

OLSON

LAMIAJ

PORTFOLIO

## Olson Lamaj

Born in 1985 in Tirana, Albania  
Lives and works in Tirana

### Education

2008-2010 M.A at Academy of Fine Arts Brera, Milano (Photography 2010)  
2004-2008 Academy of Fine Arts, Florence (Painting 2008)

### Solo Exhibitions

2017- (OVER)IDENTIFICATION - Curated by Maja Ciric, TULLA Cultural Center, Tirana, AL  
2010 - GRAFI DI MEMORIA - MS gallery, Madrid, ES  
2006 - AT EAST OF IMPOSSIBLE - Curated by Valentina Spata, Vitervo, IT

### Award

2012 - First price at ARDHJA AWARD organize by TICA (Tirana Institute of Contemporary Art), AL

### Residences

#### 2017

KulturKontakt Austria - Artists in Residence, Vienna, AT

#### 2012

ISCP- International Studio & Curatorial Program, New York, USA

### Group Exhibitions

#### 2017

DU ODER ICH? COLLECTIVE SOUL- curated by Ursula Maria Probst, Melk, AT  
TEMPORALITIES - curated by Tereza Záchová, Vienna, AT  
TRANSCULTURAL EMANCIPATION - curator Ursula Maria Probst, FLUC, Vienna, AT  
"THE NEW END" - curator Paolo Torffolutti - Villa Di Toppo Florio, Udine, IT

#### 2016

CONTEMPORARY ART IN ALBANIA AND KOSOVO- curator Julia Fabényi - Ludwig Museum, Budapest, HU  
DARK CHAPTERS - curated by Margarethe Makovec & Anton Lederer, < rotor >, GRAZ, AT  
MBI QIELL NEN - DUO EXHIBITION, COD (center for open dialog), Tirana, AL

#### 2015

THIS IS NOT A PALM TREE - Neurotitan Schwarzenberg, Berlin, DE  
NATIONLESS (altering the palimpsests) - Center of Contemporary Art, Thessaloniki, GR  
SARA ART FAIR - Sarajevo Art Fair, Sarajevo, BA  
Supermarket - Stockholm Independent Art Fair, SE  
NATIONLESS [AUTONOMY/LIBERATION]- Youth Cultural Center (MKC), Skopje (Macedonia)

#### 2014

ANIVERSARY EXHIBITION - Robert Kananaj Gallery, Toronto, CA  
POST YOUNG ALBANIA ARTIST - Curated by Antonio Frugis, Roberto Lacarbonara, Fondazione Museo Pino Pascali, Bari, IT

#### 2013

GJON MILI INTERNATION PHOTO EXHIBITION- Frits Grierstberg (curator), National Galery of Kosovo, KS  
KOL IDROMENO award - Zef Paci (curator), Shkodra Gallery, Shkodra, AL

#### 2012

HOT TABU- MIZA, Tirana, AL  
ARDHJA award - T.I.C.A, Tirana, AL  
ANDATA-RITORNO, Matilda Odobashi (curator), Fap Gallery, AL

