



Protest in front of the Public Prosecution Office building in Skopje.

PHOTO: VANCO DZAMBASKI

# SUBVERSIVE ARTISTIC PRACTICES VISUALIZING RESISTENCE IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

by **Tihomir Topuzovski**

## abstract

The article discusses subversiveness in visual arts and how its practitioners oppose, transgress and seek changes in the existing social order. This art often employs forms of activism which affect public spaces, such as squares, streets and crossroads, aimed at involving the public in existing societal problems and challenges. The focus is on the recent events in the Republic of Macedonia where artists are intervening in the social and political conditions. Identifying these practices in the Republic of Macedonia contributes to wider debates that highlight engaged forms of artistic actions.

**KEYWORDS:** Subversiveness, artistic practices, re-politicization, Republic of Macedonia.

**R**esearch on subversiveness in the visual arts is concerned with opposition to the existing social order and attempts to achieve changes through engaged forms of action. Subversive practices in art are intertwined with forms of action that undermine the establishment's institutional system. The practitioners attempt an opposition to and transgression of existing social norms and situations and initiate demands for change. In this context, the relation between these practices and politics presupposes that art, in one way or another, can help expand political action and participation, using artistic modes of presentation and practice that are intended to increase awareness and stimulate or provoke political action.<sup>1</sup> According to Ingram "artistic practices are not

just a form of resistance, refusal and critique, but contributor to political and spatial transformation,”<sup>2</sup> where artists interact with the geopolitical context. They are involved in the political circumstances, reacting and seeking changes. In conditions of opposition, therefore, art becomes subversive of the existing social order, undermining the normal and legitimate, aimed at transforming the existing situation. This raises the question: What can subversive art accomplish in the political arena? And what are its limits?<sup>3</sup> The study focuses on practices that represent a completely different approach to artistic action, aimed at achieving changes to the problems emerging for artists and citizens in their current situation as well as the manner in which any given art opposes the given order<sup>4</sup> or subverts it. This insistence on rejection or subversion incorporates the affirmative statement that art has an autonomous power of resistance<sup>5</sup> embodied in various visual practices which are “being ever more called upon to provide both insight into politics itself and the stimuli for social change”.<sup>6</sup> In the acts of “subversion and transgression [actors] crossed the contemporary borders of art and overthrew various binary and hierarchical oppositions”<sup>7</sup> established within social systems and create new situations.

**THIS ARTICLE FOCUSES** in particular on recent events in the Republic of Macedonia where artists are intervening in the political context. These artistic practices relate to the political crisis in the Republic of Macedonia which evolved from problems with democracy, including an instrumentalized state in the service of the ruling party, media under government control, rigged elections, and a scandal over the illegal wiretapping of citizens by the government. These political circumstances in the Republic of Macedonia are powerful societal forces that influence culture. In such situations, artists have developed innovative practices and responses to the ongoing situation that are characterized by subversiveness.

I argue that the subversiveness of artistic practices is an important object of study whose investigation brings new insights into art. In this article, I consider the theoretical discussion on interpreting subversiveness and also focus on the contextualization of subversiveness within the field of artistic action, in order to interpret the tendencies of these practices in the case of the Republic of Macedonia where they provide continual impulses and political demands. The article provides an important opportunity to advance the understanding of how subversiveness in the visual arts relates to political dynamics in the Republic of Macedonia.

While this article has a conceptual and an empirical focus, I organize my argument as follows: I start by analyzing subversiveness from its political connotations to its articulation in art.



The monument to citizens of Skopje shot by the so-called fascists on November 13, 1944 (left). Erection of the improvised cardboard monument (right).

Here the aim is to provide theoretical background to the empirical analysis, in which I focus on a more explicit grounding of subversiveness, describing and explaining agents, principles, and forms of action. Taking these dimensions into account, I apply this discussion in the context of the Republic of Macedonia within which I identify and analyze forms of subversiveness. One particular aspect of the analysis offered here is that there is little discussion of these practices in the spatial context of this country. Finally, I examine wider lessons that can be drawn from subversiveness in art and what these practices have achieved in the case of the Republic of Macedonia.

