

Marinka Limat walked from Kassel to Athens and made a film about her encounters.

In 2017, Swiss artist Marinka Limat literally created a personal connection between Kassel and Athens, the two locations of documenta 14. She travelled between the two cities on foot, with the intention of visiting artists and art places along the way, almost by chance. But that's not quite what happened: the result was something less, but also so much more. She screened her film of the journey in Budapest this Wednesday.

Limat performed her artistic pilgrimage project, a roughly five-month walking tour from Kassel in Germany to the Greek capital, during the previous documenta 14 in 2017. At that time – and, not unimportantly, for the first time in its history – documenta was realised in two cities, Kassel and Athens. Marinka Limat adapted to this concept. Or did she? In fact, the primary aim of her project was a critical reading of the very artistic and institutional milieu that 'makes' European art.

During her journey, she planned very little in advance; instead, in each country, she pulled out a piece of paper with a text in the local language explaining who she was and what she was doing, where she was headed, and that she wanted to visit artists and art places along the way. She would then go wherever she was directed. From small local studios and little known sculptors to alternative art galleries, she reached many different places and people, covering a broad spectrum of a field that, for want of a better term, we call art. Of course, she didn't leave everything to chance: she consciously included some internationally important places in her journey.

But all this is basically absent from the half-hour film she made about her walk, which is entitled "*Art of the Encounter*". Marinka Limat only focuses on chance encounters. Apart from the U10-Gallery in Belgrade, we don't see any other venues. Like everywhere else, Marinka Limat pitches her tent inside one of the most important places of the Serbian non-profit scene, but otherwise there is not a single white cube to be seen in the film. But let's not get ahead of ourselves and proceed in order like she did!

She calls her journey *Kunst-Pilger-Reise*, carries a pilgrimage passport in which she collects stamps and understands the whole project as a performative act. Not just the walk itself, which was physically quite demanding, but also the encounters she had along the way. Her journey took her across Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Serbia, Northern Macedonia and Greece. She slept where she was at nightfall and went the way she thought was most logical. Her chance encounters took place in bistros, on the roadside, at the edge of the forest, in the twisting and turning streets of the village, in the thick of the city. Most of the time people were nice to her, but there were also situations she deemed wiser to back out of. The camera mounted on her body recorded everything, forming the basis of the film. Its dramaturgy is shaped by the road, its music by the rhythm of her walk, its minor dramas by the stumbling, fallible and incredibly human moments of the encounters.

Just recently completed after being in the works for five years, the film is now being shown in several countries she has visited, which is how she came to Budapest. After the screening at the Ludwig Museum and the public discussion that followed, Marinka Limat gave a short interview to Amű-magazine.

The first thing that came to my mind while watching the film was the physical aspect of it. The walking itself. How did you endure it?

It was my third journey of this kind, so I have had some experience. I took my first walk from Fribourg, my hometown in Switzerland, to Berlin, which was about a thousand kilometres. My second walk was from Switzerland to the Venice Biennale, across the mountains, which was all in all a pretty decent preparation, both physically and psychologically.

We think of our world as an increasingly dangerous place. In your film, however, there is no hint of danger, only in one scene do we suspect that you were not safe, but Europe shows its friendly face for the most part. Did you have any fear and how did you deal with it?

Fear is part of the journey, part of the experience. You're walking halfway across Europe on your own, as a woman, and sometimes you end up in strange places. But my first two walks showed me that it

can be done, that nothing extraordinary actually happens, and that I mostly have positive experiences. Sometimes I would pitch my tent in the woods or at the edge of a field or farmland, and strange noises would surround me at night or animals would approach me, but after a while I learned to cope with these things. You learn to judge whether something is risky or not. With the walking and the repetition day after day, I just got used to it all.

And were others afraid of you? A stranger shows up asking us things, we don't understand her, it's not clear who she is and what she's doing here...

It was interesting, because I was walking in blue overall, with a cap on, with a pretty big backpack on my back, and from a distance I looked like a man. But I don't think they were afraid of me, and even if there was some mistrust when we started talking, they were more likely to ask me how I was able to go through with this alone, as a woman. They'd encourage me instead: "Come on, you can do it!" Do you develop a kind of pilgrim state of mind that you ease yourself into as you go, a kind of calm? Yes, there is something like this, you have to get used to your body's reactions, the way time slows down. But as you actually don't know what exactly is going to happen to you, above all, you have to trust yourself, your environment and others. You're cautious, but you trust the other. Trust is the keyword of the whole project, the main motif of *The Art of Encounter*.

Five years ago Europe was different from what it's like today: we were doing well before Covid and a war seemed unthinkable. What would encounters like the ones we see in the film be like today?

The pandemic, the war and the crisis have certainly changed everyday life and infiltrated everyone's lives. That's why I think it's important that this project attests to the fact that trust is possible, and that is something that still hasn't changed.

You've also been to fairly poor countries where people are light years away from the way of life in Switzerland. The question arises: how did you perceive this life, this difference?

It is very important for me that I walked through these places and encountered the people and their lives. It was also quite a serious learning experience for me. To be faced with how different these existential situations are within Europe, how different the opportunities and needs are. I tried to be positive everywhere, with everyone, to not judge anything. To take each situation as it comes.

You say your project is also a critique of the institutional system of art. How is this critique revealed in your work? And why, with one exception, were these particular places omitted of the film?

I made three trips, each with its own concept and each with its own principal question. After all, it was the moment of encounter that ended up interesting me most. That was the gist of it all, whether I was meeting an artist, a curator, a passer-by on the street, or people sitting in a café. What this 29-minute film should focus on was a fundamental question, and there was a long thought process involved before I made my decision. The reason U10-Gallery in Belgrade ended up in the final cut was because I wanted to make a connection between the different spheres.

That is also the only time a reflection on the whole thing is voiced, when the curator of U10 talks about the project.

That's right, this is when curator and performer Marta Jovanovic speaks; that's the one place where we get an external, theoretical reflection, as it were. I've got a lot of footage from all kinds of art venues and I'm thinking of developing it in some kind of installation form and juxtaposing it with the film to create a context for it. In other words, the project is not finished, the film is just one stage. I encountered a broad spectrum of artists and galleries. If somebody said, they knew an artist in their village, who was an egg painter, I would be sure to look them up! If you say it's art, then I take it as art.

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<https://amu.hvg.hu/2022/12/09/elgyalogolt-kasselbol-athenba-es-keszített-egy-filmet-a-talalkozás-sairol/?fbclid=IwAR09YXJ60WsHTb5bwH2k3MfC3gRo4yZTS0wxCK40M-yejmsUHD7DR7sm-Q>

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