#### 2011

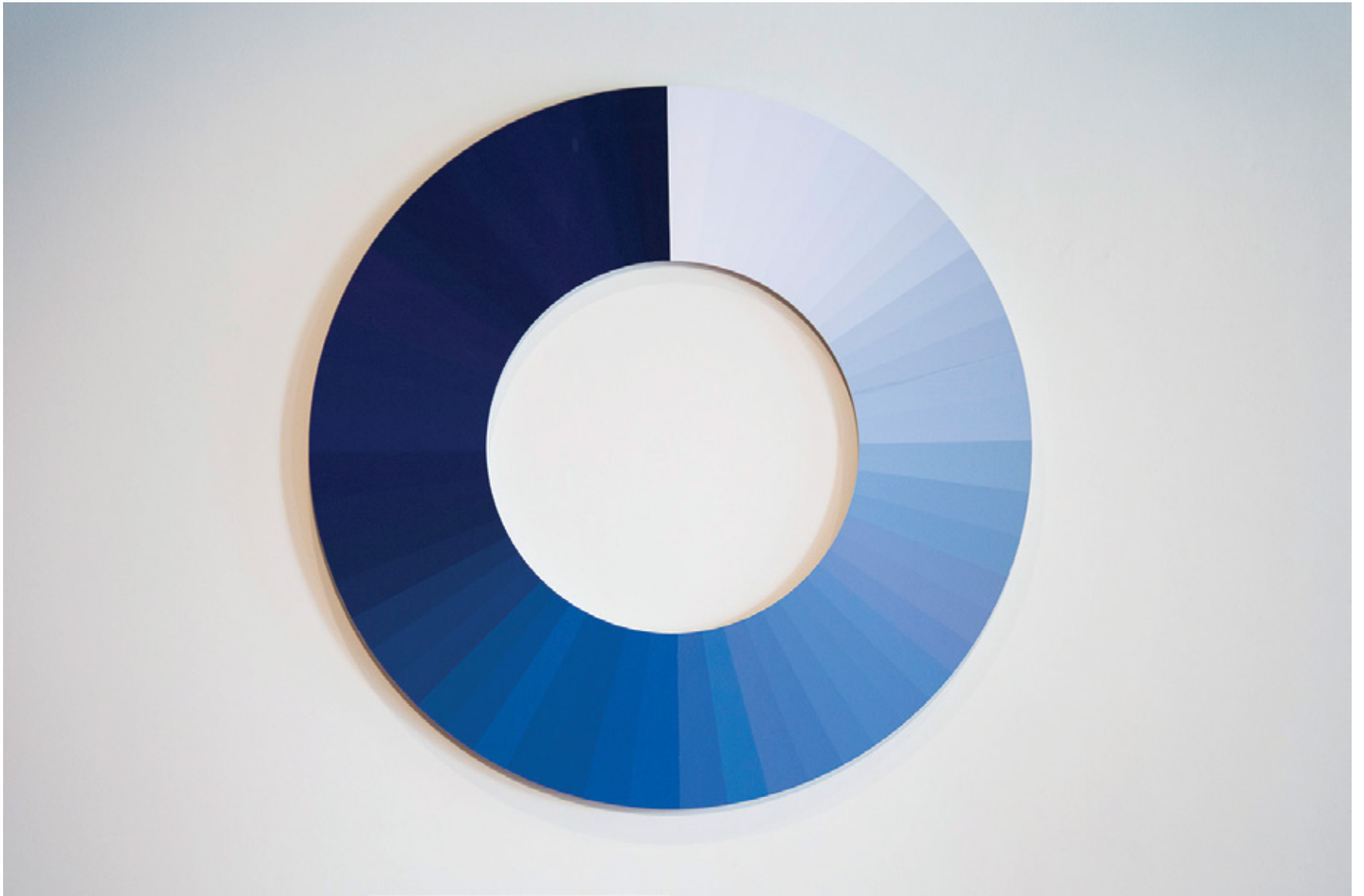
ARDHJA award - FAB Gallery and Zeta Gallery, Tirana, (Albania) METRONOM -Modena, IT

#### 2009

ONUFRI 2009 - Parid Teleferici (curator) National Art Gallery, Tirana, AL

#### 2007

ONUFRI 2007 - Rubens Shima (curator) National Art Gallery, Tirana, AL  
INDEPENDENCE DAY - Elsa Martini (curator) National Art Gallery, Tirana, AL  
Networking 2007 INTEGRATION AND CONFLICT- Giacomo Bazzani (curator) Florence, IT  
GenovARTE 2007, II Biennale of Contemporary Art, Genova, IT  
SECRET OF BOCCA - organize from Bocca Library Milano. IT



## Sky COLOR

180x180 cm,digital print with forex, 2016

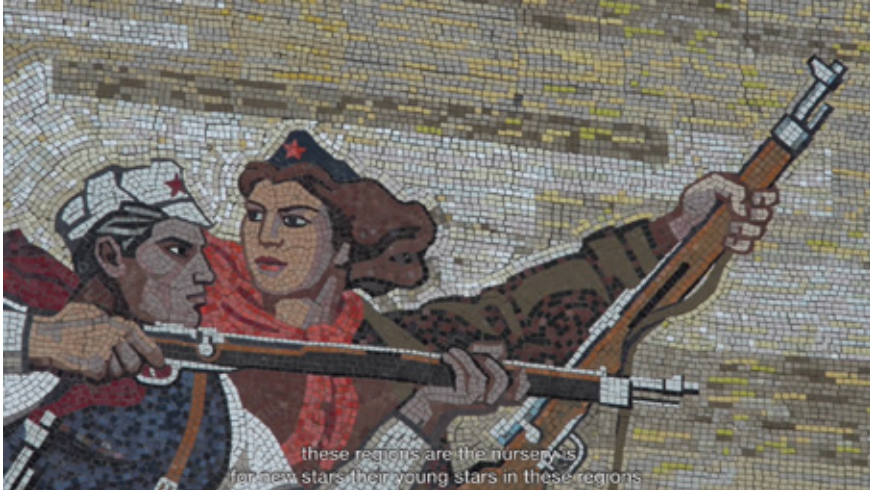
Sky Color is an augmented version of the old instrument called cyanometer (c.1789) invented by Horace Bénédict de Saussure which was used to measure depth of the color of the sky. This artwork stands for a relationship of an individual with the sky as the ultimate symbol of freedom. On a more symbolic level this augmented cyanometer stands for showing the wide span of the possible projected realities that should be measured up with the realities of the people. Culturally, politically and experientially, the societies seem to have locked up the potentials for a variety of realities. One must invent more alternative ones in order for one to have the freedom to choose. The sky is usually the ultimate plateau of human reflection, men looked up to the skies and searched for answers. This quest brought forth the trajectory of human progress. But, tragically today, under the guise of capitalist over-determination of the World and of locking up the human potential within the limits of the market, we have lost this important reference of humanities progress – the sky. The palette of variations of the blue is one example of the possible of the social and the individual. It stands itself as the mute reminder that what drove our history on the World forward must never be lost out of sight.



