

Vangjush Vellahu

www.vangjushvellahu.com

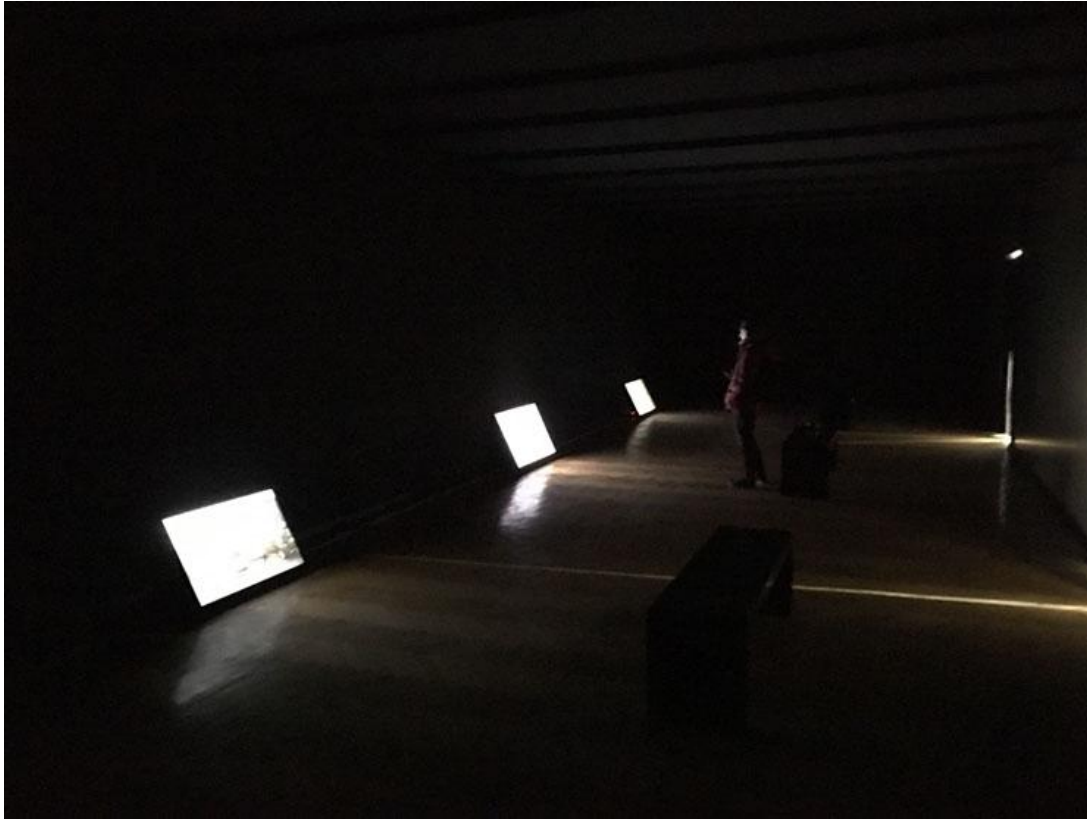
Fragments (I), 2015 - 2018

6 Chanel Video Installation

(for specifications to each video of the installation, see below)







This series of videos document the present situation of a few unrecognized states and serve as historical testimonials that are part of the development of forgotten traces. The collective drama is not only a trace left on people's experience but also a trace left on the architecture. Architectural constructions such as buildings are one of the main topics of this work, since they embed memories and at the same time their image is an embodiment of the war. These buildings show memories of a political system, memories of people who lived inside and simultaneously contain within their physical structure the passing of time and vandalism. Being an iconic image of the war for the people that live on those places, the buildings represent simultaneously the development of the place in the socio-political context. Experiencing in a literally real dimension in these regions makes one to see differently, and also judge from a different point of view. The videos show a narrative and simple message namely the historical context of these territories and the problems that occur in the present and are part of an installation that resembles the destroyed surroundings of the quasi states.

There are numerous examples of states which declared themselves as being de facto but even so in most of the cases, they face the fact that if they don't achieve the independence they would be forced to turn back under the sovereignty of the 'parent' state. This happens when a de facto republic fail to get international recognition or an external patron. Nowadays, this phenomenon remains a problem considering that most of the governments that are against this process. A multitude of countries are composed by multi-ethnic groups that could take the example of the actual de facto states and declare themselves independent. Therefore, it remains a very sensitive subject and a topic that is often seen as being pointless even in the recent years.

