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SOUND AND FURY
A DOCUMENTARY INSTALLATION

by

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of the Graduate
School of the University of Colorado in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

Department of Fine Arts, Creative Art

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This thesis for the Master of Fine Arts Degree by


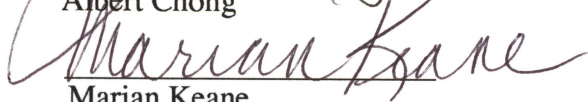
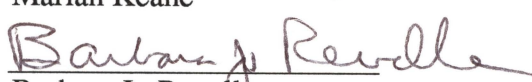
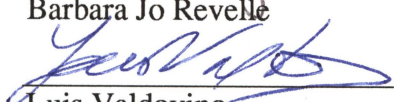
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INTRODUCTION

“Sound and Fury” is a documentary exhibit based on three trips to Croatia in 1991 and 1993, before and after the war there. While heavily dependent on photographs, the work is an attempt to bring the ideas and techniques of installation art into the realm of the documentary. The intent is not to simulate a piece of war-torn Croatia in the gallery; rather, the idea is to create an environment that embodies a sense of place and evokes the feelings that characterized my relations with friends and contacts there. The creation of an atmosphere--in this case, moody and mournful--in turn, impacts upon how the viewer experiences the photos, objects, text, and video that make up the display. As in all work that utilizes the concept of installation, the experience of the whole is designed to be more meaningful than an experience of any single part.

Photographs, by their very nature, create a dynamic tension between past and present, here and there, self and other. Bound by the rules of chemistry and physics, the photographic image is undeniably specific. Moment, view, and detail are inscribed directly on the emulsion via the agency of light. This specificity makes the medium historical as well as evocative. And yet, photographs are partial histories, synchronic and simplistic, emblematic of the single-point perspective of the self. Separated by time and space from the instant of their creation, photographs float; fragmentary, dislocated, and momentous. Any significance an image may accrue is anchored in a complex web of personal and social relations rather than any inherent claim to veracity.

By fixing a moment, a gesture, a look, photographs become a baseline from which distance, change, and the passage of time are evoked and experienced. While this experience takes place within the broad confines of culture, the relationship between image and individual is unequivocally personal and empathetic. The image, it might be said, is illuminated by personal desire, and this illumination is fueled by distance, separation, and loss.

“Sound and Fury” has a great deal to do with my feelings of distance and separation from people I have come to care about deeply. What started out as an installation designed to critique the media and question assumptions about the documentary genre turned into an homage to the friends that took me in and shared their lives with me. My initial aspirations were much more ambitious--a reflexive documentary that would sum up the history of the area, provide an in-depth portrayal of individuals caught up in events, critique the representation of the conflict in the media, and articulate a progressive role for the engaged, activist documentary artist. These are all important issues to deal with. But in evoking the feelings of distance and separation that I share with my friends, through the physical means of an installation, I accomplished something more gratifying, unexpected, and personally meaningful. It is a trade-off that, for now, I will gladly accept.

* * * * *

This essay is divided into three parts. Following this introduction is a short personal history that describes my relations to people and events in Croatia. Next is an inventory of the installation, an examination of the separate elements and how these elements play off one another in the piece, and a brief discussion of the idea of “documentary installation”. The paper concludes with some final thoughts on the fieldwork experience that provided the foundation for this work.

PERSONAL HISTORY

In May of 1991 I boarded an airline bound for Zagreb, Croatia. My intentions were to explore my ethnic roots (my mother's family emigrated from the Dalmatian coast in the 1880's) and photograph Yugoslavia at a time of significant social transformation. The Berlin Wall had come down, communism was on its way out, and nationalism was polarizing communities throughout Eastern Europe. There were ethnic riots in the port city of Split the week before my departure--I thought I might be flying into a war zone. As it turned out, things were relatively calm for the seven weeks I was in Croatia. Rather than demonstrations and demagoguery, people in Zagreb went about expressing their desire for autonomy in a restrained manner, with elections, flag-waving, graffiti, and a brisk trade in Cro Army caps, passport covers, and tapes of nationalist folk songs. To be honest, it was a bit of a letdown. But acclimating to Croatian culture proved to be as difficult as it was interesting, and kept me busy and engaged.

