



# robotron Kantine

## Šejla Kamerić

### Burn By Staying Cool

8.4.–  
29.5.2022

Contemporary art at the  
robotron-Kantine

BURN BY STAYING COOL is the title of a solo exhibition by the internationally acclaimed Bosnian artist Šejla Kamerić. It brings together for the first time a number of recent large-format artistic installations as well as works and interventions developed on site in the rooms of the former Robotron canteen.

An artistic dialogue has been developed with the building and the layers of past, present and future embedded here. Šejla Kamerić's artworks address burning issues about human existence, consumer culture, mass migration, war and the preservation of vital resources.

Touching on a variety of contexts, including the fashion industry, the artist makes visible the sharp contours of a present characterised by disproportionate rises in consumption and waste caused by a privileged fraction of our global citizenship, starkly contrasted with existential threats to our planetary survival and the many facing resource scarcity. In her artistic work, Kamerić combines installation and photography with participatory actions, and she experiments with alternative visions of sharing in both public space and social media. Her works and installations are often process-based, emphasising the patterns that recur across myriad global situations, and drawing

attention to the interdependence of historical and current events. Kamerić herself was born in Sarajevo, Bosnia, in 1976, and through her conscious decisions to live and work between Sarajevo, Istria and Berlin, different biographical and geopolitical perspectives become vividly clear.

We are looking forward to your visit and the encounter with you!

There are mediators in the exhibition—feel free to contact them.

Free admission.

Ein Projekt of Kunsthau Dresden – Städtische Galerie für Gegenwartskunst, Rähnitzgasse 8, 01097 Dresden-Neustadt

The Kunsthau Dresden is a cultural institution of the City of Dresden and belongs to the Museums of the City of Dresden.

[www.kunsthauddresden.de](http://www.kunsthauddresden.de)  
[www.museen-dresden.de](http://www.museen-dresden.de)

1

**FREI, 2004**

Stamp, public action

During Kamberić's public intervention at the festival CTM - Club Transmediale for the first time visitors were given a "FREI" stamp instead of the club's stamp. The stamp refers to the existential conditions, such as an access to a place or to resources, as well as the universal as well as existential human desire for freedom.

Hall A

2

**SUMMERISNOTOVER, 2022**

Digital print on wood

Šejla Kamberić's project SUMMERISNOTOVER is a series of site-specific works including posters, stickers and digital images that are shared and spread online. It deals with the issue of today's usage and distribution of (war) images. The photographs of SUMMERISNOTOVER depict close-ups of bomb explosions. The images have an inherent and disturbing aesthetic while the hashtag-like slogans (THROWBACKTHURSDAY, SUMMERISNOTOVER, NOFILTERSKY) cover topics, such as summer feelings or holiday fantasies which are in a clashing contrast to the violent situation shown on the image.

3

**PRESENT IS PAST, 2022**

Site-specific installation, compressed cardboard waste, festive lights

Two large-format blocks of cardboard waste, wrapped by festive lights, form the entrance situation of the exhibition. The blocks are the amount of cardboard waste generated within a few days by consumption in a Dresden supermarket chain and collected here as recycling material. Kamberić's topics are the precariousness of our existence and the question of how art and society can respond to the threatened coexistence and destruction of nature and to the flooding of habitats by our waste? The "present" in English can be used as a term for a 'gift' as well as for the 'present day'. According to this double meaning, "gifts" would have to belong to the past, whereas present and past concerning the investment of resources will remain irrevocably linked. Under the title THE PRESENT IS PAST and PAST IS PRESENT Šejla Kamberić calls for the urgently needed confrontation with our future survival and counters outdated notions of consumption and unconditional wear and tear on resources with two large-scale artistic installations.

4

**THE PARTY IS OVER, 2022**

Multipart hanging installation comprised of ca. 300 Kleidungsstücken, 5 Monitors with digital images and video footage

**"We are all part of the system that is broken. We exploit, overproduce, over-consume, unreasonably dispose and destroy. We choose not to see the devastation we leave behind. The imprinted message is for us. The party is over!"** This is the artists statement Šejla Kamberić on her participatory, public action THE PARTY IS OVER. For this project, started in 2019 as a launched grass roots action before the pandemic began, the artist smuggles textiles, transported in large quantities from richer consumer societies to former crisis regions, back into the EU. This large-scale disposal of clothing is often misleadingly declared as humanitarian aid. Šejla Kamberić buys the clothes for a fraction of their original price, and smuggles them back to the EU to be distributed for free. The artistic action THE PARTY IS OVER is also the 'new label' of the clothes, which Kamberić offers for free takeaway on the streets and in public places. The action combines activism with fashion using different media such as photography, film, performance and social media and new forms of sharing. The artist invites people who take the clothes to feed pictures and videos to social media and thus participate in the action themselves.