In addition to the diversity of literature surveyed, the empirical analysis was carried out in Skopje, Republic of Macedonia. Data was collected via semi structured and structured interviews, archival research and visual methods. Interviews were conducted with art historians, custodians, curators, artists, politicians, writers and activists (the names of interviewees have been withheld upon request because of the dangerous political situation in the Republic of Macedonia). This data was coupled with secondary sources such as newspaper articles, art magazines and official websites.

### Rethinking artistic practices subversively

Subversiveness is commonly defined as opposition to the existing power balance, authorities and social order. However it should be noted that “Subversion has no universally accepted definition”.<sup>8</sup> Explanations of subversiveness indicate that, through subversive practices, various social, political and ideological demands are put forward.<sup>9</sup> These acts have a clear inten-



tion against an existing social model and its norms. As noted by Levy, “Sovversivismo was a politically nomadic movement, according to Gramsci.” He explains that “subversive chiefs used a radical stance as a form of blackmail against the ruling political class, because at the decisive moment these chiefs invariably threw their lot in with the forces of order.”<sup>10</sup> Subversiveness involves rejection or destabilization of the existing order, its obliteration and destruction or changes to the existing hierarchy. The model of these practices, as a constituent part of all anti systemic movements, can be traced back to the 1848 revolution in France, where “a proletarian-based political group made a serious attempt to achieve political power and legitimize workers’ power”<sup>11</sup> in opposition to the institutional order. These practices are critically or theoretically founded or represent practical activities undertaken to erode the existing order.<sup>12</sup>

As a historical example of subversive activities, Levy points out that the terms *sovversivo* and *sovversivismo* (subversive and subversion) were first used by intellectual and artistic circles in Italy in 1914, but also by the police, clerks and government agencies, when describing the activities of anarchists, socialists, republicans and all other opponents of the monarchy and the political establishment of the time.<sup>13</sup> This refers to the different backgrounds and imperatives of lower-status groups within society. Thus, much of “the Left in particular, and Italian politics in general, runs the Gramscian argument, was a product of the culture of ‘sovversivismo’”<sup>14</sup> created in conditions of deficiency, the instrumentalization of institutions, a weak ethical and political culture, a wrecked civil sector and an environment unable to satisfy the basic demands of individuals and groups in the society.

In their anti systemic tendencies, “the masses who mobilized to transform the world expected that, once movements came to power, they would enjoy freedom and equality – if not in perfect measure, at least to a greater degree than previously.”<sup>15</sup> In other words, it appears that the practitioners intend to go a step further toward principles and visions for a better society.

**TURNING NOW TO** the context of culture, it is worth beginning with the point that subversive practices in art exist as activity close to the notion of politics.<sup>16</sup> These artistic practices are intertwined with political and activist movements and they oppose what Rancière<sup>17</sup> identifies as consensus, “the main enemy of artistic creativity as well as of political creativity... that is, inscription within given roles, possibilities, and competencies” which passivize the role of artistic action. Instrumentalized acts always support the preservation of existing systems in which, as noted by de Certeau, everyday practices depend on a vast ensemble of procedures.<sup>18</sup> In this context, the role of the artist is instrumentalized or “Today, the artist could be defined simply as a professional fulfilling a certain role in the general framework of

the art world,”<sup>19</sup> placed in a system of organizations, authorities, faceless agents, rules and protocols. The ultimate consequence of such activity is that the horizon of possibilities, as described by Bourdieu,<sup>20</sup> is closed, followed by adaptation to the dominant position in inevitable dependency.

However, subversive practitioners intend to take additional steps opposing such an arrangement. Thus, any artistic project which aims at creating a better society must take account of the instrumentalization of institutions in order to create what might be a new possibility through the transgression of existing criteria. This can be considered as calculated damage that questions a society’s prevailing value system.<sup>21</sup> In this respect, using this approach re-examines the boundaries “between what is supposed to be normal and what is supposed to be subversive, between what is supposed to be active, and therefore political, and what is supposed to be passive or distant, and therefore apolitical.”<sup>22</sup> What follows is the repoliticization of the artists they refer to and the analysis of “socio-political processes, related to the transformation of the system”<sup>23</sup> paying attention to social conditions, problems and challenges.