Most people I interviewed in Zagreb felt there was going to be a political settlement, but out in the countryside it was much more tense. There were terrorist incidents while I was there, but without a handle on the language, I wasn't able to read between the lines. I left the country on June 21; three days later Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence. I was in France at the time, visiting my brother. We were eating cous-cous at a little dive when I noticed tanks rolling across the bright green Yugoslav countryside on Paris television. It was only then that it dawned on me that I had documented the last days of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

* * * * *

Zagreb was a much more dynamic place than I anticipated. The stereotypes I had of Eastern Europe didn't hold true here--there were no bread lines, people were educated and friendly, and many (especially the young) spoke English. The city was clean, the air was clear, and the trams ran on time. There were street musicians and vendors on the square, MTV in the bars, and Socialist Realism had been booted out of the galleries years ago. Jasna, my initial contact, surprised me when she stated bluntly "There is no crime here, no homeless people, and it's safe to walk the streets at night". She was, no doubt, comparing Zagreb to Berkeley, California, where she had studied for a couple years. But seven weeks in Zagreb gave me nothing to doubt her claims. Jasna helped arrange a home-stay situation for me, and I began to explore the Croatian capital.

Like most big cities, the market and trams and businesses tended to be impersonal. But one-on-one, people were friendly, especially when they found out I was half Croatian. I hadn't grown up thinking of myself as "Croatian" or "Dalmatian" or "Yugoslav", but it was clear that my ethnicity was an asset in getting around Zagreb and doing documentary work. People were feeling proud of their heritage, and even though I was obviously an American, they respected and appreciated my interest in the motherland. One man, a stranger whom I had asked for directions, shook my hand and said the word "brothers", in English, when I pointed to my chest and said "Marinovich". On occasion, I would mention my name in a calculated way. But for the most part, the subject would come up in the more general conversation about why I was in Zagreb. It gave people an understandable reason for my presence. It made asking questions and taking pictures easier. And for someone who was struggling with the language, trying to get settled in an unfamiliar place, it was a calling card I didn't hesitate to show.

There is a fine line, however, between personal pride in culture and a more public, politicized nationalism. Witnessing a small group of Croatians giving the stiff-armed fascist salute at a rally for the nationalist leader Paraga was a reminder of the dark side of Balkan nationalism. Long before that incident, however, my friendship with Veljko D, a life-long resident of Zagreb whose father is Serbian, alerted me to the danger of identifying too closely with Croatian zealots. It is not without irony that my best friend in Croatia would turn out to be ethnic Serb. But that kind of irony kept me from falling into an uncritical embrace of my ethnic roots.

For the first three weeks in Zagreb, I spent a lot of time in the more public parts of the city--the main square, the Old Town, and the galleries and museums. It was easier to photograph and interview and approach strangers there. The Museum of Contemporary Art became a hangout for awhile--the curator of photography liked my work, showed me the collection, and loaded me up with books and monographs that the Museum had published. I got my first taste of what it is like to be taken seriously as an artist there.

My biggest break, however, came when I met three young art students at a video screening in one of the galleries. We became fast friends, and they began to show me Zagreb from a resident's point of view. They also thought of themselves as "Yugoslav" rather than Croatian--an idea I hadn't encountered before in the highly politicized climate of the times. They were in fact a mixed group--Deniza was Muslim, Petar a Croatian Jew, and Veljko was half Serb. This was the Croatia that was obscured by all the flag-waving and folk songs--a multi-cultural Croatia whose viability is up in the air.

Veljko and I hit it off particularly well. He was a European cross between a punk and a beatnik. He showed me around the underground art/club scene in Zagreb, and introduced me to his circle of friends. We

traded tapes, smoked hash, told stories, and rode bicycles all over town. After a couple of weeks, Veljko asked his parents if I could stay at their place, and they agreed. I was made to feel like family; sharing meals, going out for walks, watching movies on late-night television. It was Balkan hospitality at its finest.