Šejla Kamberić set up stations to distribute the clothing at three locations in Dresden in January 2022: In the reading room of the Saxon State Library - Dresden State and University Library (SLUB), in the Central Library - Dresden Municipal Libraries in the Palace of Culture, and in the Kunsthaus Dresden. Cardboard boxes and clothes and a simple "To Give Away" sign invited people to take the clothes home. In a targeted form of collaboration, actors from the ensemble of the Staatsschauspiel Dresden, Marin Blülle, Kriemhild Hamann, Sven Hönig, Anton Löwe, Karina Plachetka, Fanny Staffa and the photographer Sebastian Hoppe also took part in the action and made their own artistic contributions. The contributions to the action in Dresden as from several cities in Europe are combined in a media installation in the robotron canteen. With the project, Šejla Kamberić also designs an experimental model for an alternative, utopian practice of sharing that breaks away from commercial circuits.

5

**IMAGINE, 2004**

SD video, colour, sound, 01:24 min.

The video IMAGINE shows the artist's hands cleaning strawberries. Shot from above, the hands calmly remove the strawberries' green leaves and put them aside, while we hear a female voice saying:

"Imagine, they dig through the garbage.

Some people dig through the garbage.

Imagine, through my garbage.

Can you imagine that?"

6

**CARE 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12, 2018**

Cardboard boxes; candles; food cans; newspapers; magazines; clothes; toilet paper; soap; shoes; board games

One cardboard box of CARE contains candles, some are new and others half burnt, another box is filled with expired food cans, and an additional one with newspapers and magazines. They are a remake of the packages that the artist received as humanitarian aid during the war in Bosnia. The work is a direct response to the state of power between different socioeconomic groups in a time of crises. It questions one's understanding of his or her own "absolute" position.

7

**LIBERTY, 2015**

Plexiglas, LED lights, Anti-Roosting-Spikes

A bird control spike, also known as an anti-roosting spike, works by reducing the area available for birds to land on. They can be attached to building ledges, street lighting, and commercial signage to prevent birds from perching or roosting. The birds get stabbed slightly and are usually unharmed.

Installed on the glowing letters the bird control spikes "protect" LIBERTY.

Center

8

**KEEP AWAY FROM FIRE (black I + II), 2018**

Cotton, polyester, viscose, rayon

**KEEP AWAY FROM FIRE (white I - IV), 2020-21**

Cotton, polyester, viscose, rayon

KEEP AWAY FROM FIRE, sculptures floating in space, are made of hundreds of labels cut out of clothes. Floating from the ceiling, they form a huge cloud, made of the smallest components of clothing, which at the same time contain and hide important information and instructions: the labels.

9

**BURN BY STAYING COOL, 2022**

Viscose, 5 cm wide ribbon, dimensions variable  
Edition of 5 + 1 AP

**UNTITLED / DAYDREAMING, 2004**

SD-Video, colour, sound 05:23 min. Edition of 5 + 1 AP (2/5)

Šejla Kamberić sees political propaganda as a part of popular culture. In the video work UNTITLED / DAYDREAMING the artist has taken several quotes from different political speeches. These quotes are slogans, which over time have been used by completely different politicians with different political stands, who repeated them. George Bush wasn't the first one who said, "Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists". Variations of this sentence ("You're either with us, or against us") were most certainly uttered before him and will most likely be used again and again. In the video, political statements are reiterated in the context of a daydream to create an ambiguous feeling. In using Bosnian language and English subtitles Šejla Kamberić puts the English-speaking viewer in a position where they have to read the subtitles to understand the unfamiliar language they hear. Also UNTITLED/ DAYDREAMING asks us to question our own position and who the "Other" actually is.

