

# **SANJA IVEKOVIĆ**

# **UNKNOWN HEROINE**

**CALVERT 22 AND THE SOUTH LONDON GALLERY**  
**CURATED BY LINA DŽUVEROVIĆ**  
**14 DEC 2012 - 24 FEB 2013**

**SANJA IVEKOVIĆ**  
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Calvert 22 and the South London Gallery present *Unknown Heroine*, the first UK solo exhibition by Croatian artist Sanja Iveković. This timely exhibition brings together Iveković's pioneering work in collage, film, performance and installation. Tackling issues of female identity, consumerism and historical amnesia, the show features work made across four decades against a background of political unrest. The exhibition highlights the complexity of Iveković's practice, which lies in exploring the intersections and commonalities across local conditions and global shifts. Works on display address the assault on the individual of the media, as well as the continued invisibility and erasure of women from the public sphere and from dominant historical narratives. Other works explore the effects of power and political agendas on public space, irrespective of regime.

The emphasis of the work shown at Calvert 22 is on the transition from socialism to capitalism, and the agency of the individual within changing social systems. At the South London Gallery, the focus is on the question of female invisibility in the public arena and the artist's negotiation of identity in relation to media constructs of femininity.

*Unknown Heroine* is also the first collaboration between Calvert 22 and the South London Gallery. In showing Sanja Iveković's work, Calvert 22 upholds its ongoing commitment to enable international audiences to engage with Eastern European visual culture, and the South London Gallery maintains an important strand of its programme, which is to present solo exhibitions by artists who have deservedly attained international acclaim but who have yet to make a major presentation of their work in London

**Biography**

Sanja Iveković was born in 1949, in Zagreb, where she currently lives and works. She studied at the Zagreb Academy of Fine Arts from 1968 to 1971 and her early practice was associated with 'Nova Umjetnička Praksa' (New Art Practice) in the 1970s, a generation of artists in Yugoslavia who questioned the role of art in society and strove to democratise artistic space by abandoning galleries and taking to the streets through performances and the use of cheap, accessible materials. Living and working in a turbulent political context for many years brought forth questions regarding social structures, gender politics and identity.

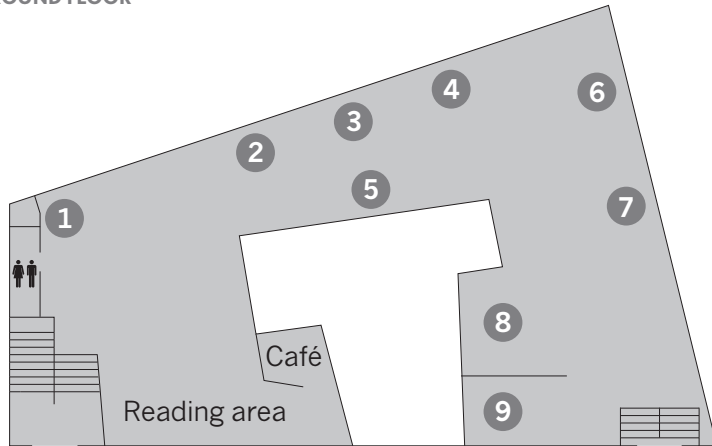
Iveković's point of departure has been her own life and social positioning as a woman, the influence of mass media as well as the politics of power in the contexts of socialist and post-socialist society.

Selected solo exhibitions include: *The Disobedients (Neposlušni/e)*, Galerija SC, Zagreb, Croatia, 2012; *Visages du Langage*, MAC/VAL, France, 2012; *Waiting for the Revolution*, Mudam Luxembourg, 2012; *Sweet Violence*, MoMA, New York, 2011; *Urgent Matters*, BAK Utrecht and the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 2009; *General Alert*, Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne, 2007. Selected group exhibitions include: *A Bigger Splash: Painting after Performance*, Tate Modern, 2012; *Promises of the Past*, Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2012; *Gender Check: Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe*, Zacheta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw, 2010; *After the Wall: Art in Post-Communist Europe*, Ludwig Museum, Budapest, 2000; and several shows at the Generali Foundation in Vienna from 2000–2005.