That's not to say I always felt at ease in Zagreb. I couldn't get a grip on the language, the food was heavy on the fatty meats, and almost everybody smoked cigarettes. Sometimes Veljko would want to stay out and party and I would be exhausted from photographing all day, and we would quarrel. Other times I didn't quite pick up on the etiquette of domestic life, and felt like a drain on Veljko's mom. Without the language skills, there were huge gaps in my understanding of politics and events. And while I was having a great time in Zagreb, out in the countryside, in the Serb-populated area of Croatia known as the Kraijna, people on both sides were preparing for a war I didn't think was going to happen.

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That first trip seems like ages ago, in another world. That's what happens when a war comes between you and your memories. Zagreb looks more or less the same as it was in 1991--only slight damage from a jet attack. But the people living there had lived in fear and uncertainty for over a year. You didn't necessarily see it on the surface, but living through the tension of the times, at the front or waiting in the capital, took its toll.

Veljko's family was split up by the war. Slobodan, his father, was not only a Serb but an officer in the Yugoslav Federal Army (the JNA). He believed in the Yugoslav ideal and, in Deniza's words, elected to stay with "his boys". He is living in Serbia now; Marijana, his former wife, told me he wouldn't have been safe in Zagreb. The family, by virtue of association,

wasn't particularly safe, either. On two separate occasions, men in paramilitary uniforms have tried to evict them from their flat. They received help from supportive neighbors, but live with the threat that it might happen again. I became involved in the situation; when I returned in July of 1993, my presence was reported to the authorities. They suspected I might have been Slobodan! A policeman (who was fortunately a family friend) was sent over to investigate. The Croatian peace movement, as well as international human rights groups, have begun to document these kinds of incidents--they are not uncommon. Not that most people are like that; but the behavior of extremists is tolerated by the government, and supported by certain sectors of society.

When I returned to Zagreb in July of 1993, Veljko was doing graphics work for "Arkzin", the journal of the Anti-War Campaign of Croatia (ARK). He introduced me to people in the peace movement, a mix of Croats, Serbs, Muslims, and internationals (mainly Europeans). The Arkzin office became a base of operations for me; a place to leave my bags, hang out with people, meet new friends, do interviews, and party. I had been involved in the anti-nuclear and anti-intervention communities in the Bay Area in the 80's--the atmosphere at the Arkzin office felt familiar. I had found a place for myself.

Vesna Jankovic, editor of Arkzin, helped me secure UN press credentials. This allowed me to get out of Zagreb and see the physical effects of the war first-hand. ARK had just begun an international volunteer program in a town called Pakrac, in the United Nations Protected Area (UNPA) known as Sector West. Volunteers were being solicited to help the local work crews clean up the rubble, salvage building materials, and initiate social welfare projects--teaching classes, providing day-care, organizing youth and woman's groups. The idea was to help normalize the situation, and provide a link between two very distrustful communities.

My timing was just right--I was there with the first work crew, and provided photos for Arkzin that were published. Slides of my work were also used for fundraising and orientation for new volunteers. For my part, I was getting the chance to combine my background in visual anthropology and social activism, as well as documentary photography, in a meaningful and compelling situation.

Pakrac is unique in that the cease-fire line (in effect since March of 1992) splits the town into Serb and Croat sides. There was intense fighting between the two groups, with the Serbs being supported by well-armed units of the JNA. The town changed hands five times and virtually every building suffered artillery or automatic weapons-fire damage. There is still intense hatred towards the Serbs on the other side of the line, many of whom left in the dead of night without warning their Croatian neighbors before the first attack. The destruction and the hatred were sobering. It wasn't television anymore, it was the reality I was walking around in, the reality I had come to experience. You couldn't escape; it was everywhere.

Walking around the cease-fire line, where the devastation is most intense, became a kind of ritual for me. The whole neighborhood is shot up, abandoned, and eerily desolate. I went there to photograph, but also to feel, to empathize, and to pay my respects. People had died in this place, and the blasted buildings were like melancholy monuments or mausoleums. Making art out of this seems almost sacrilegious. But just as making photos was a way of staying focused and centered and sane while I was in Pakrac, making something respectful and resonant was a way for me to process and deal with my experience when I returned home. I would like to talk about the installation now; but I would ask that you keep in mind this image of silent desolation. Walk around in it for a moment. The wind is whistling

softly through splintered rafters; the weeds are growing silently in the rubble. And your footsteps crunch the gravel like the sound of boots crunching bones. *Watch your step!*

THE INSTALLATION

The individual parts that make up the installation whole are listed below. What follows is a discussion of each element and how it plays off the other elements in the piece. Please refer to the diagram, next page, for a sense of how the elements relate spatially. Slides of the piece are on file in the Slide Library in the Sible-Wolle Fine Arts Building.

