



Ulrich Museum of Art

The XXIII Faculty Biennial ***It's All Part of the Process***

Artist Statement

Levente Sulyok

As our concepts of culture and place become increasingly homogenous, the desire to “return” to some origin can lead to the reemergence of an authoritarian brand of nationalism. Mourning what has passed and yearning for its return seem to be ubiquitous aspects of change; where the past is often an idealized version of “official” histories mixed with wishful projections towards an imaginary future. After a recent shift in research focus, my current work addresses the relationship between the present, the past, and, ultimately, the future in terms of shifting cultural and physical borders.

I explore nationalism in the context of Hungary with a focus on late 19th-century folk traditions as a starting point (1880-1920). In terms of its borders, 1920 marks the last major event in Hungarian history when the country lost 70% of its territory. My base materials comprise of antique “folk weavings” from this period, and the artifacts are appropriated and reframed to highlight the concept of loss issuing from cultural and geographic deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Both paintings presented here consist of “Hungarian” weavings produced in locations outside the nation’s current borders, while the embroidery patterns are from a region within modern Hungary and from approximately the same time. I focus on folk traditions precisely because they seem to defy nationalistic borders by existing both inside and outside of them. My inclusion of the web address to the location of each artifact, as found in the global marketplace, further complicates conversations about origin.

Echo (sound installation) exemplifies my ongoing concern with the relationship between image and sound. In this specific context, I translated embroidery patterns into sound by using an image-to-sound converter. The “DNA” of each pattern, from regions both inside and outside of current national borders, is translated into a sonic equivalent of itself. For a visual artist, this represents an ultimate defiance of borders.