



**RHETORICAL IMAGE**

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**ART & LANGUAGE**

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**JAROSLAW KOZLOWSKI**

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**The New Museum  
of Contemporary Art,  
New York**

## **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

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1. What kind of working process do you use? Do you proceed from materials to ideas or from ideas to materials? Or is your production process different and, if so, could you please describe it?
2. What is your work's vocabulary? How does your choice of material constrain or expand it? Does your distribution context(s) (e.g. a museum, commercial gallery, public space, etc.) determine your choice of materials, scale, or other formal considerations?
3. Is your work meant to provide a critical interpretation of the world in general or the world of art? In other words, are its references and concerns independent of art history and art criticism, or do you see your work as being situated in the continuum of art history, in which it relates to art of the past and/or to contemporary art with concerns parallel to yours?
4. How do you measure a work's "success" or effectiveness? And how is your measurement different from or similar to measurements used in the larger art discourse?
5. Has your work put you in any danger or become a threat to you in any way? Or, in what way, if any, does the political sphere collide with your work?
6. Do you have periods of non-productivity? How do you resume work after such a period? If you have never experienced a hiatus, how do you maintain your optimism?
7. To what degree are you concerned with your work's social effect? Is it addressed to a specific or general audience? Do you think of this audience as local, national or international, or as one having or not having power?
8. To what degree does your work address topical events or circumstances in your local milieu? Is it concerned with issues of nationality, ethnicity, gender, or with things specific to your personal history?
9. Given that it is impossible to achieve, could you describe the ideal response to your work?
10. What question or questions would you like to ask the other artists, specifically or generally, in the exhibition? Or to ask all artists? Or the audience?
11. Do you believe that art has or can have any effect on politics?

(The interview questions have been printed on this flap, which can be folded out and referred to when reading the individual interviews.)

1. I was born in 1937. For a long time (from the earliest days of 1947 and watching movie images in dark theaters), the material dominated my thinking about art, and this went on until 1967 (*The Art of the Paranoid View—Homage to Glenn Miller*), when the idea became primary. In fact, my life (my art) has been made up of two things: one—observation, gathering (of material) and, two—the search for meaning, soul (idea).

2. The lexicon of *The Art of the Paranoid View—Homage to Glenn Miller* is the concentration camp, kitsch, torture, cliché, brain washing, socialist realism, sadomasochism, repetition, “directed by,” minimalism, Hollywood, irony. An action, performance, happening, or installation is best suited to a public space, and a public space is best suited to brutal political activity.

3. Like Don Quixote, I also thought that what I was watching in any given art form (film, theater, painting, photography, etc.) was real life, but I’d fallen into the trap of innocence. Maybe it was a flight from the concentration camp state-of-mind of my family, maybe a flight from the horrible state of things in the streets, in Zagreb society, in Yugoslavia? The so-called normal life-world functions according to the laws of naturalness, necessity, connection, ethics, whereas a work of art functions according to the laws of aesthetics only. What’s to be said for ethical rubbish like *Shchors*, the anti-Polish Soviet film (1939) by Alexander Dovzhenko, which probably “explained” to Soviet citizens why genocide was being carried out against the Poles, given that *Shchors* is an aesthetic masterpiece, one of the loveliest Soviet films? Or for ethical shit like the anti-human, Nazi film *Triumph of the Will* (1935) by Leni Riefenstahl, probably the best documentary ever made, an aesthetic masterpiece? I think my work has its place within the continuous history of art and that it is based on art of the past because otherwise it couldn’t appear.

4. Overall, I think I’m fairly well informed about art forms of the past and present, so I’m familiar with their parameters and various contexts, and I also believe I get more than enough information from history and politics.

5. Since 1967, my private and professional life, my artistic training, my social status, occupation, exhibitions, have been threatened more and more; because of certain of my action-performances in public spaces, I’ve been arrested and penalized, my shows closed or stymied.

6. It can’t be said that I’ve ever been mentally inactive but, instead, that there have been periods when the public, friends, didn’t know what I was doing or working on. All in all, I’ve always been strong, believed in myself and the rightness of my artistic thinking and brimmed with optimism for art and a limitless pessimism for the life around me and throughout Europe.

7. Whenever I’d address the public with something of mine, I wanted to surprise it, excite it, just like Michael Curtiz used to excite audiences in dark theaters with *Young Man with a Horn* (1950)—and audiences were “dying” as they watched Ted McCord’s gorgeous photography and Hoagy Carmichael smoking and talking and listened to Harry James’ horn and Hoagy’s piano. Or when people listened to Glenn Miller’s big band in fifteen minute commercials for Chesterfield cigarettes every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, between 1938 and 1942, and it was all brought live from Hollywood over all the radio networks by “mad” Paul Douglas who married five times and died at fifty, and people listened in cars that raced all over the landscape or at the beach lying on inflatable mattresses, while at the same time an uncle in Germany had taken over all the airwaves and was shouting and shouting and everybody in Germany was piously listening and listening. . . . And whenever I did something of my own, I thought I was doing it from the center of the world and it didn’t matter to me that those immediately around me didn’t understand it.

