

# FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE & LISTING

Exhibition:

## **NORMALITIES**



### **EXHIBITION DATES:**

JAN 20 – APR 12, 2016

### **OPENING EVENTS:**

JAN 19, 6 – 7 PM | panel discussion

JAN 19, 7 – 9 PM | opening reception with a live performance by Ana Prvački

JAN 20, 7:30 PM | Viennese Tschuschenkapelle in concert:

*Balkan Blues Goes West*

Austrian Cultural Forum New York

11 East 52<sup>nd</sup> Street, New York

[www.acfny.org/normalities](http://www.acfny.org/normalities)

[Image credit: Alban Muja *My Name Their City (Saranda)*, 2012]

**ARTISTS ON VIEW:** CÄCILIA BROWN, NEMANJA CVIJANOVIĆ, DUŠICA DRAŽIĆ, FLAKA HALITI, IBRO HASANOVIĆ, JELENA JUREŠA, JAKOB LENA KNEBL, IRENA LAGATOR PEJOVIĆ, ARMANDO LULAJ, ALBAN MUJA, DAMIR OČKO, ANA PRVAČKI, MARUŠA SAGADIN, SAŠO STANOJKOVIĆ, KERSTIN VON GABAIN

**Curated by MARKO LULIĆ and CHRISTINE MOSER**

*New York, December 2015* – The **Austrian Cultural Forum New York** is pleased to present ***Normalities***, a show starring artists from the Western Balkan region (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia), Croatia, as well as from Austria and the United States. Artists include Flaka Haliti, Armando Lulaj, Damir Očko, and Irena Lagator Pejović, whose works were featured at the 55<sup>th</sup> and 56<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennials in 2013 and 2015, respectively.

For philosopher Slavoj Žižek the very name “Balkans” is almost synonymous with “otherness” and deliberately used to distinguish oneself from one’s very neighbor. In the past century, the region was a laboratory of extraordinary political circumstances, and still is by all means a place in constant transition. In recent times, Southeastern Europe has gone through a massive transformation in an economical as well as political sense. Migration has made Vienna the fastest growing European capital, the city with the third-largest Serbian population, and home to many emerging artists. The integration of the Western Balkan countries into the European Union is a clear goal, but still an ongoing process. Apart from these political

aspects of normalization, the concept of 'normality' becomes all the more attractive within various different theoretical frameworks and disciplines, from philosophy and psychology to sociology and, of course, the arts.

**Normalities** sets out to explore the concept of normality from a number of different angles—focusing on the Balkans, but extending outwards. What does it mean to be an artist almost a quarter of a century after the fall of Yugoslavia in a globalized world? How can identity collectively and individually be preserved? These questions are crucial, for artists from the region but also beyond. They are similar to those that are being asked all around the globe, in a world that has changed so quickly in the last few decades. The term 'normality' defies any attempt at a concise—let alone exhaustive—definition. Its meaning is in constant flux, changing in the most unpredictable ways, as the Balkan region has over the past century.

The works showcased in **Normalities** go beyond art of a post-conflict society. They range from print, collage, and sculpture to photography and video, support the approach of constantly questioning normality. Some artistic positions deal with overcoming the past: **Cvijanović, Lulaj** and **Hasanović's** artworks deal directly with history as they choose an event or person of great historical importance and manage to create a new reading by shifting symbols. Others address the friction between private and political. In his series of staged portraits **Muja**, for example, depicts aspects of national identification. **Knebl** uses her own body as a projection surface in her sculpture dealing with hate speech. **Haliti, Jureša** and **Stanojković** focus on sociological and cultural topics such as de-masking of mechanisms of male bonding, questions of migration or the death of cinemas—dimensions in which issues of normality pervade through and guide society. **Prvački's** video *At the Tips of Your Fingertips* is a performance which literally shows the "laundering" of one dollar bills. **Lagator Pejović, Brown** and **Dražić's** pieces could be described as investigating modes of perception, but all of them also engage with the materiality of the artworks and associations evolving out of a certain choice of material or format. **Von Gabain's** work—a plaster cast of a Starbucks cup—can be seen as ironic comment on industrial norms. The analysis of architecture, especially driven by an interest in gender topics, is part of **Sagadin's** installation. In *TK*, **Očko** investigates human shivering as a mechanism of resistance in a time of global insecurity, anxiety, and fear.

