

Eulàlia Grau, Katalin Ladik and Žene u crnom

29 June – 1 October 2017

A person can become free through acts of disobedience by learning to say no to power.

Not only is the capacity for disobedience the condition for freedom; freedom is also the condition for disobedience.

These words by Erich Fromm are the thread that ties together the exhibition focusing on three “positions” of disobedience, with the disobedient in our case being women. Their disobedience stems not only from

feminism as a defining point of departure for their actions, but also from a position of revolt against and noncompliance with any form of dominance and discrimination, be it male dominance over women in predominantly patriarchal societies or militarisms, sexism, and nationalisms of all shapes and sizes, as well as the devastating impact capitalism has on society as a whole. Acts of disobedience occur as interruptions disturbing the ingrained social arrangement of power, whereby the ideology of those in power is questioned and can therefore no longer be seen as valid or taken for granted. On the next level, the identities, borders, disciplines, hegemonic narratives, and automatic bodily responses are deconstructed and new counter-knowledge is produced. Art, as shown in the context of the Disobedient exhibition, is such counter-knowledge, an activity of critical social intervention and political upheaval.

The exhibition presents **Eulàlia Grau, Katalin Ladik** and the group **Žene u crnom / Women in Black**

nation that are activated by a repressive system, as was the case under Franco’s dictatorship. There were many feminist protests against the regime in 1975 and 1976. With the support of the Catholic Church, the Spanish government passed an act in 1942 whereby a woman, once married, could no longer work, open a bank account without her husband’s permission, hold a passport or have custody of her children. The use of contraceptive pills was also forbidden, as were abortion and divorce. The protests were indelibly linked with Grau’s artistic work, as is evident for instance in *Discriminacio de la dona / Discrimination against women* (1977). The curator Teresa Grandas noted that even though 40 years have passed since the artist produced her first works, many of the situations she denounced still exist today.

Katalin Ladik (1942) entered the literary and artistic scenes of Novi Sad (Vojvodina, then Yugoslavia, since 1992 she has lived in Budapest) in the mid-1960s, working in radio, and as an actress in the theatre and films. She wrote poetry in Hungarian, ranging from erotic verse to ritual and experimental phonic and visual works. Her early interest in poetic, vocal experiments, experimental sound, phonetic and vocal improvisation, and her work as a visual artist with, for example, the group BOSCH+BOSCH is also notable. It was, however, her work with the voice and body that led her to performance, and subsequently to the visual arts. Katalin Ladik was the first female performer in Yugoslavia to use her own body as an autonomous medium equivalent to text and sound. Her early performances were influenced by para-rituals, shifting in the mid-1970s towards a reflection on the position of women, questioning the traditional female roles constructed by the male-dominated society. She often used her naked body in her performances to critique the constraints of patriarchy. Since the 1980s her works have been referred to as “postmodern narrative performance”. As Miško Šuvaković pointed out,

Žene u crnom (Women in Black) is a group of feminist and antimilitarist activists from Serbia (active as a group since 1991). They have made “visible non-violent resistance to militarism, war, sexism, nationalism. In short, all aspects of violence towards and discrimination against women and all those people different ethnically, religiously, culturally, sexually, ideologically.” They also founded the Women’s Peace Network/Network of Women in Black in Serbia, produced women’s alternative history and thus recorded *the other* to history, and organized permanent peace education.

They constantly demand accountability for the war and war crimes in the former Yugoslavia, calling for the trial of all those suspected of war crimes in The Hague, and also confronting the issues of both moral and political collective responsibility, through street actions, appeals, petitions, campaigns, attendance at commemorations, seminars, and conferences.

For more than 25 years the Women in Black have taken to the streets in Serbia and other parts of the for-

“she began to recycle, copy and referentially exploit her early para-ritual and proto-conceptual performing strategies in new works, leading her from performance to cabaret and theatre.”

Besides her most emblematic performances and body art pieces in the format of photo documents, the exhibition will show a selection of music scores and collages.

Curated by Bojana Piškur, assistant Silvia Maria Carolo

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mer Yugoslavia in silent, peaceful actions encouraging society to confront its difficult past. The radicalism of their continued performances (silent performances, i.e. standings) lies not in the representation of bodies in public space, but in the attempt to struggle while “offering one’s body for some common goal.” As Dubravka Knežević wrote, “for sometimes the only action is standing in public, neither agitating nor propagandizing but bearing witness to events to which there is no obvious or immediate remedy.” To date they have organized more than 1500 peaceful actions on the street (protests, performances, campaigns). The selection of their rich archival materials (photo documentation, protest posters and similar) will be shown for the first time at the exhibition *Disobedient*.

For Grau, art is always a means of social intervention. She is a fierce critic of the unequal position of women in society, and of the mechanisms of social domi-

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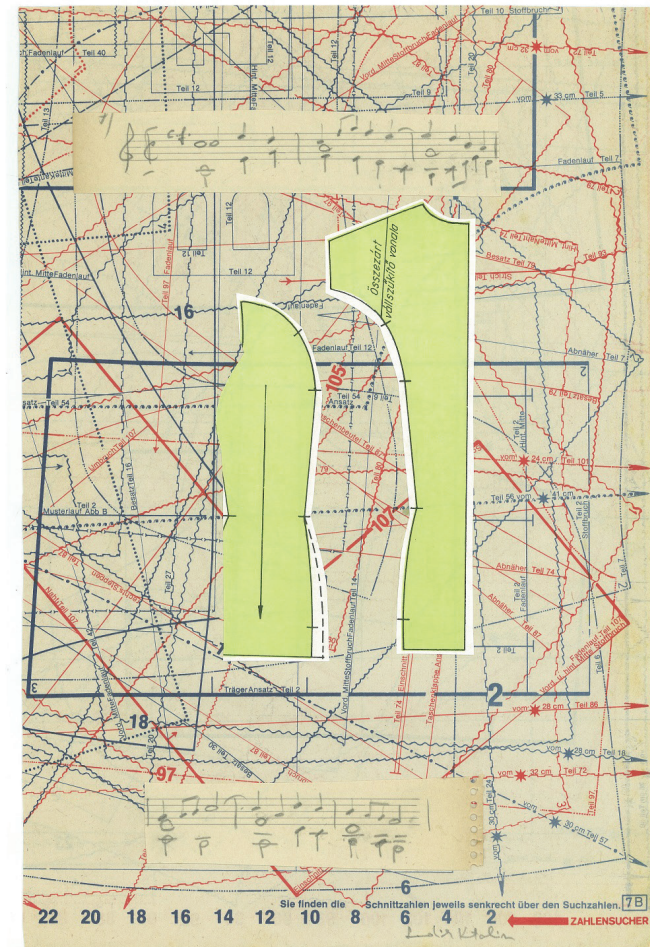
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Eulàlia Grau: Leisure Time (Ethnography), 1974,
acrylic and photographic emulsion on canvas, courtesy of:
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid.
Long-term loan of Eulàlia Grau Collection, 2010

DISOBEDIENT

Katalin Ladik: Estrangement,
paper collage, 1978 (+ sound recording,
2015), courtesy of the artist



Žene u crnom / Women in Black: Silent standing at Trg Republike, Belgrade, 1996

Women's anti-war solidarity rally – a meeting of
the Women in Black international network, Novi Sad, 1996,
photo by: Vesna Pavlović