Iveković has participated in the Gwangju Biennale in 2010, in dOCUMENTA (13), (12), (11) and (8), in 2012, 2007, 2002 and 1987, and the Istanbul Biennial, 2009 and 2007. Her works have repeatedly won prizes at film and video festivals, including Locarno and Montreal. She is the facilitator and founder of a large number of political initiatives including *Electra – The Women's Art Centre* and the *Centre for Women's Studies* in Zagreb.

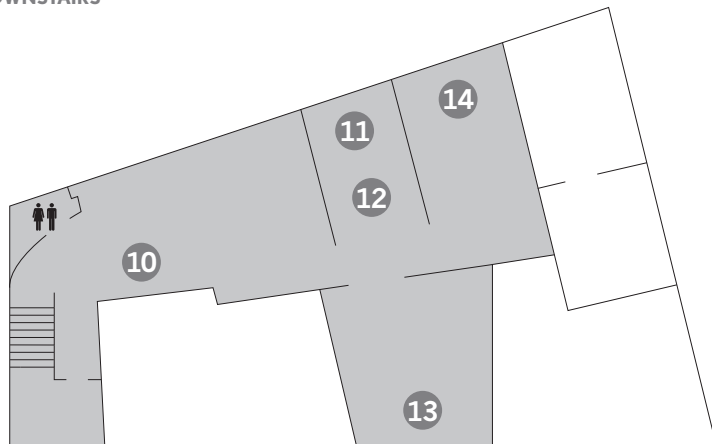
## CALVERT 22

### GROUND FLOOR



Calvert Avenue

### DOWNSTAIRS



## GROUND FLOOR

### 1. General Alert (Soap Opera), 1995

Video (digital transfer), colour, sound, 5'

*General Alert (Soap Opera)* shows TV footage recorded by Iveković directly from the Croatian public television channel *HRT Hrvatska Radiotelevizija* [Croatian Radiotelevision] in 1995, as missiles were launched on the city of Zagreb in the final year of conflict in the former Yugoslavia, also referred to as the Croatian War of Independence. *Opća Opanost Zagreb* (General Alert Zagreb) appears at the top of the screen. Households were advised to keep a television or radio on constantly in order to receive these alerts. Iveković draws attention to the personal dramas unfolding in the lives of the protagonists in this popular Spanish-language soap opera, in relation to conflicts being fought out on a national scale.

### 2. Private – Public (Man’s Pictures – Woman’s Pictures), 1981

2 photomontages, black & white photographs, colour photographs, mounted on card

This diptych places images of public monuments representing socialist ideals of masculinity and femininity in direct comparison with images of male models cut out by Iveković from weekly magazines, and photographs of the artist as a young ballerina.

### 3. Triangle, 1979

4 black & white inkjet prints on photo paper, with text

On 10 May 1979, Iveković performed an action on the balcony of her apartment during one of President Tito’s official visits to Zagreb. This resulted in *Triangle*, a work which now exists as documentation of the 18 minute performance and is accompanied by the following text written by the artist:

‘The action takes place on the day of President Tito’s visit to the city and develops as an intercommunication between three persons:

1. a person on the roof of a tall building across the street from my apartment
2. myself on the balcony
3. a policeman on the street in front of the house

Due to the cement construction of the balcony, only the person on the roof can actually see me and follow the action. My assumption is that this person has binoculars and a walkie-talkie. I notice that the policeman in the street also has a walkie-talkie. The action begins when I walk out onto the balcony and sit on a chair. I sip whiskey, read a book, and make gestures as if masturbating. After a period of time the policeman rings my doorbell and orders that ‘the persons and objects are to be removed from the balcony.’

#### **4. Triangle 2, 2005**

4 grids of 9 colour photographs, with text

On 15 October 2005, Iveković re-performed *Triangle* when 15 European presidents visited Zagreb to attend the Croatian Summit at the Westin Hotel (the same hotel Tito had visited 26 years previously). She attempts to contact the Croatian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the local police station, the Croatian President, and the Croatian Parliament to inform them that she is staging a performance. Due to the lack of mobile phone signal in the area for security purposes, she is unable to get through. Instead opens the local newspapers to read about the summit and other issues of public interest.