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Examining these possibilities in the context of artistic actions and the creation of subversive agents, it is of paramount importance to note that this concerns not only the artist or artists, but also a large number of those working in the field of culture. This can be illustrated by the example of the Russian collective “What Is to Be Done” (Chto delat), which is a network of poets, artists, philosophers, critics, design artists and writers who act as a collective.<sup>24</sup> Their horizontal networking and interaction strengthens the organizational capacity of various groups

and increases the efficiency and synergy of these agents in their multidisciplinary democratic struggle. The ultimate consequence should be to unify different types of struggle,<sup>25</sup> such as social, urban, ecological, antiauthoritarian, antiinstitutional, feminist and antiracist, as well that of sexually marginalized groups.

The implementation of subversive practices embodies another aspect. The artists’ engagement with the problems cited above presupposes certain ethical principles on the part of the participants. They try to change “living conditions in economically underdeveloped areas, raise ecological concerns, offer access to culture and education for the populations of poor countries and regions, attract attention to the plight of illegal immigrants, improve the conditions of people working in art institutions”,<sup>26</sup> as well as addressing issues of discrimination, freedom of speech and economic inequality. In the final instance, their agreeing to act upon these problems can be defined as a reaction to “the increasing collapse of the modern social state ‘and an effort’ to replace the social state and NGOs that for various reasons cannot or will not fulfil their role.”<sup>27</sup> Thus these practices are most commonly undertaken by the underprivi-



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Protest of the association AJDE.

leged living in conditions of social, identity-based, ethnic and racial segregation and exclusion. Consequently, the principles of these practices aim “to produce a new perception of the world, and therefore create a commitment to its transformation” which are “united no longer by the abstract forms of the law, but by the bonds of lived experience”<sup>28</sup> Through these acts artists come close to an understanding of their paradigmatic role linked to the crux of social problems.

At the same time this new faith in the political capacity of art has assumed many forms that are often divergent, and in some cases even conflicting.<sup>29</sup> These art practices often employ forms of radical activism, affecting public spaces such as squares, streets and crossroads, aimed at getting publicity and, more importantly, at influencing the public sphere by involving the public in existing problems and challenges. Furthermore, artists remove distanced observers from their safe position, pulling them into a game of affects. In many cases, forms of subversiveness “generate the effect of absurdity and parody”,<sup>30</sup> humor and incisive irony.<sup>31</sup> Such forms of subversiveness can be illustrated with the example of artists in the “Occupy” movement. They occupied cultural institutions such as museums at the onset of the movement “Occupy Wall Street” because these institutions were seen as stimulators of social and economic inequality.<sup>32</sup> On this basis then, the focus of subversive practices in art is not separated from a given societal context, but inherently arises from the existing political and social relations, which are relations of power.

## The spatial context

In approaching these kinds of artistic practices this study focuses specifically on the Republic of Macedonia, which has been marked by a transition accompanied by radical reforms in every

stratum of society.<sup>33</sup> These rapid changes are having a serious effect on the distribution of income and wealth, the restoration of the market system, and the growing income gap: all factors that have brought issues of inequality<sup>34</sup> and rising poverty levels throughout the country. The changes have resulted in problems of social inclusion and social cohesion of different class, gender and minority groups and their access to social provision. Mirroring the pattern displayed in most of the former socialist countries, the resurgence of nationalism in the Republic of Macedonia was a key agent in the transformation and became a structural quality in building the new system. Reconstruction of the national identity accompanied the establishment of the Republic of Macedonia in 1991. However, in the decade 2006–2016 under the leadership of a conservative, nationalistic party, named VMRO DPMNE (the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity), the country has been characterized by some aspects of authoritarianism. There is a distinctive concern that “retooling of this small nation’s – a Balkan brand of hyper-patriotism accompanied by the trumpeting of Macedonia’s ancient roots – is raising concerns internationally about growing authoritarianism, the silencing of dissent and accusations of abuse of power by the governing party”<sup>35</sup> and “manipulation of independent institutions”.<sup>36</sup> Macedonia’s fragile democracy is further hampered by the absence of a free press. In the past decade, owners of Macedonian media have deliberately shifted their political allegiances, constantly depending on the ruling political party and the government’s effective purchase of support through media advertising.<sup>37</sup> A member of an opposition political party acknowledged this in my interview, pointing out that “those who declined to consent were shut down, jailed or severely financially strained through libel charges”.<sup>38</sup> Under these circumstances

**Language constitutes a unique *Sprachraum*, which might be needed to create a unique *Raum*.**

the problems with the fragile democracy and human rights in the country are being aggravated.