Abkhazia After, 2016

13 min 44 sec
HD-Video, Color, Sound, Aspect Ratio 16:9

Interview with: Astamur Kortava

Music: Akhura Ashva, Song of the wounded 2, Abkhaz Folk Songs 1956

Auasarhuga, Ethnographic choir of Abkhazian villagers, 1929-1938

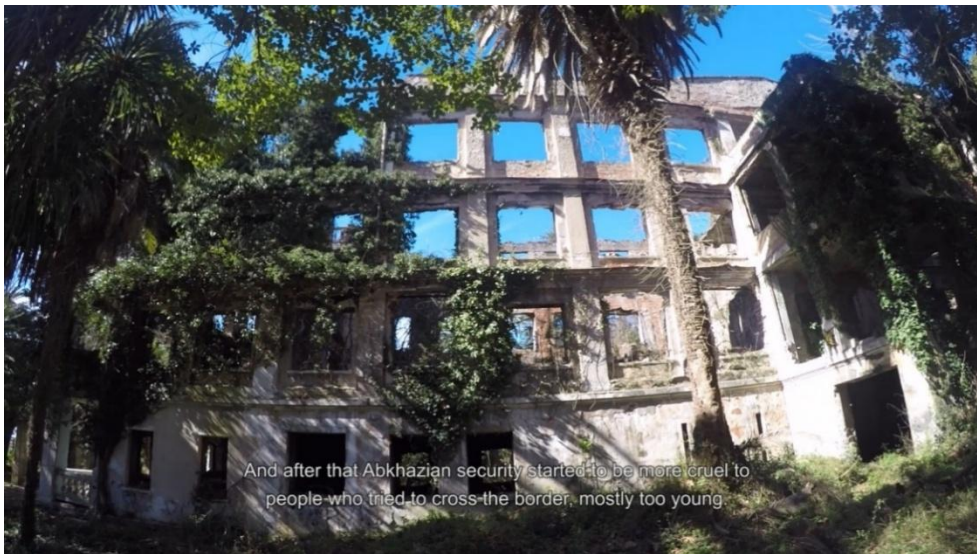
Language: Audio English, Subtitles English

Locations: Sukhumi, Gagra, Gudauta, Ochamchire, Tkvarcheli, Gali district, Zugdidi (Abkhazia, Georgia)

Support: Ioana Mitrea

<https://vimeo.com/172200091>

pass: van



Abkhazia is a partially recognised state in the Caucasus region, located next to the black sea between Russia and Georgia and is a post-Soviet "frozen conflict" zone.

Abkhazia considers itself an independent state, called the Republic of Abkhazia but this status is recognised only by a few countries, including the external-patron state, Russia. Georgia and the majority of the world's governments theoretically consider Abkhazia a part of Georgia's territory, though Georgia does not control it. The status of Abkhazia is a central issue of the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict and Georgian-Russian relations. The separation of Georgia from Soviet Union led to the 1992-93 war in Abkhazia which resulted in Georgian military defeat, de facto independence of Abkhazia and ethnic cleansing. A major part of the international community and Georgia itself considers Abkhazia to be occupied and controlled by Russia.

Varosha, a silent town, 2016

12 min 05 sec

HD-Video, Color, Sound, Aspect Ratio 16:9

Interview with: a conscript soldier

Music: Recorded during Salah times at Lala Mustafa Paşa Mosque in Famagusta

Language: Audio English, Subtitles English

Locations: Varosha-Famagusta, Girne, Nicosia-Gokhan (Northern Cyprus)

Support: Ioana Mitrea

<https://vimeo.com/172693137>

password: van



The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is a self-declared state, recognised only by Turkey. In 1960 Cyprus became independent. Three years later, the president of the Republic of Cyprus introduced new amendments on the constitution that were reducing the position of the Turkish Cypriots regarding the constitutional framework. This turned into a violent conflict after the Turkish Cypriots rejected the reform. The Turkish Cypriots withdraw into enclaves which were situated all over the island until 1974. In 1964 a UN peacekeeping force was established. In 1974, a coup d'état, performed as part of an attempt to annex the island to Greece, prompted the Turkish invasion of Cyprus. This resulted in the eviction of much of the north's Greek Cypriot population to the south and the flight of Turkish Cypriots from the south to the north, and the partitioning of the island, leading to a unilateral declaration of independence by the North in 1983. The international community considers the northern part of the island as territory of the Republic of Cyprus occupied by Turkey.

Agdam, 2016

10 min 40 sec

HD-Video, Color, Sound, Aspect Ratio 16:9

Interview with: Ani Harutyuyan

Music: Davit Sukiasyan, Untitled

Locations: Agdam, Shusha, Stepanakert, Martakert (Nagorno-Karabakh)

Language: Audio English, Subtitles English

Support: Inna Tevikyan, Ioana Mitrea

<https://vimeo.com/198875728>

password: van



The de facto Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh or officially also known as the Republic of Artsakh is an unrecognised republic in the Caucasus region, officially part of Azerbaijan but under the control of ethnic Armenian separatists. Karabakh's territory was established in 1923 as an autonomous oblast with an ethnic Armenian majority within Azerbaijan SSR. The tensions started in 1988 when the ethnic Armenians expressed their wish to be united with the Armenian SSR. This was rejected by the Soviet Union and as well by Azerbaijan. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Armenia and Azerbaijan became independent but Karabakh remained under Azerbaijan's control. In the 90s the tensions led to war and in 1992 Karabakh declared its independence. The war ended in 1994 with a ceasefire that left the current borders unresolved. The Republic of Artsakh is a member of the Community for Democracy and Rights of Nations, commonly known as the "Commonwealth of Unrecognised States" Including Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria.