#### **5. New Zagreb (People Behind the Windows), 1979**

Photomontage: digital print mounted on aluminium

During President Tito's official visits to Zagreb, residents were forbidden from standing on their balconies to watch the convoy pass by and were expected to either stay indoors or to line the streets in welcoming crowds. In *New Zagreb (People Behind the Windows)* Iveković colours in the apartments where she spots people violating this law.

#### **6. Gen XX, 1997–2001**

6 offset prints, with vitrine display showing selected issues of *Arkzin*, 1997–1998

In *Gen XX* Iveković alters six magazine adverts featuring well-known fashion brands and models, replacing the advertising copy with information about six young female anti-fascist militants who were imprisoned, tortured, or executed during World War II: Dragica Končar, Nada Dimić, Ljubica Gerovac, the Balković sisters, Anka Butorac and Nera Šafarić (the artist's mother). Iveković aimed to reach a younger audience with this work and therefore chose to publish the altered adverts in the independent monthly magazine *Arkzin*.

#### **7. Searching For My Mother's Number, 2002**

3 screen video installation, research material in lever arch file (1945–1961)

- *Reading My Mother's Diary*  
Video, colour, sound, 21'16"
- *Family Archive*  
Video, colour, silent, 6'53"
- *Freedom*  
Video, colour, silent, 18'44"

Originally conceived and produced for dOCUMENTA (11) in 2002, *Searching for My Mother's Number* is a research project combining private and public material surrounding the artist's mother Nera Šafarić's story of resistance against

the Nazi occupation of Yugoslavia.

The work traces Iveković's own process of uncovering missing information on her mother Nera, whilst giving an insight into the wider socio-political climate in Yugoslavia in the decades following World War II.

#### **8. Personal Cuts, 1982**

Video (digital transfer), colour, sound, 3'43"

Iveković wears a black stocking over her head, and methodically makes incisions into the fabric with a large pair of scissors, gradually revealing her face. The gesture of cutting near her skin parallels the manual process of editing celluloid film, which, together with her editorial decision to insert snippets of TV footage of historical events from socialist Yugoslavia, make up a fragmented national narrative. The work was broadcast on prime-time national television, on TV Zagreb's programme 3,2,1 – *Action!* in 1982.

#### **9. Tragedy of a Venus 1975–76**

10 photomontages selected from a series of 25.

Black & white photographs; newspaper clippings and magazine pages, mounted on paper

Tabloid images of Marilyn Monroe from the Yugoslav magazine *Duga* (November 1975) are juxtaposed with snapshots of the artist from her daily life. The images are paired according to similarities in pose, appearance and setting, questioning the stereotypes that influence the production of images, both public and private. A similar artistic strategy is applied in the series *Bitter Life, Sweet Life* and *Double Life*, which are on display at the South London Gallery.

## DOWNSTAIRS

### **10. Women in Art – Women in Yugoslav Art, 1975**

Photomontage: 1 page from *Flash Art* magazine, pen and ink drawing

A page from the Italian arts magazine *Flash Art* depicts photo-portraits of US and European women artists, curators and critics in 1975. Iveković's drawing is more or less a copy of the page, but changes the title from *Women in Art to Women in Yugoslav Art*. In this way, her fictional portraits highlight the lack of female artists, curators and critics in socialist Yugoslavia at the time.

### **11. Lost & Found, 2003**

Synchronised slide projections on 2 carousels

Two slide projections show parallel images of shop fronts and factories in Zagreb during the socialist period, and the same facades as seen in 2003 as a direct means of signifying the transition from collective to private ownership; from Yugoslavia to contemporary Croatia.

### **12. Ponos (Pride), 2003**

Neon sign on red wall

A replica of a neon sign taken from a textiles shop in socialist-era Zagreb. In the nineties the shop changed its name from *Ponos* [Pride] to *Terranova* [New World].

### **13. Practice Makes A Master, 2009**

Video, colour, sound, 16'40"

First realised by Iveković in 1982, this performance was re-enacted by the dancer Sonja Pregrad in 2009. She stands on stage in a black dress wearing a white plastic bag over her head, continually stumbling and falling to the ground as if under attack, only to get back up again and exhaustively repeat the action.

