

Letter of Support to all Working at Metelkova 6

We at Moderna galerija (MG+MSUM) are shocked and appalled by the demand of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia that the cultural, research, and civil-society organizations that have their offices at Metelkova 6 vacate the premises by the end of January 2021. This demand fails to show any trace of concern for the continued cultural, artistic, and civil-society work of organizations and collectives that have a thirty-year-long tradition and exceptional symbolic significance. How will these people carry on their work, where will they relocate the priceless archives they have assembled over the decades, where will young people go to further their education? Metelkova 6 is an important part of the cultural and civil-society heritage of our space, for which the state should feel greater responsibility and, indeed, active concern for its well-being and preservation.

A potential change in the use of the Metelkova 6 building is a matter that affects and involves the entire Slovenian cultural sphere and calls for a broader public debate. But in particular it concerns us who work in its closest proximity. With its fields of activity, Metelkova 6 brings together the north and south parts of the former army barracks complex at Metelkova, i.e., institutional and non-institutional culture, live action and museum work, art and civil-society issues. This is what makes Metelkova so special: it is a cultural quarter composed of organizations that differ in status and may not always be on the most harmonious of terms yet nonetheless together co-create a space of the commons. It is something not found anywhere else in the world: Metelkova is unique, representing a different, innovative model of cultural production, something our country should be proud of and proudly present abroad, something our country's leaders could take inspiration from for their work. The Metelkova 6 building is undoubtedly deteriorating and in need of renovation, but when is such renovation scheduled to start, and what is the program behind it? Does this program take into account the symbolic capital produced over the decades by the same people and organizations that are now facing the threat of finding themselves without premises for their work?

The organizations working at Metelkova 6 have been partners of Moderna galerija (MG+MSUM) in various projects on many occasions. In the years we have been neighbors we have established a creative dialogue and solidarity, without which our future would be impoverished. Metelkova could serve as an example of good practice in shaping cultural policy in the time of the pandemic as well as after it. As neighbors we have always been available for one another, ready and willing to help with equipment and advice, hosting one another's projects, and arranging ways to collaborate. All who work at Metelkova 6 are crucially co-shaping our cultural life, and in addition to that, are active internationally. The NSK Information Center, the Retro-Avant-Garde Association (Laibach), the Contemporary Dance Association Slovenia, En-Knap, Exodos Ljubljana, Forum Ljubljana, Otok Institute for the Development of Film Culture / Kino Otok / Isola Cinema Festival, Maska – Institute for Publishing, Production and Education, City of Women – Association for the Promotion of Women in Culture, Peace Institute, Dance Theater Ljubljana, Center for Contemporary Arts SCCA-Ljubljana, ŠKUC and others are involved in numerous projects at home and regularly invited to tour or participate in exhibitions, festivals, concerts and conferences abroad. They are acclaimed and respected researchers, cultural workers and artists, winners of numerous awards. Metelkova 6 is a place of production of knowledge, creativity, and education, and a testing ground for new forms of community work and life.

Our time calls for cooperation and solidarity, not for division and intolerance. This makes the demand that the organizations working at Metelkova 6 move out all the more unreasonable. Equally reprehensible are the attempts to discredit some of the NGOs working there. Moderna galerija (MG+MSUM) wishes to express its support of all who work at Metelkova 6 and calls on the Slovenian government and the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia to enter into dialogue with them so that the organizations and collectives can keep or renew their leases.