Trans'nistria, 2017

11 min 50 sec

HD-Video, Color, Sound, Aspect Ratio 16:9

Interview with: Anonymous people in Tiraspol

Locations: Tiraspol, Percani, Bender (Transnistria, Moldavia)

Language: Audio English, Subtitles English

Support: Gavrilov Dmitri, Ioana Mitrea

<https://vimeo.com/214410021>

password: van



Transnistria's (officially known as Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic) wish for independence began during the Soviet Union as a reaction to the Moldavian Romanisation. However the Soviet Union and also the Moldavian authorities declined its independence and Transnistria remained part of Moldavia. After the dissolution of the USSR, tensions between Moldova and the breakaway Transnistria territory escalated into a military conflict that started in March 1992 and was concluded by a ceasefire in the same year. As part of that agreement, a three-party (Russia, Moldova and Transnistria) Joint Control Commission supervises the security arrangements in the demilitarised zone, comprising twenty localities on both sides of the river Dniester. Although the ceasefire has held, the territory's political status remains unresolved. Its authorities have adopted a constitution, flag, national anthem, and coat of arms. It is the only country still using the hammer and sickle on its flag. Till now Transnistria's de facto independence has been recognised only by South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh and Abkhazia and it has a large Russian military defence.

At the edge of Tskhinvali, 2017

12 min 20 sec

HD-Video, Color, Sound, Aspect Ratio 16:9

Interview with: Galina Kelechsaeva

Locations: Tskhinvali, Lower Khviti, Upper Nikozi, Tbeti, Ergeneti, Shavshvebi (South Ossetia, Georgia)

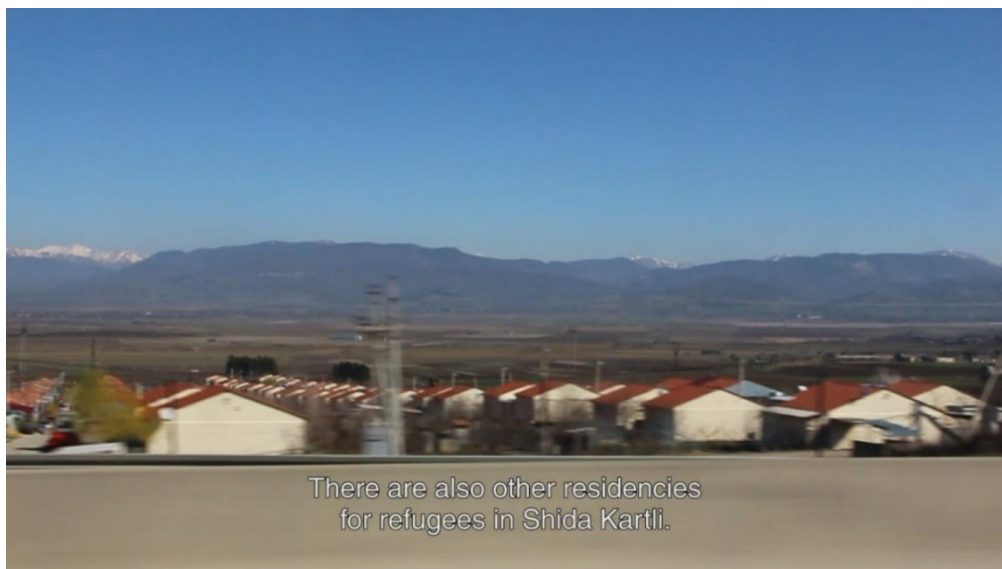
Language: Audio German-Georgian-Russian, Subtitles English

Translation: Martha Todua, Mariam Tataridze

Support: Guram Kereselidze, Maka Sartania, Ioana Mitrea

<https://vimeo.com/222664145>

password: van



Tskhinvali Region or the Republic of South Ossetia is a partially recognised state in the South Caucasus, that was established as an Autonomous Oblast within the former Georgian SSR. In 1980 a separatist movement was created and promoted the idea of the separation from Georgia and the unification with North Ossetia, which was a republic in the Russian Federation. In 1989 they wanted to be recognised as an autonomous republic but this was rejected by Georgia who implemented a series of laws that were seen as hostile. In 1991 when Georgia gained independence from the Soviet Union the conflicts raised between Ossetians and Georgians. A peacekeeping operation from Russia was established in South Ossetia in 1992. One year later, they approved a constitution that underlined their independence as a republic even if this was not recognised by most of the countries. Conflicts raised in 2008 during Saakashvili politics which culminated with the Russo-Georgian war, Georgian military defeat and ethnic cleansing.