A soundtrack from the film *Bus Stop* featuring Marilyn Monroe is mixed with the sounds of gambling machines. This audio progressively slows down as the performance endures, whilst stage lights continue to rhythmically flash on and off.

### **14. Pines and Fir Trees – Women's Memories of Socialism, 2002**

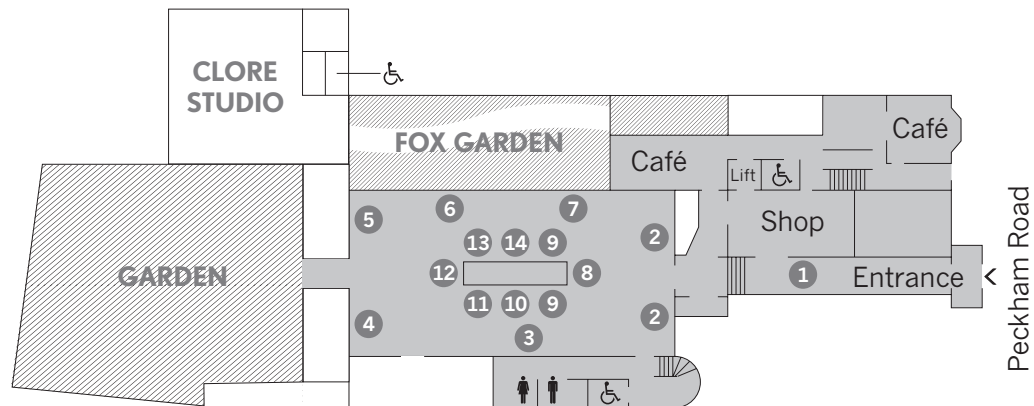
Video, colour, sound, 58'

Produced by *Electra – Women's Art Centre* in Zagreb, this documentary film spotlights the stories of women from different social, religious and political backgrounds across Croatia. The work uncovers narratives that have remained invisible within official state histories and recounts key historic events from a female perspective.

*Electra* was established in 1995 by Iveković as a centre for women artists; the first of its kind in Croatia and is linked to the *Centre for Women's Studies* in Zagreb.

[www.arkzin.net/electra](http://www.arkzin.net/electra)

## SOUTH LONDON GALLERY



### 1. Unknown Heroine, 1998/2009

Poster; associated documentation on paper

Iveković conceived and realised the project 'Neznana Junakinja' [*The Unknown Heroine*] with Electra Women's Art Centre, Zagreb, between November – December 1998. The project aimed to uncover the story behind the name of a small street in Zagreb, *Ulica Neznane Junakinje* [*The Unknown Heroine Street*]. As a work-in-progress, it was imagined as a collaborative, participatory project, and was timed to coincide with the global action *16 Days of Women's Activism*. The project was re-staged at BAK, Utrecht in 2009, where a street was identified to be renamed *Unknown Heroine Street*. The process was documented and is represented in the vitrine.

### 2. Black File, 1976

6 photomontages: magazine and newspaper clippings, mounted on paper

Images of models cut out from men's magazines are paired with newspaper clippings of teenage girls in 'missing persons' columns, reflecting on the homogenisation of women in the media, whether a missing girl or an erotic subject.

### 3. Double Life, 1975

13 photomontages selected from a series of 64.

Black & white photographs and colour adverts from magazines, mounted on paper

Conceived and originally published as an artist's book, the series *Double Life* presents photographs from Iveković's personal albums in direct comparison with adverts cut out from lifestyle magazines. She explains, 'In *Double Life* I juxtaposed the advertisements I found in women's magazines (mainly imported from the West) with photographs of myself taken from my private albums. Since the pictures of myself predate the advertisements taken from mass media, it is clear that I did not mimic or re-enact the models' body postures and gestures, although the similarities are quite striking. I wanted to show the power of mass media not only in the identity construction of these intangible women but also to analyse my own personal role as a woman in society, and specifically in a society in which – in spite of its officially egalitarian policy – patriarchal culture was still very much present and alive, and in which the consumerist dream was a part of everyday life.'

