

Ismar Cirkinagic: *Smoking Gun*

With the exhibition *Smoking Gun*, by the Bosnian/Danish artist Ismar Cirkinagic, the Aarhus Art Building has the pleasure of inviting the public to a special artistic experience. Taking as his starting point the brutal genocide during the Balkan War in the years from 1992-1995, Ismar Cirkinagic has created an exhibition that treads closely to the violence and the unseen victims of war.

Bosnian born Ismar Cirkinagic was only 19 when the war broke out and he had to flee the country. His artistic efforts are far from supporting the idea of l'art pour l'art – art for art's sake. To him art is about presenting the tough realities of war. He confronts the audience with a world that for most people is unknown and impalpable. War and death are two central themes in Cirkinagic's art, and in order to avoid clichés he treats these themes in an aesthetic and indirect way. Instead of directly depicting the horrors of war he chooses to present history in a sensitive way and presents the audience with places that – in a contrast to life – express a rowdy silence.

In the exhibition *Smoking Gun* Cirkinagic couples the horrors of the past with the paradoxically idyllic landscapes that now hide the many mass graves left behind by the war. In a totally soundproof room Cirkinagic has constructed a dimly lit installation that confronts visitors with a stillness that evokes associations about death or the stillness of a mass grave. A synthetically created scent will make the room smell of unearthed bones and bodies. Outside the room the visitor meets the idyllic natural settings where the atrocities during the war took place. In connection with a journey back to Bosnia Ismar Cirkinagic has photographed a number of selected landscapes in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The large photographs show idyllic landscapes in clear and bright colours, but when you dive into the stories behind each of these images you discover that the beautiful landscapes represent the views from execution rooms, hide former mass graves or have become beautiful in spite of terrible incidents from the war. Death is a premise for life. Thus the exhibition also contains a video of a boy harvesting crops located on top of former mass graves, which adds yet another layer to the relationship between life and death: Life goes on. The video is supplemented by a series of herbariums – pressed and dried flowers that have been picked on top of mass graves and in this way symbolize the human tragedies buried below the landscape.

Smoking Gun is an exhibition of great immediate interest and contains lots of food for thought. In spite of specific references to the war in the Balkans the visitor will automatically draw parallels to other current wars around the world and include these in his or her experience and understanding of the exhibition.

Ismar Cirkinagic (b. 1973) graduated from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in 2006. He works within the fields of photography, installation and painting and has participated in a number of solo and group exhibitions in Denmark, Germany, Switzerland, Turkey, Thailand and the former Republic of Yugoslavia.

In connection with the exhibition a catalogue with a preface by Dr. Phil. Thorsten Sadowsky and texts by Dorthe Rugaard Jørgensen, exhibition inspector at Arken, will be published. The exhibition is sponsored by The Danish Arts Council's Committee for Visual Arts and the Cultural Development Foundation, the Municipality of Aarhus.