Field of Blackbirds, 2017

17 min 05 sec

HD-Video, Color, Sound, Aspect Ratio 16:9

Interview with: Naser Shatrolli

Music: Recorded on the streets of Pristina

Locations: Pristina, Ferizaj, Mitrovica, Peja, Gjakova, Prizren (Kosovo)

Language: Audio Albanian, Subtitles English

Translation: Elona Gusho, Vangjush Vellahu

Support: Ioana Mitrea, Felisha Bahadur

<https://vimeo.com/228236545>

password: van



In 1974 the Yugoslavian constitution gave Kosovo the status of an autonomous province within Serbian sovereign territory. With the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the rise to power of Slobodan Milosevic in 1989, Kosovo's autonomy was revoked. Subsequent protests of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo led to military intervention and the dissolution of the province's parliament. Tensions between Albanians and Serbs of Kosovo erupted into major violence, culminating with the Kosovo War, which resulted in withdrawal of Serbian armed forces and the establishment of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo. The war brought major ethnic cleansing, displacement of almost the entire population and thousands of casualties. In 2008, Kosovo unilaterally declared its independence from Serbia. Since then it has gained diplomatic recognition as a sovereign state by over 100 UN member countries. Serbia, Russia, China and many other countries strongly opposed Kosovo independence by calling it a violation of the international law. Kosovo's legal status was reviewed by the international court of justice when Serbia requested such a review. In 2010 the Court gave an opinion that the declaration of independence did not violate international law. Kosovo's independence was therefore a product of international action rather than indigenous effort. This is not to underestimate the local achievement, but the foreign contribution was relatively larger than in other cases of secession.

"Home Conversations"

With former employees of Impuls Factory Dilijan,
August-September 2016

This series of interviews with former employees of the Impuls factory evokes the spontaneous character of encounters that can take place when people from different generations, cultures, and economic systems speak face to face. When we are confronted with something which is not ours, we can only understand it by living out of sync with our own personal time. At this intersection, a dialogue emerges that transmits the wisdom and memories of the past. In an unfamiliar location, face to face conversation offers the possibility of catching the missing details of official narratives. These interviews are the beginnings of an oral archive – a living archive – in which the past is transmitted through personal experience.

This is the secret factory of Impuls which by the time hosted some four thousand mainly female workers and which till before the 90s produced telecommunication devices in Dilijan, Armenia. Impuls is one of many factories constructed during the USSR time. The interviews with the former employees give us specifically information about the factory and its social substance reaching far beyond the production site, by showing us how the factory was connected to the city, how it generated urban culture and the social life and activities of Dilijan during USSR time. After the fall of Soviet Union and the declaration of independence of Armenia, Dilijan was disconnected from this larger family and that disconnection brought this city an extreme social change. This changes brought generations of the Soviet Union system into extreme difficulties to configure with the new political systems.

Credits:

Interviewees:

Shushanik Babayan, Adrine Tutoyan, Serge Yeghikyan, Tsaghik Simonyan, Arevshat Matinyan, Albert Melkonyan, Hratch Khachatryan, Valentin Ghevondyan, Arkadi Davtyan

Interviewers:

Joanna Sokolowska, Vangjush Vellahu, Vigen Galstyan,
Natasha Gasparian, Christoph Keller, Ioana Mitrea,

Language:

Armenian, Russian, English

Translators:

Hrach Sargsyan, Inna Tevikyan, Simon Beugekian

Special Support:

Ioana Mitrea, Jasmina Metwaly, Silvina Der-Meguerditchian

Dilijan Arts Observatory

Curator:

Clémentine Deliss

Assistant Curators:

Asya Yaghmurian, Nairi Khatchadourian

Production:

Dilijan Arts Observatory 2016 was supported by philanthropists Ruben Vardanyan and Veronika Zonabend, founders of the United World College Dilijan, RVVZ Family Foundation, and IDeA charitable foundation, and co-founders of Dilijan Development Fund.

Further support was generously provided by Gagik Adibekyan, co-founder of DDF and founder of Adibekyan Family Foundation for Advancement.

Additional financial support:

National Galerie im Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart
Kulturstiftung des Bundes
German Federal Foreign Office

Produced for “Hello World. Revisioning a Collection”, an exhibition at the Nationalgalerie der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin 2018, at the Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin.

© Vangjush Vellahu, 2016 - 2018