#### **4. Figure and Ground, 2005–6**

8 photomontages: magazine pages, newspaper clippings and screen grabs. Vitrine display: *The Face* magazine, Issue #56, September 2011

Eight images of female models from a photo-shoot in *The Face* magazine (wearing designer army coats, camouflage caps, balaclavas and bikinis together with bullet belts and weapons) are paralleled with documentary photographs from newspapers, magazines and websites circulating news reports with images of armed militants after 9/11. This issue of *The Face* was designed prior to the attack, and published just afterwards.

#### **5. Invisible Women of Solidarity: 6 out of 5 Million, 2009–10**

6 screen prints, with text by Sanja Iveković, first published in *Krytyka Polityczna* [Political Criticism], issue 18, 2009

‘Solidarnos’ [Solidarity] was the first independent Polish trade union to oppose the communist regime, and was established in Warsaw in 1980. The work includes six portraits of seemingly invisible women who played an influential political role in leading the Union throughout the 1980s. The women, largely omitted from the official history of the trade union itself, have since become prominent public figures in Poland. The portraits are accompanied by texts written

by Iveković, reporting each of their biographies, as examples of six women out of five million who supported the union.

#### **6. Sweet Life, 1975–6**

6 photomontages: black & white photographs and magazine clippings, mounted on cardboard

Paparazzi shots cut out from gossip columns of magazines and newspapers are juxtaposed with photos from the artist’s private albums. These photographs of various celebrities, taken during private and personal moments for the public’s enjoyment, are positioned by Iveković like a scrap book, with her own personal photographs as private counterparts.

#### **7. Bitter Life, 1975–6**

6 photomontages: black & white photographs and magazine clippings, mounted on cardboard

The work consists of images cut out of magazines and daily newspapers with captions reporting crimes and tragedies. The artist draws attention to the exaggerated visual language of the media by juxtaposing these clippings with those from her private albums.

#### **8. Women’s House (Sunglasses), 2002/2012**

18-page publication, printed in an edition of 10

*Women’s House (Sunglasses)* is composed of fifteen adverts for designer sunglasses, in which the advertising copy has been overlaid with the testimonials of women who have been subjected to domestic violence. In Iveković’s words, ‘I always seek the most effective way of getting the message across in a given context. I think that this state of urgency, which is characteristic of the times we live in, demands that artists be extremely flexible; strategies of *intervention* form part of the feminist heritage, which is exceptionally relevant to today’s artistic practices...I like to collaborate with non-governmental and women’s organizations. I am convinced that activism and art can be mutually complementary.’

#### **9. Structure – Book, 2011**

Boxset with 100 gelatin silver prints, designed by Ajdin Bašić, edition of 50

Ten portraits of women taken from daily newspapers and magazines are reproduced with handwritten captions beneath each image such as: ‘She loves to sew from time to time’, ‘She is bored with the role of a good girl’, ‘She is still waiting for her master’s return’.

#### **10. Sweet Violence, 1974**

Video (digital transfer), black & white, sound, 5'56"

Iveković’s early video work from the 1970s focuses on the potency of television and its influence as a tool for political and social change. *Sweet Violence*, one of the artist’s first video works, takes footage from the Yugoslav television’s daily economic propaganda programme, (EPP), a mixture of socialism and free-market capitalism. Iveković intervenes with powerful edits to disconnect viewers from the ‘sweet violence’ of media culture, a term originally coined by the Italian journalist Guido Guarda.

#### **11. Monument, 1976**

Video (digital transfer), black & white, sound, 6'

The camera carefully spirals around a still and silent male body; the close-up shot allows the viewer to travel along the figure until the camera’s gaze reaches the space above his head. The figure is observed to the slightest detail; his stillness is accentuated by the camera’s movement and transforms him into an object, a statue or a monument.



### **12. Instructions No.1, 1976**

Video (digital transfer), black & white, sound, 6'3"

A close-up shot shows the artist as a young woman painting black arrows over the contours of her face, as a surgeon might when preparing for cosmetic surgery. She then massages her face along the arrows, erasing them and leaving a smudged residue across her skin.

