

My vacations with Lume

Republic of Kosovo, 2021

“In 2013, Núria Güell staged a hide-and-seek game in the harbor of Gothenburg, Sweden, with an asylum seeker from Kosovo, a former policewoman named Maria. Maria was in the process of applying, for the third time, for permission to stay in Sweden. A contract was issued by the Gothenburg Biennial in Swedish and in Albanian—Maria and Edi Muka’s (the biennale’s artistic director) mother tongue. The employment contract with the art organization was made in consultation with activists and was structurally helpful in procuring Maria’s residence permit. In the hide-and-seek game, staged during the exhibition, Maria was always the one hiding, while visitors were always the ones searching. The invitation to play almost always finished with an in-depth dialogue about migration policy, political asylum, integration, and displacement, turning the game into a conversation piece.

The project, organized in the frame of the seventh Gothenburg Biennial and curated by Joanna Warsza, will now be revisited on the other side of the road, in the place that Maria—whose real name is Lumnije Gërguri Stojkaj—comes from. Güell and Gërguri Stojkaj spent a short vacation in Prizren, walking, visiting, and talking. Questions arose: What is the relationship between the artist and her subject now? How to see and work with unequal relations in collaborative projects, especially around migration issues? What are the ethical ways of addressing asymmetries in art? How does Gërguri Stojkaj see art as part of her journey to Sweden, where she now works as a prison guard? On their vacation, both women talked about homeland, exile, ethnicity, war, cultural identity, and the landscapes of the past. Who would play a hide-and-seek game today? And how and why? Visitors to the opening will encounter Güell and Gërguri Stojkaj on their “vacation visit,” while the visitors to the finissage will see a film resulting from their trip, which will also be presented online.”