## Blue Meteor

Pavement stone, 2016

What is the purpose of the museums today? Do they merely represent something that happened some time ago, or is it possible that we can open up our realities in an interplay and exchange of practices, valorizations and relations with the static presence of object in the museum space? Cubed stones collected as means of a social revolt and set up in a museum-like setting, are perfectly fit to remember us that what we do today is going to be highly relevant for the what the future has to tell to us about our own experience. Have the sky-colored blue meteors flown over the democracy-locked institutions of The State, only managed to open them to the formal apprehending of the critique and resistance, that is to pervert them into mute museum objects? Opening up the field of contestation requires its maintenance under whatsoever future conditions. The State can attempt to tame, coopt, integrate such experiences through various acts of artistic capture of such political moments. But, the explosive political dimension, inexhaustible within the large scope of contemporary practices, will always remain one of the most powerful tools to subvert and such gestures of occupation and territorialization and keep alive the lines of light of the struggle. Olson's meteors perform exactly that act of relentless return to the field of contestation and critique.



## How stars are born ?

Video, HD Color, 4.03 min, 2015

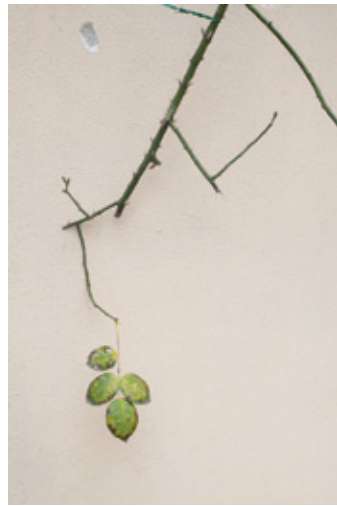
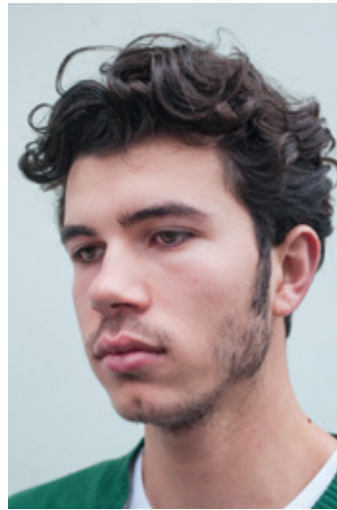
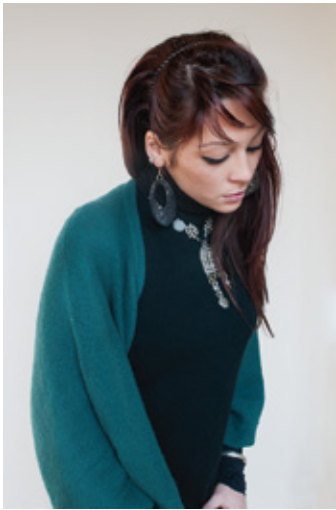
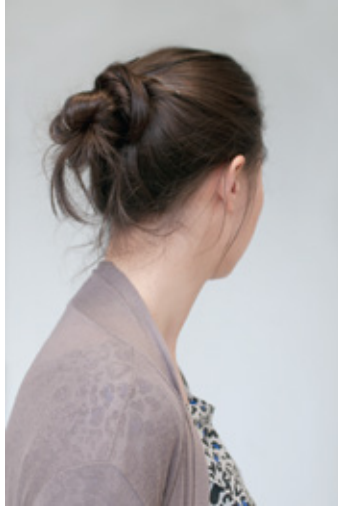
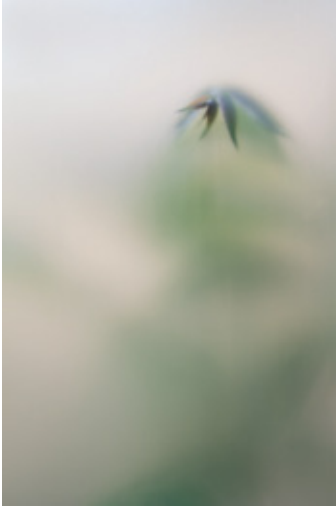
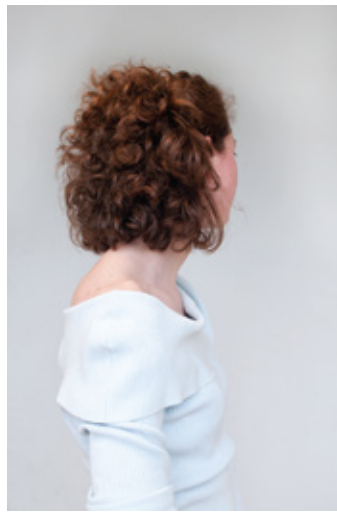
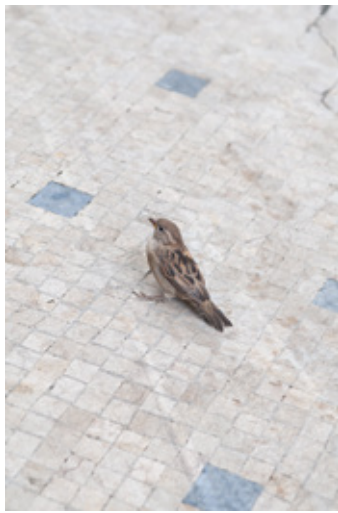
The video piece "How stars are born" is a genuine act of presenting pure and simple the ideological battles that use the same signifiers to transmit quite different 'spirits of time'. Not relying at all on excessive discursive framing of artwork, one that the contemporary art suffers from heavily, Olson mashes three dimensions of "the star" in a confused imagery and narration. He only traces the ideological overlays of transition, a process which paints post-modern lifestyle over the layer of contested heritage of an ex-communist country and society, generating a condition of latent absurdity. The monuments of a 'glorious past' and the partisan stories of grandfathers continue to be present alongside commercials of a consumerist culture and kitsch local manipulations with the US/EU symbols. The narration on star science stands in a position of complete absurdity to the ideological constructs of the meaning of 'the star'. This is the predicament of transitional societies, no clarity for the past, and no viable future, always remaining within the thick line of confusion.