The leading conservative, nationalistic party in the Republic of Macedonia views culture as a possible means of creating collective memories, patriotic motifs, slogans and symbols, monuments and architecture, pushing it to the level of idolatry in an attempt to reconstruct the historical narrative and establish it meaningfully in the present. Picking up on this, nationalistic art in the Republic of Macedonia usually celebrates proclaimed essences of a national and romanticist spirit. Highly ceremonial, it is heavily oriented towards reconstruction of a national identity<sup>39</sup> as a part of postsocialist material culture.<sup>40</sup> In this case, the geopolitical instrumentalization of culture has always been related to the local and regional establishment, which instrumentalizes art to sustain these systems. This can be explained, in the phrase “apparatus of capture”<sup>41</sup> coined by Deleuze and Guattari, as a geophilosophy of power consisting of the geographical instrumentalization of cultural activities through numerous programs and projects, as well as through networking, documenting and supporting various activities, political goals and programs. In the context of culture and art in the Republic of Macedonia, the instrumentalization can be found in particular schemes where most of the practices are affiliated with governmental programs and strategies. These practices can be understood in the context of various actions, operations and techniques with a political background, attended and financed by the centers of power.<sup>42</sup> Cultural institutions and organizations are profoundly influenced by the political establishment in the country and they adapt their program in accordance with the official political dynamic.

In this way the role of the artist in the Republic of Macedonia is instrumentalized. The artist can simply be defined as a professional fulfilling a certain role in the enactment of state cultural policies and practices relating to the discourse of existing authorities.<sup>43</sup> With the exception of some independent artistic productions, artists in the Republic of Macedonia are included in institutional structures and programs. The purpose of the majority of newly built museums, exhibitions, and cultural events promoted is to achieve materialization of the conservative party VMRO DPMNE’s political narrative.<sup>44</sup> This is evident in the case of the project “Skopje 2014” which stands for the reconstruction of national identity as well as the re-representation of Macedonian history, realized in the capital city. The project started in 2010 and involves museums, buildings, and monuments inspired by the past. It is actually a project dedicated to strengthening national identity through neoclassical and baroque architecture and sculptures.<sup>45</sup> The project illustrates a crucial element of the way in which cultural production is instrumentalized by the political establishment and governmental politics in the Republic of Macedonia.

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We turn now to evidence of some subversive artistic practices in the Republic of Macedonia that relate to the breakdown of the previous system and the emergence of authoritarianism and hyperpatriotism embodied in new models of social and political order in this country. This situation poses a challenge to artists who aspire to contemplate new agendas and practices in relation to the overall social and political arrangement. It involves the articulation of a different form of action that is not institutionalized and will serve as a call for social change. In line with this aim, “the artist needs to establish a new attitude, based on radical democratic policy that would call for articulation of different levels of strategy”.<sup>46</sup> This requires applied effort on all levels of social relations and practices in order to discover new forms of political life, to support new movements that would stimulate the emergence of new ethics and mobilize new initiatives.

### **Aiming to develop a vision for social change**

In considering subversive practices in the Republic of Macedonia, it is important to start by identifying subversiveness on the Macedonian art scene by “the manner in which artists are organized, the situations in which they perform and present themselves, the relations they build, maintain, avoid or break among themselves,”<sup>47</sup> as well as the stances they take. Various subversive practices can be identified in Macedonia, generated by day-to-day political circumstances, as well as by the ever present intention in other countries of the region to produce different artistic strategies.

