

# frieze

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## ART AS ACTIVISM

DOCUMENTA (13)

THEASTER GATES, SUZANNE LACY, KATEŘINA ŠEDÁ  
& PETER WATKINS

ALTERNATIVE ART SCHOOLS

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## MLADEN BIZUMIĆ

### Salon of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade

Luxury hotels have long fuelled the cultural imagination. Places like The Plaza or The Ritz continue to concretize otherwise vague desires and promises of glamour and social status thanks to their recurring pop-cultural circulation, dropped as names or serving as movie sets; never mind that these venues have long been outgunned globally by some seven-star spectacles in Dubai. And according to Jay-Z and Kanye's 2011 track 'Niggas in Paris', where it's at now is Le Meurice.

Times change. And they certainly did for Belgrade's Hotel Jugoslavija, a formerly grand but now defunct concrete colossus of the species, at the centre of artist Mladen Bizumić's eponymous exhibition at the Salon of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade. Designed in 1947 yet only completed in the late 1960s, the hotel provided Tito's modern state construct of Yugoslavia with befitting new model lodgings for both a Socialist elite and Western heads of state and celebrities. Bizumić approached this site's exemplary Yugoslavian postwar trajectory in quasi-archeological museum mode, by borrowing and exhibiting, for the show's duration, its 'artefacts': the hotel's furnishings, including miscellaneous items such as a series of room service doorknob signs and an obsolete currency exchange table.

Yet the artist didn't leave it at this site- and time-specific, art-historically well-trodden transplantation, as the objects were further fashioned into self-contained sculptures: wooden cabinets, more Art Deco than International Style, were stacked atop one another, approximating human height. Floor lamps were lined up like an attentive row of bellhops. Two large chandeliers dangled

from a sinuous luggage trolley like a pair of sparkling earrings. What could have been an exercise in anthropomorphization became an injection of playfulness into the bleak uniformity traditionally ascribed to so-called failed Modernist architecture, especially of the Eastern Bloc variety, as well as to the latter's perception of the everyday from a Western perspective.

A similar instinct is reflected in a series of black and white photographs channelling architectural details of the hotel and its surroundings through a kind of chronologically dislodged 'Neues Sehen' style. As such, this individualizing treatment of potentially heavy subject matter (the hotel was severely damaged during the 1990s NATO bombings) suggests a different course, subtly bypassing any dualistic argument, be it that of communism vs. capitalism, Modernism vs. Postmodernism, or Utopia vs. dystopia.

So it was apt that Bizumić chose this hotel rather than the more popular staple of contemporary practices thriving on these dualisms – the Modernist housing estate. The hotel was further featured in a video piece in which the camera circumscribes the sprawling complex, lingering on gleaming facades, dusty crystal ceilings and above all its emptiness, only disrupted by a Serbian celebrity the artist equally 'borrowed' from a concurrent film shoot while on location. The actor's hazy ruminations on what this kind of space in flux may yield for a community past and coming, are caught up with the real-time on-screen exploits of advertising, the film industry and contemporary art projects. A suite of identical hotel mirrors hung in several facing pairs, creating the familiar effect of endless reflection of the self, here enacts the kind of destabilizing of ideology, -isms and history colonizing visual perception the artist seems to engage in, asking which one trails the other.

DANIEL HORN



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## MATT HINKLEY

### KALIMANRAWLINS

#### Melbourne

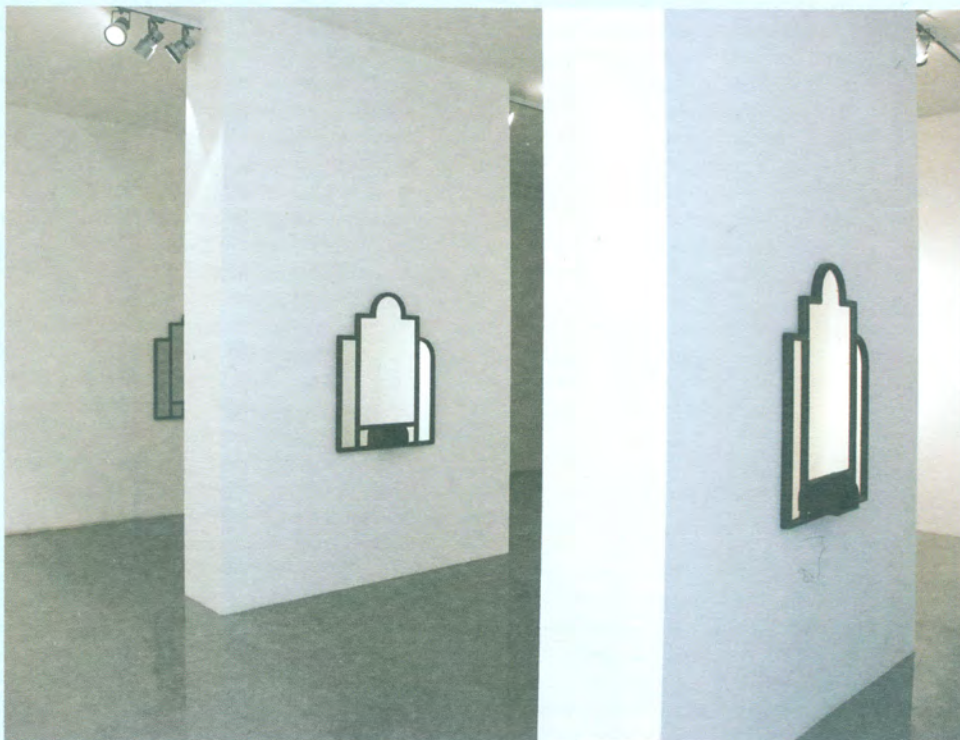
At first glance, the five wall-mounted, ghostly sculptural masses presented in Matt Hinkley's recent exhibition suggested at most a weak resemblance to the artist's previous work. His garishly coloured, minuscule polymer clay sculptures with their abstract patterns cast from hand-etched plaster moulds were nowhere in evidence. Nor was there any sign of the table-tennis ball, aluminium tubing or obsolete items of electronic hardware upon which he has, in the past, inscribed similarly intricate designs. The increased magnitude of Hinkley's new works (all *Untitled*, 2012), along with their heavy horizontal protrusion from the wall, lent them a certain clumsiness and docility – qualities difficult to attribute to the Australian artist's previous sculptural output.

Yet despite superficial differences, that the new work was manufactured through an ad hoc, labour-intensive technique with ordinary objects and materials, confirmed its underlying continuity with Hinkley's previous work. The DIY production process employed by Hinkley for the new works, more specifically, involved casting the sheets, strips and shreds that comprised the outer layers of each work by scraping a thin coat of liquid silicon onto an array of flat surfaces – mostly different sorts of paper and tablecloth. Each silicon piece was then wrapped around a structure built from either wire attached to a metal frame or, in the case of the simplest, cylindrically shaped work on display, wire alone.

The completed works staged a series of disjunctions between the formal properties of silicon, wire, and stainless steel. Viewed from certain angles, the wire structures of certain works were plainly visible, which had the effect of punctuating the outer rubbery layers of the work. The underside of one work, more radically, left its innards substantially exposed; the viewer could glimpse the stainless steel Sol LeWitt-type modular structure pressing against delicate outer layers. Typically though, one's attention was directed more towards these layers than to the geometric architectures concealed within.

1  
Mladen Bizumić  
'Hotel Jugoslavija',  
2012,  
installation view

2  
Matt Hinkley  
*Untitled*, 2012,  
wire, silicon  
and pigment,  
54 × 37 × 46 cm



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