1-- The Floor

2--The Shrines

3--The Grid of Photographs

4--The Objects on Pedestals

5--The Map and Text

6--The Video and Audio

1--The Floor

The floor of the piece, along with the walls, serves to define and unify the display space. Made from various sizes and colors of brick, the floor covers thirty-five by eighteen feet, running from the north wall of the gallery to the south wall. The 3,000 bricks that make up the floor are seconds or used, and vary in size. They are laid with gaps between them, making the floor awkward to walk upon. Rather than provide solid footing, the rough floor is designed to reinforce the idea that the viewer is treading on unfamiliar, unstable ground.

The idea for the floor came up while thinking about the battered landscape of Pakrac. Bricks--as rubble, or piled neatly in stacks to be reused--are a common sight in town, and seen frequently in the photographs arranged on the south wall. Rather than attempt to recreate the destruction (as I had originally

SOUND AND FURY
A DIAGRAM OF THE INSTALLATION

South Wall of Gallery

grid of photos

brick floor
(covers entire display space)
(18 X 35 feet)

map and text
(east wall)

shrines

audio and video
(west wall)

objects on pedestals

North Wall of Gallery

considered doing), the rough brick floor allowed me to reference the destruction without being literal. The bricks also reference the arrangement of the photographs, which are displayed in a grid. In an understated way, I hope to suggest that both bricks and photos are building blocks of larger structures of significance.

2--The Shrines

In the center of the piece are three short walls, made of bricks, that rise about 40 inches off the floor. These walls stand independently in an unconnected U-shape, so that viewers can walk in and around them. Each wall is about eight feet long. Images of five close friends from Croatia have been applied to the interior surface of the wall, using the paintable photographic emulsion known as Liquid Light. The names of these individuals have been written on the bricks with white paint. Flowers--some fresh, most browned and stiff--have been placed around the walls and next to the images. On the other side of the walls are scores of common Yugoslav names, lettered crudely in white paint.

These shrines are an homage to the individuals they portray. In a broader sense, their presence embodies the tragedy that has engulfed Yugoslavia. While all are "Croatian" by virtue of their residence in the country, their ethnic and cultural origins vary in a typical Yugoslav mix. Marijana is Slovenian and Montinegrin; her children, Veljko and Ana, have a Serb father. Deniza's parents are Muslims from Bosnia. Zvezdana is Croatian and Hungarian. None of these people fought, or were hurt, in a physical sense, during the war. Yet they have lived through the psychological trauma of air raids, artillery attacks, the loss of friends, and a relentless climate of fear and uncertainty. They are survivors, and they are friends, and I wanted to honor them in some way.

Marijana. Veljko. Ana. Deniza. Zvezdana.

These are the people that took me in and shared their lives and food and homes with me. These are the people that answered my endless questions and tolerated my ever-present camera. We shared, argued, partied, listened, and learned from one another in a way that transcended difference and celebrated it. I miss them. And I struggled with a way to bring them into this piece in an evocative and respectful manner.

The answer came in thinking back upon an event I witnessed on All Souls' Day in 1993. Refugees, who couldn't visit the graves of loved ones to pay their respects, built a wall of bricks around the UN headquarters in Zagreb. On this wall they wrote the names of the dead and missing, laid flowers, lit candles, and paid their respects. They transformed an ordinary brick wall into a shrine, a site of mourning, and a political statement of loss and grief.

I told Marijana and Veljko about it, in the kitchen of their apartment near the lake at Jarun. And Marijana, whose husband was forced to leave the country during the war, touched her heart, looked me in the eyes, and said "I'm grieving, too". I didn't realize the significance of her words until later. She was grieving for a man from Serbia. She couldn't express those feelings in public the way Croats could. She knew I was there, in part, to document pain and distress. And she didn't want her pain and distress to be overlooked; she wanted her experience to be acknowledged.