Many debates and initiatives have been undertaken with the aim of developing a vision for social change. These attempts can be defined as unclassified and their goal was to contemplate the possibility of a different political engagement. They emphasize the principles for different practices, where “in the sphere of action of what has been preformulated as artists and critics’ competence, the foundation and the improvement of the ethical principles should be of pivotal importance”.<sup>48</sup> As an illustration of this, I would refer to the project called “10-minute Protest”, initiated by myself and realized on May 15, 2014 in the CAC gallery in Skopje, followed by a discussion about redefining and repoliticizing artistic practices with the participation of activists, cultural workers, politicians and columnists. Protest slogans were exhibited as part of the project. The main aim of the project was that protest should be seen as a means of artistic action. The discussion itself produced the opinion that this is not “the time for negotiation, but for confrontation because we are living in a state of siege”<sup>49</sup>, which indeed distills the artists’ position towards different forms of action. The project laid out the existing situation and opened the prospect of providing preconditions, perhaps even an actual possibility, for action. It illustrates cognitive subversion, as does the observation that in certain cases “we



can sense that efforts are being made to draft a certain strategy of negation, a program for foundation of subversiveness.”<sup>50</sup> This implies that “political subversion presupposes cognitive subversion”<sup>51</sup> or a change in the vision of the world that would later be embodied in a series of actions. The idea is supported by Mill’s view on the French Revolution, that “the subversion of established institutions is merely one consequence of the previous subversions of established opinions”.<sup>52</sup>

It was found that several artists, in interaction with individuals and groups, had taken initiatives that can be deemed subversive, mostly in reaction to the current situation in the Republic of Macedonia. These actions have most commonly been organized as civil initiatives. I will start with the intervention provoked by the government plans to erect the statue of the “Warrior on a Horse” and performed by an informal group on February 4, 2010. The intervention consisted of writing graffiti on the metal safety fencing of the monument construction site in downtown Skopje, an action almost immediately interrupted by a police intervention. The police asked the participants for their ID and they were accused of a misdemeanor against public hygiene because they were writing graffiti on a public building. The metal fencing was repainted the following day.

**ON ANOTHER OCCASION**, this group intervened by placing stickers to replace the street name signs in Skopje. The wording of all the stickers was identical: Boulevard of Lesbian Revolution. These inscriptions were placed on several buildings in the center of the city on November 12, 2013. This action was provoked by the decision of city authorities to rename many streets throughout Skopje. The new names of the streets were a result of the revision of national history by the government of the Republic of Macedonia. The motivation behind this subversive act, according to the official explanation, was to liberate homophobic Skopje. This confirms the position that art uses subversive strategies that appropriate cultural space, while “artists break through the semantic sphere by means of decontextualization and re-contextualization of signs”.<sup>53</sup>

Regarding LGBT rights in the Republic of Macedonia, another action was aimed at blocking the normal functioning of the institution of the public prosecutor. Provoked by an act of violence that members of this community suffered from unknown perpetrators and the lack of any legal resolution of the case, a group consisting of human rights activists, members of the LGBT community and their supporters, and artists held a peaceful protest in front the office of the public prosecution or Office of the Republic of Macedonia, underscoring the inefficiency of institutions and the lack of political will to resolve the cases of violence against this group in Macedonia. The blockade of this institution interrupted its normal functioning, making this action exceptionally successful. The protest included a performance which

consisted of symbolically placing “corpses” in plastic bags in front of the public prosecution office with the aim of exposing the attitude of the official authorities towards the LGBT community.

In a different context, a group of citizens consisting of artists, activists, and cultural workers initiated an action that was aimed at reminding the public of the removed monument commemorating the death of nine people shot by the so-called fascists on the morning of November 13, 1944 in revenge for the partisan attacks upon the liberation of the city. The group erected an improvised cardboard copy of the missing monument (see image) at its original site by the Stone Bridge in Skopje. The monument was removed the very same day, soon after it had been erected.

This event was intended to confront the revisionist iconography of the projects for new monuments in Skopje supported by the Ministry of Culture.

Another initiative, combining a public protest and a performance, was organized by the association AJDE, a platform for civil politics, with the participation of several artists and cultural workers. The performance took place on February 19, 2015 in

front of the Ministry of Health and the participants wore white masks and dark clothes, symbolically underlining their unequivocal demands that the Ministry of Health should be held accountable for causing the death of a nine-year-old girl by negligence and incompetence.