### **13. Make-Up – Make Down, 1978**

Video (digital transfer), colour, sound, 9'36"

Iveković performs the everyday routine of applying make-up, handling cosmetics in front of a camera which is positioned as a mirror might be. However only her upper body and hands appear in the frame, as she twists a lipstick up and down, removes and replaces the lid from an eye pencil, and dips a mascara brush in and out of its container. The work has been edited to a very slow pace and the artist's ritualistic interaction with these objects becomes intimate, fetishised and increasingly layered with sexual innuendo.

### **14. No End, 1983**

Video (digital transfer), colour, sound, 7'7"  
In collaboration with Dalibor Martinis

*No End* shows looped footage of a woman revealing only her chest, arms and legs: the protagonist is caught up in edited repetitions, buttoning and unbuttoning her blouse. A spoken narrative is continuously layered and looped, as a female voice repeats, *There will be no end because I forgot the beginning.*

## TALKS AND EVENTS

### **Sanja Iveković in Conversation**

**Sat 15 Dec, 2pm, South London Gallery, £5/£3 conc**

Sanja Iveković discusses her work with the exhibition's curator Lina Džuverović.

### **Twenty Three Percent\***

**Fri 25 Jan, 12–5pm, Royal College of Art, Battersea Campus, Free**

Presented in collaboration with the RCA, this one-day conference takes the work of Sanja Iveković as a point of departure to discuss urgent matters in feminism today. Participants include Ute Meta Bauer, Katy Deepwell, Lina Džuverović, Silvia Eiblmayr, Sanja Iveković, Elisabeth Lebovici, Suzana Milevska, Ruth Noack, Milica Tomić and others.

\*On average, women in the UK earn 15% less than men. In London, the pay gap stands at 23%.

### **Archive as Strategy: Conversations about Self-historicisation across the East**

**A Woman Must Put Herself into the Text:**

**a reading day with Suzana Milevska**

**Sun 27 Jan, 10am – 5pm, Calvert 22, Free**

Calvert 22's core research strand continues with a workshop led by independent curator Suzana Milevska.

### **Studio visit: Milica Tomić**

**Wed 30 Jan, 7pm, Calvert 22, Free**

Milica Tomić is an artist based in Belgrade, and a founding member of the New

Yugoslav art and theory group Grupa Spomenik [Monument Group]. For Studio Visit she discusses two recent projects: 'Four Faces of Omarska' and 'Container: photography by other means'.

### **Gallery Talk: Catherine Wood**

**Thu 31 Jan, 7pm, Calvert 22, Free**

Catherine Wood, Curator of Contemporary Art & Performance at Tate Modern, discusses Sanja Iveković's practice and gives a tour of the exhibition at Calvert 22.

### **Gallery Talk: Lina Džuverović**

**Thu 7 Feb, 7pm, Calvert 22, Free**

Lina Džuverović discusses the curatorial concepts behind *Unknown Heroine* and gives a tour of the exhibition at Calvert 22.

*All events are free and take place at Calvert 22, unless otherwise stated. Please contact [rsvp@calvert22.org](mailto:rsvp@calvert22.org) for further information or to make a reservation, visit [www.calvert22.org](http://www.calvert22.org) or ask at reception for details.*

### **Exhibition Catalogue**

**Sanja Iveković-Unknown Heroine**

A catalogue featuring newly commissioned essays by Ivana Bago, Lina Džuverović, Antonia Majaca and Suzana Milevska accompanies the exhibition. Published by Calvert 22 and designed by Russell Warren-Fisher, the catalogue is available at both Calvert 22 and the South London Gallery.



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Tuesday – Sunday 11am – 6pm, except Wednesdays and Last Fridays 9pm.

Closed Monday.



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Wednesday – Sunday, 12pm – 6pm, except First Thursdays 9pm.

Closed Monday. Open by appointment on Tuesday.

*Thanks to Linklaters LLP*



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### Transport between venues

**Overground:** Shoreditch High Street Overground Station (2 mins walk from Calvert 22) to Peckham Rye Overground Station (5 mins walk from the SLG or buses 12, 36, 171, 343, 345 and 436).

**Bus:** No 78 bus runs from Shoreditch to Peckham Library (5 mins walk from the SLG or buses 12, 36, 171, 343, 345 and 436).