## The Goldfinch

Video, HD Color, 5.21 min, 2014

The film shows the interior of a luxurious villa "villa of the dictator Enver Hoxha" and inside it, a goldfinch bird enters. This bird, which you usually find in a cage and is well known for its beautiful voice, in this case, the house becomes the bird's cage that wants to go outside. The goldfinch, different from other species of birds, is not a domestic bird. If we try to get it free from the cage, the bird can survive by itself even without the help of the master. The video deals with the relationship that domestic animals have with a dictatorship regime.



## Details view

Photographic series, 2010

This is a photo series included in a photo-book where the artist shows the portraits of new ages nowadays. The subjects appear melancholic, but represent details of the city, revealing its inner essence. Lamaj talks about a human ecology, that one featuring the urban areas where fragility and hope intertwine. Those are feelings that draw a sort of landscape of a new generation. Without recurring to maps and geo-references, the project is an 'Emotional Atlas' consisting in faces, glimpses and small close-ups.



## Mystic Bird (Shqipe)

150x100 cm, digital photo, 2007

It is a job performed by the artist in a period of time when in the Balkan talks about the independence of Kosovo and about Albanian's destinies. To see and to hear about this things and reflecting on the tradition and symbolism of the Eagle with two heads of the Albanian flag, Olson decided to illustrate the through digital photos montage on how he sees his beloved country. So he decides to photograph a turkey with two heads, referring to the symbol of double-headed eagle in the flag, but not as Albanians describe as a strong and brave eagle that flies free to the heaven but as a eagle of peeling and procumbent. An eagle that is not threatening nobody but only reduced mercy in a way that she don't have the force to leave nor to fly. This tragic illustration of our artist comes from his personal reflection about the wars and unrest that Albanian people have been through years and simultaneously political situation of Albania with Europe, a country that he intends to admire but which in the eyes of Europe looks like a nomadic people.





## biography

Olson Lamaj (b. 1985) is an Albanian artist living and working in Tirana. His work investigates social and political issues related both to contemporary life in Albania and to more universal and timeless systems of meaning extending beyond immediate conditions. As one of the co-founders of MIZA Gallery in Tirana, Lamaj's own experience as an artist has been related to the establishment of artistic spaces and institutions in Tirana. Lamaj's projects emphasize the semiotic oversaturation – and the mysterious, almost mystical qualities – of objects and images related to political ideologies of various kinds. His artworks function as a collective mythography of the present, laying the groundwork for the projection and creation of new myths.