Furthermore, members of the group “Ajde”, seated on chairs, held a protest performance in front of the public broadcaster MRT and demanded it be returned to the citizens.

They publicly appealed to MRT that it should be a public service of the citizens, not a government propaganda service. This action was realized on November 9, 2014 and in the words of the artists themselves, it was a testimony to the necessity of the artists’ involvement in civil movements and initiatives, so that their artistic ideas might help increase the visibility of the action and add creative momentum to help convince the public and the authorities to correct their erroneous policies.<sup>54</sup>

**FINALLY, ALL THESE** attempts were summarized in the “Colorful Revolution”, where neo-classical and baroque facades of public buildings were colored and other artistic activities carried out, actions that were subversive with regard to the existing political order in the Republic of Macedonia and thus contributed to political change in the country. The artists involved in this protest hold that the coloring, seen as an artistic practice, is intertwined with activist forms of action that undermine the institutional and corrupt system in the Republic of Macedonia. This is summarized in the statement that “from an artistic point of view, painting buildings and monuments in downtown Skopje is authentic phenomenon for the country, where art becomes a tool for achieving political change”.<sup>55</sup> It is astonishing how artis-

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tic means – paint – became a weapon for achieving social and political goals in Macedonia's Colorful Revolution.

## Practices create political stance

The cases selected in this study do not exhaust all the practices undertaken in the Republic of Macedonia. They were chosen because they illustrate different forms, imperatives and motivations. All these practices were characterized by subversiveness against the official politics in the Republic of Macedonia which, according to the actors of these practices, run

contrary to rather than promoting justice and liberty in a democratically equal society. The activities were realized as nomadic actions outside of the established institutions. They opposed the existing centers of power in the Republic of Macedonia through the occupation of various public spaces, issuing a series of social and political demands. Moreover, these practices can be considered as urban grassroots mobilization and as “a new phase in the development of postsocialist civil societies”.<sup>56</sup> Even here, they can be seen as the actualization and concretization of Gramsci's “series of negations”.<sup>57</sup> They represented a vision for redefining and repoliticizing the role of the artist, as well as a refusal of the existing norms and criteria that instrumentalize artistic practices, thus creating the possibility of arriving at a political stance.<sup>58</sup> In order to make these practices efficient and to achieve certain goals, the artists forgo privileged positions and transgress institutional lines of the Republic of Macedonia.

The practices discussed here, such as the graffiti on the fencing, the replacement of street signs with stickers, and the improvised cardboard monument, mobilized participants in the struggle to oppose official government policies aimed at recoding the identity of citizens in the Republic of Macedonia. The performance in front of the public prosecution office is part of the struggle of groups suffering sexual discrimination and this particular protest was against the institutions failing to sanction an act of violence perpetrated against members of this community. The protest in front of the Ministry of Health can be defined as social struggle against dysfunctional institutions whose incompetence led to the loss of a human life. Another important action of this group was the performance staged in front of the public broadcaster MRT and the demands that it be returned to the citizens. Finally, actions that were part of Colorful Revolution are an example of artistic involvement through using paint-filled balloons against government buildings and monuments that represent current politics in Republic of Macedonia. In this political performance, a lot of people out on the streets were involved in



“Colorful Revolution” protest in Skopje.

PHOTO: VANCO DZAMBASKI

this act of using artistic means in the struggle for democracy.<sup>59</sup> At a more fundamental level, all these practices, each of which makes a particular contribution, embodied the principles, forms and agency of subversiveness I have discussed.

The actions described above involved different profiles of participants and in that sense it is fair to claim that they outline the agent of subversiveness which presupposes space of interaction through various forms and principles. Allying these subjects through groupings of initiatives, discussions, political activists, and individuals with cultural and artistic affinities involves different approaches and various degrees of horizontal organization.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, discussing the agent of subversiveness of these artistic practices establishes the possibility of a more general subject; that is, citizens who strive to achieve social change. The agent of change can be identified through a combination of individuals and groupings that exist separately. Implicitly, this illustrates how the agent consists of a multitude, and hence is composed of a social subject whose difference cannot be reduced to sameness, a difference that remains different.<sup>61</sup> They represent the possibility of stimulating “the daily struggles of the workers themselves, their coordinated acts of resistance, insubordination and subversion of the relations of domination in the workplace and in society at large.”<sup>62</sup> Each of these struggles unfolded separately as an independent entity, raising the question and the challenge of how they could be unified in the Republic of Macedonia.