11

**IF I SLEEP IT WILL BE DOUBLE, 2009**

Silk, ink, cotton, dimensions variable

Excerpts from diaries, written by four individuals during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, are painted on duvets and cushions: passages from a young girls detailed reflections, a soldiers systematic counting of the days (or is it the number of people killed?) and the listing of names of the people encountered by one man during his daily routine.

12

**SUNSET, 2008**

SD-Video, colour 01:20 min., Edition of 5 + 2 AP (1/5)

The video animation SUNSET is based on what is believed to be the only colour photograph showing the Warsaw Ghetto in flames during the 1943 uprising in which the Jews locked up in the Ghetto were fighting against their deportation to extermination camps. The photo was shot as a transparency by Karol Grabski, who was hiding in Warsaw at that time. In SUNSET, the moment captured in the single image is extended. The smoke rises to the sky, the sun fades away, the moment is stretched and it becomes eternity.

Hall B

13

**ORIGINS, 2015**

Wall drawing, pigment, gold dust, dimensions variable

The word "Origin" in English describes the place you come from. The site-specific wall drawings, that Šejla Kamberić has realized starting in 2015, were created in the context of her confrontation with the war atrocities of the Bosnian war. Place names like "Buchenwald" sound as if they refer to beautiful picturesque landscapes to anyone who does not know the history of the place, and yet the opposite is true.

"Little Soft Hills" is the place of an execution site, "Red Earth" is the name of a mass grave. How do you possibly translate pain? It is hard to explain, it is impossible to share these experiences. Šejla Kamberić translated the names of places of war crimes into English, leaving them open to interpretation. Later she encountered a sentence in a novel by Charles Frazier (Cold Mountain, 1997) which seemed to be matching with what she wanted to share: "How can a name, not even the real name, break your heart?"

14

**HORIZON, 2017**

HD video installation, colour, sound, curtain, video: 00:53 min., loop

A pastel pink curtain hides a vertically positioned screen showing a colourful voice line that does not sync with sound of a computer-generated female voice repeating the question: "Have you ever seen the moon set over an open sea?"

In a setting that resembles a changing room, the screen functions as a black mirror and the installation HORIZON functions as a confession spot or a meditative self-reflection hideout.

The earth, the nature and our existence in this universe gives us so many transcendental moments of enjoyment for free. We choose not to take those and rather turn ourselves to artificial supplements that over waste and destroy us.

The moon setting over an open sea - is the image that the voice recalls. Do we allow ourselves to experience the wonder of the universe and our existence? And what is our position in this world? What is for some the most romantic setting, for others could be a journey full of fears.

15

**ENDLOSERSOMMER, 2022**

Newspaper, stone, dimensions variable

For her newest work, ENDLOSERSOMMER, published in the form of a newspaper and presented for the first time in Dresden, Šejla Kamberić combines cropped-in images of

smoke, explosions and fires from current war zones with images of the forest and refugee camps on fire. By using these simultaneously spectacular yet abstract, lyrical and ultimately interchangeable images of clouds, Šejla Kamberić transforms them into supra-temporal ciphers of violence. At the same time, she addresses our ever-faster cycle of attention, and the processing of news of this kind in the media. Images of violence may be accessed millions of times in one day and shared via social media platforms, only to be quickly lost in the maelstroms of media. The very next day, our short attention spans have moved on from the images, and from concern with the fates of the people involved.

16

**PAPILLONS D'EIDOMENE, 2018**

Colour photograph with text on paper

Butterflies of unknown origin found at Idomeni camp after Greek riot police cleared migrants from the site in May 2016.

Humans and butterflies migrate. Butterflies fly. Humans flee. The Idomeni camp was the largest transit camp in Greece at the Macedonian border. Between 12 and 14,000 people, including at least 4,000 children, lived at Idomeni camp in squalid conditions for months, hoping to be allowed to continue on their journey toward Northern or Western Europe. Migration is movement for a range of purposes, but probably most frequently occurs in connection with resources. These include food, shelter and generally a safe habitat.

Refugees are humans who are forced to migrate, they leave their homes because of persecution, war, or violence. They have a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group.

