displays, *Table of Contents* forms miniscule imaginary galleries or museums and seeks connections to a wider contextualization than the individual pieces or fragments within the overall system.

Although these interventions inhabit a ghost-like world full of ambiguities, similar to the *We used to call it: Moon* series, they also point to possible echoes of progressive and emancipatory ideas of the past. This is especially noticeable in Tadić's numerous animations, such as *Until a Breath of Air* (2015) or *Moving elements* (2016) that not only refer to, but also actively rework the tradition of the Zagreb School of Animated Film that from the 50s and 60s onwards has produced a number of animated films that have reached international prominence. Many visual artists such as Vlado Kristl, a member of the Exat 51 group, also participated in the movement. Employing motifs from landscape and architecture to depict the processes of devastation in times past and present, *Until a breath of Air* is structurally more experimental than Marko's other films. It is a short melancholic revision of an unknown history as told from the perspective of ruins that follow the appearance and disappearance of an era, where everything is reduced to debris.

2. "The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there."
Is an opening sentence of L.P. Hartley's novel *The Go-Between*, 1953.

Tadić uses *stop frame* animation to continue his obsessive, almost compulsive drawings and stretches them through the dimension of time. He usually uses animation as the final, concluding part of a certain series. The narratives are frequently organized around a journey-like motif and the temporal dimension unfolds through the continuous movement of various objects, lines and shapes against phantasmagorical backdrops. Departing from the various narratives and following the strongly pictorial dynamic of lines, the dream-like atmosphere of his films is punctuated by the everlasting movement of the colour black set against the background. This highly pictorial rhythm is the main “protagonist” of his films. The technique of stop-motion animation can be read as a process that brings about both the formation and the dissipation of a world. Enhanced by a voice-over narrator or a musical score, the animation does not impose interpretations, but in suggestive manner, almost like a Rorschach test, it offers the viewer the conditions to enter a subconscious state. It is a cognitive void which he maps, and he inhabits it with multiple stories that rise above centuries and worlds in a quest for elusive, utopian places. Tirelessly, dot by dot, the artist records the horizons of its constant re-emergence and disappearance.

Ana Dević, 2016

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Monday – Friday, 15 – 19 pm
Morning by appointment
Free entrance