

## **Nada Miljkovic – Artistic Statement**

Art has a profound affect on me. It does not matter what form of art, from music, painting, sculpture to filmic experiences. Throughout my life, I great art inspires uncontrollable spontaneous sobbing. As a child and young adult, I was puzzled by these reactions. Luckily through my varying studies, I understand myself better. I've realized that highly sensitive visceral reaction of art allow me an understanding and a proclivity to make art. Particularly I found that my art practice allows me the space for discovery and claiming of my "self" and "other".

At the beginning of my practice, I've explored paint as the medium and creating self-portraits and the portraits. I quickly realized my images were a means for introspection. Subconscious feelings for the world and myself revealed themselves on the canvas. Studying philosophy, my research and writing developed. I defined my art to include aesthetics as well as activism, formal and conceptual. Art manifests in ways of living as well the various mediums from painting, writing to film.

My philosophical work began with Ancient Greece and their concept of art. Continuing through time, I became aware of all the different theories of art and aesthetics throughout Western civilization. One particular theory that has stayed with me is from the Poetics. Aristotle defines empathy as the height of successful storytelling which is the highest art form. The greatest achievement for the writer is to stimulate the audience into not only feeling similarly and agreeing with the characters' actions but to get the audience to feel that they too would make the same decision if given the same circumstances. This idea cuts across all the arts. This led me to understand that empathy is at the heart of all great art.

The tools for creating art have evolved into modernity. This evolution has become more and more fast and profound. Today, my practice in conjunction with progress in technology has led me to filmmaking, the point of intersection between the narrative, sound and the visual. The tools of these new media have even greater potential than ever before to heighten an artistic experience that provokes a life-changing experience. The stakes are at their highest with the bar constantly raising.

Seventy years ago, Walter Benjamin implores us to consider the ethical use of these new technologies in his great essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Art's Reproducibility." The intention of the art is imbedded and must transparent for the viewer to see. The choice and use of media has the potential to manipulate and change the world for better or worse. Today, the technologies have moved art practice and theory past many 20<sup>th</sup> century paradigms. Art can be sensually immersive, interactive and completely unique every time. Now, the spectator can be the participant.

My newest installation, Game of Balkan Life, combines video interactivity with a panoramic simulated space. As soon as the participants enter an area surrounded

by four screens (45"x80"), they are immersed in a pastoral sensual environment. The participants sit at a table will be a multi-touch screen table-top environment. A map of the game shown that resembles the board-game "Game of Life" yet different. A voice begins when the participants are ready to begin the game and lead them through the various activities such as how to roll the dice and move the car as well choosing if they are male or female. Once the players are instructed and ready, they play the game. As they move, landing on specific squares trigger sound or video vignettes that projected on the screens behind the players from Romi music being played to an old woman telling you about life. This game of life takes place in the Balkans. Choices are similar and very different. Each squares shows a part of Balkan life from pagan rituals, to cooking on the ground or making plum brandy. As each player moves, their corresponding screens change. By the end of the game, which is death, they learn all about Balkan Life.

Many aspects of GLB are from the gaming technologies both in form and practice as well as the theoretical. The entire system is built to interact with the participants to create a narrative and experience completely unique to them.

Gaming informs my practice about concepts such as virtuality, embodiment, and interactivity as well the newest technologies for game engines to interface. Spurred by the profitability of the gaming industry, people have been researching these elements for many years. Their development is extraordinary from story generators and artificial intelligence, interactivity involving accelerometers and gyrometers, dialogues between humans and avatars, just using brainwave controllers that need no movement only thought. Many of these elements are in GBL.

Ultimately, the aim of my work is to create opportunities for stimulating and building empathy with people cross-culturally. My research will use the newest media technologies and digital arts to build bridges by connection across ethnic and social divides by focusing on the commonness of human existence and experience. If in gaming, the "successful game design is the creation of meaningful play", then my goal is to create a game that is fun and inspires empathy.