17

**PAST IS PRESENT, 2022**

Site-specific installation, dried pine needle, festive lights, dimensions variable

Šejla Kamberić's second large installation under the title PAST IS PRESENT is also dedicated to the extreme and often extremely short-term consumption of resources produced by Western consumer societies. The occasions of these excesses of consumption, to create moments of happiness or festive moments for children, are diametrically opposed to the consequences that this use of resources has. The dry pine trees come from the huge contingent of Christmas trees which, after being cut to decorate the living room for a few days, are being collected in the streets in large piles, to be then quickly disposed of.

18

## DREAM HOUSE, 2002

SD-Video installation; colour; sound; curtain,  
Edition of 10 + 2 AP (3/10)

Šejla Kamerić's video installation DREAM HOUSE deals with the interminable situation of migration and with the camps in which refugees are placed before their asylum applications come up for review. The video is projected onto a white curtain and shows a refugee camp building embedded in a changing landscape, evoking a dream-like scenario imbued with hopes for a better future. The barrack shown was photographed at a refugee camp outside Sarajevo and denotes the transition period that many have to undergo, with no knowledge of what their actual futures will bring. Kamerić's poetic approach depicts the campsite at various times of day, from sunset to sunrise, and raises questions as to the evolution of time and space.

2001, Šejla Kamerić had visited the Rakovica UNHCR camp for asylum seekers near Sarajevo for the public project "Fortune Teller II". "It was hard to get into the camp and even harder to get permission for taking photographs. I learnt that people staying in the camp were not allowed to leave the camp, and many of them had been actually living there for years. It was shocking to see many kids who permanently live there. There were refugees from Kosovo, Serbia, Macedonia as well as from Ukraine and China. They all had very different stories and backgrounds. This is where I took a photo of a house where these people lived. It was built according to UN standards. It was planned to house eight families, but had only two windows. For a year, I had a photo of this house hanging on the wall in my studio. I was looking at it every day, and then I started calling it a 'dream house' and tried to imagine what happened to those people. What are their hopes and dreams? Are they still stuck in that house?"

19

## REFUGEES WELCOME (blue), 2020

Neon, metal

"Refugees Welcome" was the slogan used at many demonstrations, on stickers and posters in 2015 to counteract the hate of right-wing populist movements directed at refugees in both words and deeds. Šejla Kamerić's neon installation takes this slogan further: Refugees Will Come. Conceived in 2020, the work drew attention to the ongoing movement of people fleeing, both before and after the so-called refugee crisis.

20

## I REALLY REALLY REALLY REALLY REALLY, 2018

Four camouflage pieces, cotton, acrylic paint

21

## SAPONIFIED JACKET OF MELANIA TRUMP, 2018

Jacket, cotton, viscose, soap, dimensions  
variable

22

## I REALLY REALLY REALLY (TRIPTYCH), 2018

Three military capes, cotton, acrylic paint

"I really don't care – do u?" This lettering was emblazoned on the back of the olive parka worn by American First Lady Melania Trump at an official appointment in the summer of 2018. Just a randomly chosen statement without deeper meaning? Many saw it differently: because she was with her husband, at that time the president of the United States, just on the way to visit refugee children who had to live near the Mexican border separated from their parents in a camp, when she was photographed in the jacket. Trump had previously been heavily criticized for his 'zero tolerance' policy and inhumane treatment of people. Many suspected a hidden message behind the saying on the coat.

23

## DEZEMBER - MAI, 2022

Sound installation

Es geht alles vorüber  
Es geht alles vorbei  
Auf jeden Dezember  
Folgt wieder ein Mai  
Es geht alles vorüber  
Es geht alles vorbei  
Doch zwei, die sich lieben  
Die bleiben sich treu

Performed by Djula May Mujanovic

**Current dates, information for  
events and guided tours**

[www.kunsthauddresden.de](http://www.kunsthauddresden.de)  
Instagram @kunsthauddresden

**Wed – Fri: 16 – 19 h**

**Sat + Sun: 12 – 19 h**

**Free admission**

**Exhibition venue:  
Lingnerallee am Skatepark  
D-01069 Dresden (Zentrum)**

**A project of Kunsthaus Dresden –  
Städtische Galerie für Gegenwartskunst  
Rähnitzgasse 8 01097 Dresden-Neustadt**

**Works on loan: Courtesy  
Galerie Tanja Wagner, Berlin**

**Curatorial team Kunsthaus Dresden:  
Christiane Mennicke-Schwarz (director)  
Robert Thiele**