These shrines speak to her need to be noted. And they speak to my feelings of separation and distance from those whom I have come to love. Photos can conjure up the past, down to the details of dress and posture and expression that elude verbal description. And it is precisely these kinds of details that sting with the pain of absence and loss. That is the tragedy of the photograph:

time stands still for the camera, but not for those it represents. And the future will not let us forget the past.

3--The Grid of Photographs

On the south wall of the installation is a grid of 16x20 inch photographs, five down and eleven across for a total of 55 prints. Time tends to flow from top to bottom, with images from Zagreb in 1991 predominating the upper rows, and images from Pakrac in 1993 occupying the lower rows, but this is a loose order rather than a strict criteria of arrangement. The photos from Zagreb are primarily street shots of people involved in public events, images of political and cultural emblems, photos of friends, and images of American cultural influence. The photos from Pakrac tend to reflect my morbid fascination with the devastated landscape, but also include political posters, graffiti, Croatian workers, street scenes, and colleagues in the peace movement.

The top row of images alternates between photographs that feature images (newspaper photos, political posters, an image of a t-shirt) and photographs that show people engaged in looking. This is a reminder of sorts to the viewer that the piece is an inquisitive act of looking, and that images are constructed as well as consumed. This is a cautionary note, given that photos are often claimed to contain more than they can deliver.

What, then, can these images “deliver”? It is clear that these photographs are historical documents, rooted in a specific (and significant) time and place. But they don't pretend to answer political questions, provide evidence, or place blame. They are, after all, photographs. They can reliably render non-verbal information about a specific time and place, but the catch is that time and place must be contextualized by verbal means--date, time, conditions of exposure, what came before, what is to come after. Some

people--citizens from Pakrac, for example--will bring their own context to the images, and read them in a much more politicized way than an American audience would. To say that these images are historical doesn't mean that history isn't argued over, or disputed, or ignored. And these images, used selectively, can provide evidence of Serb brutality, Croatian fascism, or a generalized human tragedy.

Interpretation itself isn't as cut and dried as it may seem. Response to photographs isn't necessarily based on ethnicity or political affiliation. A friend of mine, working for the UN and ARK, showed some photos of Pakrac to a group of former residents on the Serb side. They hadn't seen the extent of the destruction; most were silent, taken aback. One woman began to cry; a man smirked. For these people, philosophical debates about photographic realism were the farthest thing from their minds. For most of them, the photographs were an uncomfortable reminder of the gulf between past and present.

In a general sense, there is a correlation between the emotional power of a photograph and the personal relationship the viewer has with what is being represented. That personal relationship is one of the "wild cards" that enters into any evaluation or appreciation of a given image. The other wild card comes from the producer of the image rather than the viewer, and has to do with artistic skill. Bracketing both these variables is the cultural context that shapes the artistic codes of a culture as well as guides the expression of emotion.

An American audience, for obvious reasons, isn't likely to have a deeply felt, emotional connection with photographs from Croatia, much less a sophisticated awareness of the political and cultural dynamics. That leaves me, as author, the responsibility of providing a point of entry,

a context, an interpretation. Given the complexity of the situation, and the broad gaps in my knowledge, providing such a context proved to be the most difficult part of the installation. Rather than provide an extensive personal or political history, I chose to ground the work in the more generalized feeling of mourning and loss that the shrines embody. The limited personal and political history I did provide, by way of written text, was more of an orientation than a thorough discussion. I think I missed the opportunity to use the video portion of the piece to ground the work in personal stories and situations; but that can be done at a later date. For this reason, and because I feel compelled to go back and fill in some of the gaps in my understanding, I don't mind admitting that the installation feels more like a work-in-progress than a fully resolved piece.

4--The Objects on Pedestals

Directly opposite the grid of photographs, in front of the north wall of the gallery, are three pedestals. Displayed on these pedestals are household objects retrieved from destroyed buildings in Pakrac. Some of these objects show signs of fire or other damage; most are just worn, rusted, or water-stained. I found some of these things while working on a reconstruction crew one day; other items were given to me by Croatians. There is something compelling about these material remains that is hard to articulate. In an understated way, they evoke human presence. They represent the common details of life--a pair of shoes, a school notebook, a partially melted bottle--that are forgotten about when discussing the larger questions of war and peace. They are ordinary, yet they have an undeniable importance derived from having been there rather than what they are.