Curated by Marko Lulić and Christine Moser, **Normalities** initiates a new narrative and dialogue that unites the artists on view through their disparities within the confines of the **Austrian Cultural Forum New York's** unique exhibition spaces.

## OPENING EVENTS

The opening of **Normalities** will take place on January 19 from 7 PM to 9 PM, featuring a live performance by Ana Prvački. The opening reception is anticipated by a panel talk from 6 PM – 7 PM. As part of the exhibition, on January 20 at 7:30 PM, the ACFNY will present a concert by the Viennese gypsy-jazz band *Tschuschenkapelle*.

## ABOUT THE CURATORS

**Marko Lulić**, born in 1972 in Vienna, is a Vienna-based artist, whose work is concerned with the intersection of art, architecture, ideology, and aesthetics. In recent years, he has also curated several exhibitions at the Secession (Vienna, Austria), the Siemens Arts Program, the Museum of Contemporary Art (Belgrade, Serbia), and for Gabriele Senn Gallery (Vienna). He has shown in institutions like Storefront for Art and Architecture (New York City, USA), MSUB - Museum of Contemporary Art Belgrade (Belgrade), Witte de With – Center for Contemporary Art (Rotterdam, Netherlands), 21er Haus / Belvedere (Vienna), Lentos Art Museum (Linz, Austria), Kunsthalle Wien (Vienna), MSU – Museum of Contemporary Art (Zagreb, Croatia), MAK – Austrian Museum of Applied Arts / Contemporary Art (Vienna), Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen (St. Gallen, Switzerland), and FKV - Frankfurter Kunstverein (Frankfurt, Germany). His work was also included in The Biennale of Sydney (Sydney, Australia), the 12<sup>th</sup> Swiss Sculpture Exhibition (Biel/Bienne, Switzerland), the October Salon (Belgrade), and the Chicago Architecture Biennial (Chicago, USA).

**Christine Moser** is director of the Austrian Cultural Forum New York with its contemporary programming across all disciplines. Previous international group shows include the ACFNY's "Vienna Complex" festival as part of Carnegie Hall's "Vienna City of Dreams" festival in 2014, "Self Timer Stories", "Martin Karplus", "Lenin Icebreaker Revisited", and "Frederick Kiesler and Contemporary Art" in 2015. In fall 2015, she initiated "The Jewish Museum Vienna on 52<sup>nd</sup> Street", the first

collaboration between the Jewish Museum Vienna and the Austrian Cultural Forum in New York. A leading Austrian diplomat, her previous postings include Austrian ambassador to the Organization for Security and Development in Europe, deputy chief of the Austrian embassy in Paris as well as assignments in the fields of European integration and human rights. Moser, who first got to know New York City and New England during her studies as a Fulbright scholar at Smith College, Massachusetts, is dedicated to showcase Austrian art, music, film, theater, and literature, presenting “as much contemporary art as possible” at the Austrian Cultural Forum New York.

## **ABOUT THE AUSTRIAN CULTURAL FORUM**

With its architectural landmark building in Midtown Manhattan, located just around the corner of MoMA, the ACFNY’s facilities include a multi-level gallery space, a theater, and its own library. Hosting more than 100 free events annually, the ACFNY thus becomes one of the most important, if not *the* most important place to encounter Austrian art, culture, and tradition for an American audience. The Austrian Cultural Forum enjoys long-standing and flourishing partnerships with many venerable cultural and academic institutions throughout New York and the United States. Visit [acfny.org](http://acfny.org) for more information.

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