

Searching for peace: art, genocide and memory in 2022 Ukraine and 1992-1995 Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Screen prints / postcards, art & photos by Lisa Glybchenko, Copenhagen 2022. All rights reserved to the image-maker.

This project was supposed to be about the peacebuilding aspects of coffee-making/drinking in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the idea came out of the collaborative podcast "The Late Art Talks with Berina and Lisa" (which will be available soon). When making the podcast, I discovered that Berina, who is a young filmmaker from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and myself, an artist and peace worker from Ukraine, had a lot in common (maybe too much for these coincidences to be good). The commonalities had to do with struggles as young women and artists, making impact along the lines of our activism, work- and study-related migration, and – of course – living with and transforming the impact that armed violence has had on our home countries and communities. So, I thought I would take the podcast idea further to explore intersections of peace work, coffee-making and feminism in Sarajevo in spring 2022 to somewhat experience the visual connection we unexpectedly created in the podcast's poster - selecting café pictures of ourselves and simulating a late art conversation although we had never met in person. And then, with Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, the idea changed (as it absolutely should have, if the project was indeed a sensible peacebuilding project).



Podcast poster, design by Lisa Glybchenko.

When I went to Sarajevo in May 2022, what I was exploring was not feminist coffee-making as peacebuilding but memory and memory-forward of genocide. As a Ukrainian experiencing forced removal from my home country, I looked at the images from the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (which Sarajevo is full of) and could only really see the images from the news about Russia's war crimes and deaths of civilians in 2022 Ukraine. Since I was in Sarajevo to make images for the project, I decided to reflect these experiences in the techniques and content of images I was making – to connect the way the genocide against the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina about 30 years ago appears to someone, whose nation and culture are under threat of extermination in 2022. I wanted to explore the notions of distance and removal from one's country and its people, as, being Ukrainian, I cannot safely return home because of the full-scale war (otherwise I would have gone to Ukraine several times) and am experiencing its horrors through, among others, the lens of digital media. And I wanted to explore memory and memory-forward (preventing horrors from happening again, and the failure to prevent mass murders in Bosnia and Herzegovina from happening again elsewhere in the world – like Ukraine).

Techniques and rejection of beauty

The artistic techniques I chose relate to and critique what is used in war. On the one hand, weapons – which I reference through carving pieces for lino-printing. On the other hand, citizen reporting as part of peace processes – documenting the war with a phone

camera and shaky images to ensure justice during tribunals. I reference that by purposefully using only my phone camera for shooting moving images within the video art.



Lino carving, inking and printing/prints by Lisa Glybchenko. All rights reserved to the image-maker.

The idea with all of the images was, while making them effective in terms of messaging and artistic/graphic design, to make them ***not beautiful*** - *disturbing*. I chose this approach because there is nothing beautiful in the atrocities the project is about and because beautifying violence (including through/by/with images) also normalizes it – and that is the last thing I would ever want to do.

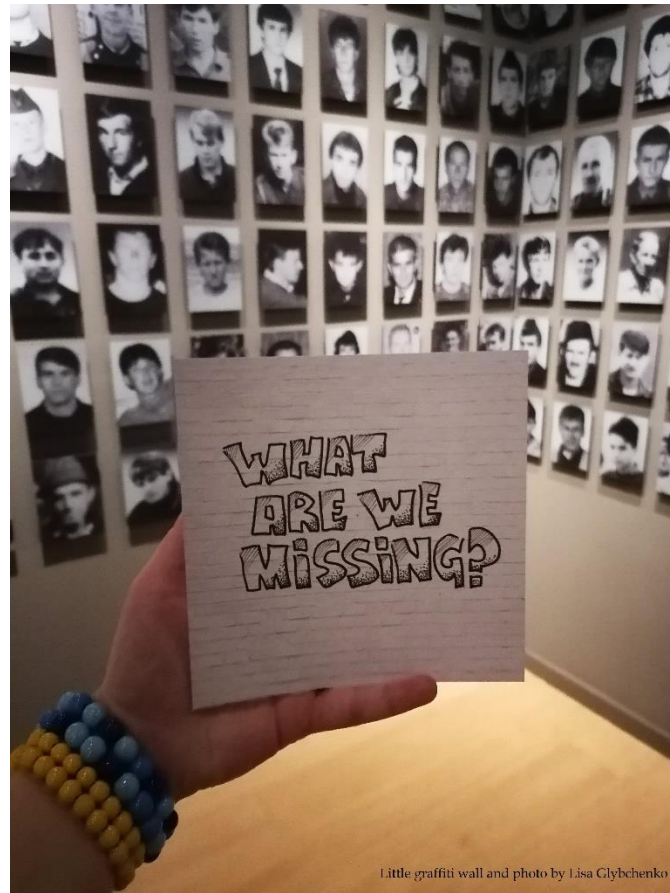
Coloring Freedom

Of importance to me was also to send a message of hope and fight for freedom through color-use. The video is full of blue and yellow – the colors of the flag of Ukraine (e.g. the beads), as well as black and red (as in lino-printing) – colors of resistance to oppression and colors of some of the national cloth embroidery patterns. I was specifically looking – or maybe already somehow wired to see anyway – Freedom Blue and Energizing Yellow, as in the photos below that I made in Sarajevo.



Pocket Walls

As I was learning more about then new for me context of Bosnia and Herzegovina, I was mesmerized by the role of graffiti in reclaiming and recoloring post-war Sarajevo to project a new violence-free future for the city and the country. So, when doing the project, I got the idea of creating “pocket walls” for graffitiing, but with liners. The pocket walls are squares of decorative paper with visual expressions of brick textures, over which I lettered some messages. This photo is taken inside Galerija 11/07/95 in Sarajevo. The background includes photos of, as far as I remember from the audio guide, those who were murdered in Srebrenica.



Little graffiti wall and photo by Lisa Glybchenko

Memory and Memory-Forward

I wanted to explore memory and prevention through such visual props as postcards (the ones from Galerija 11/07/95 and self-created) and polaroid photos. Freezing experiences or images in time and carrying them forward in material ways - the cards and the photos – made me think of perhaps decades-long processes of restorative justice and holistic post-war transformation Ukraine will need to undertake and all the mental/material legacy of war (from pieces of military equipment to broken house items to images of pre-war non-destroyed infrastructures).

(Missing) Animations

The video opens with an animation – a live recording of me drawing on a sheet of paper attached to a paper-based graphic tablet, which records the movements of an inking pen with a sensor that connects to the tablet's surface. And I further edited the image digitally only making two different versions – a paper drawing and a digital art piece. When I saw the live recording, I understood that it may not be a suitable medium for all of the project. The animation looked too smooth to reflect my life. My life is rather like the rhythm of the video you will see – punctuated by different images of/about the war in Ukraine, and images of media reports I see online (and that is why I even

included pieces of media reports in the video). You can see the video on the YouTube channel of Color Up Peace, my arts-for-peace startup:



The video was shown during the art exhibition of the Changing The Story Closing Event at Stage@Leeds, University of Leeds. What I plan to do next is to create a series of smaller video art pieces around the topics of war, genocide, searching and art. And I will definitely return to the original idea of feminist peacebuilding through coffee-making.

The project was supported by Changing The Story Mobility Fund.

Special thanks: The Complete Freedom of Truth, including for making the soundtrack creation possible with the participating musicians. See the credits part of the video for more information on contributions.