I set the objects on pedestals, directly across from the photographs, as a way of contrasting the two kinds of items on display, as well as bringing up the issue of display itself. The photograph provides an image of another place; the objects are that place. Yet in the context of an installation, neither can claim any superior presence or significance. The act of being put on display tends to level notions of value; the viewer is left to consider what is most meaningful in a display where the everyday and the ordinary (as image and object) are elevated to a similar status of documentary importance.

5--The Map and the Text

The east wall of the installation is covered by a large depiction of Croatia, with several cities identified with a dot or a name. These are places that are represented in the photographs or noted in the text. Six pages of written text provide a combination of political and personal history. Both map and text are necessary to orient the viewer to the installation, but they are not especially outstanding elements of the piece. The text is important, however, in that this is where I address the viewer in my own voice, rather than through images or objects or display.

6--The Video and Audio Presentation

The video is a loop that alternates between news footage from CNN and material I shot in Croatia in 1993. The idea was to contrast the rather predictable news footage with longer, less edited material that wasn't full of talking heads, titles, soldiers, and diplomats. My footage includes kids playing with toy guns, people dancing to rave music at a club, a long take of destroyed buildings in Pakrac shot from a train, and workers salvaging

bricks from a destroyed residence. The sound was turned off to make fun of the talking heads, and emphasize the highly stylized, carefully controlled presentation of information that characterizes television journalism. While not an explicit, analytical critique, the intent was to contrast this with more naturalistic and personal footage.

The audio portion of the installation consisted of a loop of different musical pieces recorded while in Croatia, as well as a pre-recorded tape from a punk band. The other pieces include a classical woodwind trio, the Dubrovnik Symphony, a tamburitza from Zagreb, and a gusle player from Cilipi. The intent was to suggest, through the different styles of music, that Croatia includes a variety of different musics, and peoples, within its borders. Juxtaposing the punk music next to the folk songs (to pick but one example) was an attempt to shake up or dislocate the listener, even if momentarily, and cause them to question their assumptions about this unfamiliar place known as Croatia. The tape played from a portable cassette deck located under a bench in the center of the piece. The bench provided a place to sit, relax, watch the video, or look at the other elements in the installation.

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From observing people moving through the installation, it was clear that the photos, shrines, and objects on the pedestals attracted the most attention. The music, the subdued lighting, the floor, and the shrines themselves created a somber, evocative mood that affected the way people interacted with the other elements. This kind of dense, multi-layered installation provided an experience that would be impossible to achieve using the traditional means of documentary representation.

What I am calling “documentary installation” is similar to what art and

natural history museums have been doing for decades--combining displays of objects, text, images, and simulations into larger descriptive wholes. These displays, however, are more often than not didactic and educational rather than personal and creative. Photographs and text, in these displays, tend to explain or describe rather than stand on their own as creative pieces. The idea of a documentary installation where each element reveals the sensibility and hand of the artist, rather than the educational needs of the curator, offers a rich potential for documentary expression. Cross-cultural collaborations, installations designed as performance venues, "live" documentary through e-mail and broadcast television--the possibilities are endless. The key would be to avoid simulation and emphasize an intensive fieldwork experience as the foundation for any further explorations in documentary installation.

REFLECTIONS ON THE FIELDWORK EXPERIENCE IN A WAR ZONE

One afternoon, as I was walking around the cease-fire line that divides Pakrac in two, I came upon an old man trying to unclog a sewer. After spending a couple minutes figuring out we didn't share a common language, I gestured to the surrounding devastation and shook my head in sympathy. After a minute, he started to cry. He made a machine gun with his hands, and made a machine gun sound, and cried out "Moma, Tata!" I didn't need to speak the language to know what he meant. I felt horrible--awkward to be in the presence of this man's pain, ashamed at bringing it up in the first place, and powerless to do anything about it. The only thing I could think of to do was step across the puddle of water that separated us and give him a hug. We held each other for a couple minutes, and the cries turned to sniffles. We stepped back, looked at one another, and then parted.