8. *My Art of the Paranoid View—Homage to Glenn Miller* questions my life, the lives of my family, my country, my lately deceased Leader-Dictator Josip Broz Tito; it questions his policies towards us, his subjects, the policies of others towards him, Tito the Leader, and towards my country; it questions leaving the traces of, and marking the history of, the communist dictatorial concentration camp in the Museum of the Revolution of the People of Yugoslavia, the Museum of the Revolution of the People of Croatia, the Museum of the Revolution of Tomislav Gotovac (A Retrospective of Documents ←1956–1986→ *The Art of the Paranoid View*, Zagreb, June 1986). Who is Leader Tito? Is he a leading man surrounded by supporting actors, bit players, every one of whom is part of the vast sea of extras with speaking and non-speaking parts (just like in Hollywood), and me, Tomislav Gotovac, I’m one of them too (I’ve been in plenty of feature films as an extra, more or less, with a non-speaking part), in other words, is Leader Tito the lead (the star) in the movie *Communist Yugoslavia*? Or is my deceased Leader-Dictator Tito a leading director and screenwriter—maybe a producer?—which means, free of foreign influences, as official propaganda continued, and continues, to maintain? But if this is pure nonsense, and he’s just a leading man, who’s the director? And what’s the message of this movie *Communist Yugoslavia*? The fact of the matter is that the best known, the most popular Yugoslav (Slovenian-Croat) since World War II has been Josip Broz Tito, and it’s also a fact that nobody up till now could have become, or has been allowed to become, better known, more popular, in Yugoslavia than he has, and the further fact of the matter is that this fame, this popularity, this power, as well, of course, as its opposite, has been achieved by purely aesthetic means, ethics and logic being deep sixed, and all our lives have been put in service to Tito. I maintain that Josip Broz Tito is, and will probably remain for years to come, the best-known artist from the territory of what is now called Yugoslavia! In fact, there isn’t a single Yugoslav who didn’t and doesn’t have an opinion about him, whether good or bad, or who will ever forget him. The fact of the matter is that without America’s economic, military, and so on, aid (*Homage to Glenn Miller*) the movie *Communist Yugoslavia*, starring the communist Josip Broz Tito, couldn’t have been produced. A detail: In March, 1941, Mr. Donovan (Cloak and Dagger, O.S.S.) makes a trip to Belgrade to organize and supervise a military coup, and John Ford, maybe the greatest film director in the world and maybe Mr. Donovan’s best friend, arrives on the island of Vis in 1944 to assess and evaluate the artist and actor J.B. Tito for the leading role in the upcoming movie *Communist Yugoslavia*; Ford is favorably impressed. Okay, the screenplay is ready; the shooting script is ready; the storyboards are ready; the moviola’s ready: now the movie can start to unfold. And unfold it has for the past forty-five years, even though the leading man has been dead for the last ten. So what’s *Communist Yugoslavia*’s message? Maybe this movie is like an electric rabbit luring the limitless masses of the USSR, China, and everyone else maimed by the communist ideology (this dog race)?

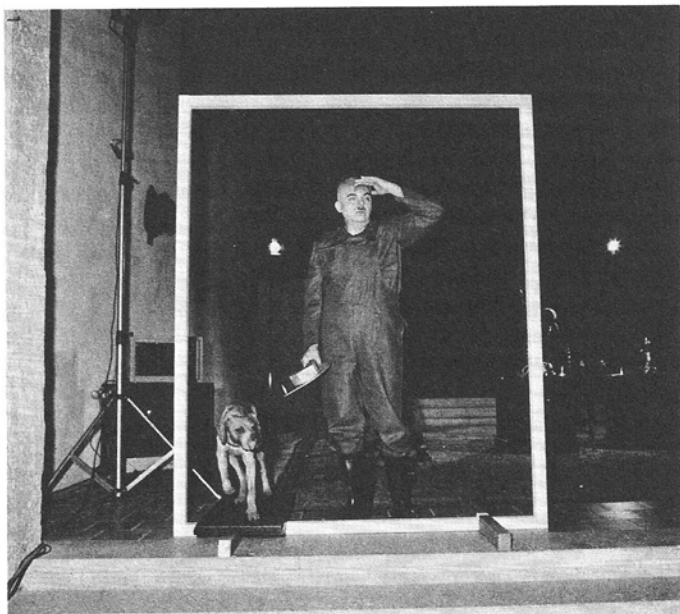
9. I’m trying to find out which small, information-carrying nerve in the big, strong body of the Great Director I am, and whether I’m of any use.

10. Have you seen the movie *Ayatollah Khomeini*, produced by Paranoia View Art, or its latest production, *Nelson Mandela*? What do you think about the movie *Vietnam*? Have Americans finally lost or won the war (read: art\*)?

11. I think politics doesn’t exist anymore; the only thing left is aesthetics!

\*This is an untranslatable pun. In Serbo-Croat, the word for war—*rat*—is an anagram for art.

**TOMISLAV GOTOVAC**



*The Art of the Paranoid View—Homage to Glenn Miller from Trans-art 1: Das Gläserne U-Boot, September 1988*  
Performance at MinoritenKirche, Krems-Stein, Austria  
Courtesy the artist  
Photo Nino Semialjac. © The photographer and the artist