Looking at this issue, it can be seen that a certain level of partial association has occurred over some political and social issues, but above all, over ethical principles. The social engagement of the cultural subject, the visual artist, should be encouraged and supported and the ethical autonomy of the artist in the space of public interest should be seen as the key issue of these actions. The principles of freedom of speech or freedom of choice or the struggle against economic inequality, unemployment and poverty, environmental protection and reduction

of pollution can all help in unifying different individuals and groups, whose radical stance includes total negation of the unjust social, cultural, political and economic context of the Republic of Macedonia. These practices demonstrate significant and appropriate strategies for authentic action.

**CONSEQUENTLY, SUBVERSIVE** practices might be the only engaged and significant attitudes under present circumstances in the Republic of Macedonia. The vision of these actions sees the artistic, that is to say, “the creative, political and mediatic fields” as “intrinsically linked”, so that “contemporary cultural practices point toward a new, better society in which art has merged with lived experience.”<sup>63</sup> The outcomes of these practices can be twofold: first, they are involved in the specific context; and second, they are part of a wider process of concretizing subversiveness in the field of art.

## Conclusion

Subversive practices in art consist of radical forms of transgression of established social and political norms through a form of resistance, protest and creativity visualized in public spaces. These practices in art take very different forms depending on the spatial and political contexts of the activities as those contexts are crucial in understanding them. Practicing such acts includes various forms of acting in order to increase public awareness of existing social problems and to initiate changes. This work highlights the complex and ever-shifting relationships between artistic practices and political and social contexts and challenges. This was the initial approach whereby some of the modes of action employed by the artists were identified.

The study discussed theoretical aspects of subversiveness through the lens of an agent, principles and forms of action and their contribution to the ways in which artistic practices intervene in political contexts and disrupt spatial structures. On this topic, the study continued by identifying these practices within the context of the Republic of Macedonia. Using the Republic of Macedonia for case analysis was productive because of the radical changes and transformations it had undergone in past decade, coupled with the political crisis. Recent cases of subversive practices in art in the country offered characteristics to the core of my argument. The study clarified that the instrumentalization of cultural institutions in the country generates the need for different actions against erroneous and unjust policies, especially in cases where they are reinforced by complex political circumstances and accusations of abuse of power by the governing party. In investigating these acts in the Republic of Macedonia as a research area, subversiveness was detected as set up in a given political context where several important practices were portrayed as a confirmation of performative politics which extend political struggle. This is basically a result of the ever more complicated day-to-day political situation and the impossibility of acting effectively in other ways. The acts demonstrate the ways in which individuals and groups engage in civil movements and initiatives by using the means of artists. and can be considered as a possible strategy of authentic action for the future. I showed

how these practices merge in the interface of social and political change. These findings suggest in the most general sense that socio-political contexts make it possible for different artistic practices to interact in public spaces.

This study found that subversiveness can be modified and can contain new explanatory implications and connotations in the field of art. Consequently, subversion is perceived as an important activity in the political arena, offering a significant engagement with burning social questions and problems. These practices gain meaning and importance not only due to the resistance or critical positions they offer. They are important above all because they expand the space of the possible in terms of visualizing new initiatives and forms of creativity. This article discussed the possibility of renewing different art affiliations, since art today is totally usurped or interrupted by its instrumentalization, that is to say, interrupted with regards to the history of subversive practices and the idea of visual arts as an anti-systemic and social movement. The implications of the study lie in the possibility of these findings being applied to other geographical and political contexts that are undergoing political processes of transformation in different circumstances. Establishing new cases and insights of subversiveness in art will contribute to the contemporary debate regarding creativity and accomplishments of these acts. ✖

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