I've thought a great deal about our encounter over the past year. The people in Pakrac, like this gentleman, have very thin skin. If you scratch them, they will bleed. In a very real sense, they need to bleed, they need to cry and grieve and express their feelings. They need to tell their stories. Rather than feeling my presence (and my camera) are inherently intrusive, I have come to feel that respectful acts of paying attention, listening, and expressing concern are in fact helpful and therapeutic. I don't feel awkward, or ashamed, or powerless in the face of another person's pain anymore. I know I can make a difference, even if it is only to offer a hand or a shoulder, or take a picture, or record a story. Martha Rosler coined the phrase "The indignity of speaking for others". Her point is well taken, but it skews

the discussion away from the key point: the responsibility of speaking with others and engaging difference in a respectful and open way.


Rather than the Self/Other dualism that is currently fashionable in describing the engagement with difference, my experience in Pakrac suggests a much more complex triangulation of other/self/other which involves shifting roles tied to such factors as cultural competence and communication skills as well as ethnic affiliation. The idea of triangulation implies that difference can be understood by reference to a third party rather than within the confines of a system based on opposition. In other words, a third-party paradigm offers a way out of the Us/Them, Self/Other dualism that characterizes contemporary thought about ethnicity, culture, and gender. Underlying this idea is the need to acknowledge difference within categories as well as between them.

In the former Yugoslavia, the UN has a rather broad and ill-defined mandate to serve as third-party "peace-keepers". But the cumbersome decision-making process, the layers of bureaucracy, and the politicization of the institution limit the ability of the UN to serve as an effective, neutral third-party presence. This role is more appropriately served by small-scale activist groups staffed by volunteers or independent professionals rather than tenured experts. The Pakrac Reconstruction Project is one such group. With a little luck and effort, I will be on staff there this summer as a media worker.

In my relations with people, and my photographic practice, I am attempting to explore and articulate this idea of an other/self/other triangulation as the basis for an effective third-party intervention in areas of ethnic tension. Both my personal work as well as the efforts of the Pakrac Reconstruction Project as a whole may some day offer a

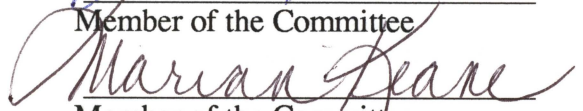
model of intervention that may be useful in other highly polarized situations. I am convinced that the ability of the camera to represent non-verbal elements of culture and hold them still for inspection, confrontation, and negotiation will provide an important tool in this kind of intervention. In addition, photography and video offer a powerful means of documentation so that effective models may be seen and shared with other interested parties.


In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Master of Fine Arts
Keith Michael Holmes
has submitted this written thesis
as a supplement to the creative thesis
and twelve slides
which are in the permanent possession of the
University of Colorado and recorded with the
Department of Fine Arts

Approved by 
Chairman of the Committee


Member of the Committee


Member of the Committee


Member of the Committee


Chairman, Department of Fine Arts

SLIDE LIST

Installation	18 X 35 feet	Overview Looking South
Installation	3 X 8 feet	Detail of "Shrine" (Zvezdana)
Installation	3 X 8 feet	Detail of "Shrine" (Ana, Marijana, Slobodan)
Installation	3 X 8 feet	Detail of "Shrine" (Deniza, Veljko)
Installation	2 X 2 feet	Detail (Objects Retrieved From Destroyed Residence)
Photograph	16 X 20 in	Portrait of Tito (Hospital) Pakrac, Croatia, 1993
Photograph	16 X 20 in	Hospital Facade Pakrac, Croatia, 1993
Photograph	16 X 20 in	Reconstruction Crew Pakrac, Croatia, 1993
Photograph	16 X 20 in	Destroyed Residence Pakrac, Croatia, 1993
Photograph	16 X 20 in	Political Poster Pakrac, Croatia, 1993
Photograph	16 X 20 in	Workers Posing Pakrac, Croatia, 1993
Photograph	16 X 20 in	Destroyed Warehouse Pakrac, Croatia, 1993



