

# POTLATCH OR A UTOPIA OF ARTISTIC EXCHANGE

COMMISSIONED BY:

**Tanja Vrvilo**, Filmske mutacije

(...) **You might bring instructions for a rational embellishment of the town, an educational game with hot intellectual themes instead of boxing matches, a serial radio drama with educational values, strategies for a utopian artistic potlatch, an exchange of what I'm not capable of giving. You might bring tactics for impossible work on a borrowed typewriter on which Michele Bernstein typed all the numbers of *Potlach*. You might "bring" by post the gift of an impossible artistic *Potlach* to all for whom "community is given as a gift" and those who are not allowed even minimal exchange and who will "reify and freeze" your gift (...)**

**I decided, following the suggestions of the client for the sending of an "impossible" gift, along the lines of the critical Lettrist journal *Potlach*, to launch the online bulletin *Boomerang*... (...)**

**With the public revelation of my own carefully guarded ideas, which, by being made public on the pages of *Boomerang*, became common property and an open invitation for readers to adopt them, I started up a circle of reciprocal giving. *Boomerang* is a potlatch. Read *Boomerang*!**

TITLE OF THE WORK:

# READ BOOMERANG!

July 2012

9



PHOTO: AMANDA FRANKL

.....  
Document: email  
From: Tanja Vrvilo  
To: Amela Frankl  
.....

Dear Amela, sending you text as document :)  
Let me know if you can't open it, I hope it will be ok. I would like it to stay in this shape, so I send it as pdf.  
I hope it won't, but don't worry if it looks as if we have bypassed each other, I think that every date is a good date.  
See you, Tanja

## POTLACH

### or a Utopia of Artistic Exchange

Dear Amela,

Right from the very first impossible word in one of your mail “order forms” you give the first phase of the preparation of this project of distributed (or disowned) ownership the name of a commission. In the categories of the spectacle of mechanical images, the special-purpose, commissioned work openly admits (and supports) the economic and propaganda functions of a medium. Although it is a kind of negotiated commission, with the tactic of resistance that it provokes, the “accursed share” of almost every artistic work, your insistence on the concept of commission additionally purposefully-pejoratively distances the utopia of artistic desire from your own and the still more distant joint work. Apart from the name of your impossible artistic work “What I bear” invoking the powerlessness and impossibility of artistic issues, it also opens up the old questions of the gift economy, “dimensions of gift... between the invaluable and the free of charge”, and I would like you to make some non-economic (or not necessarily rational) strategy or secret for a work of disowned (co)ownership and utopia of artist desire, a reflection from the damaged sanctification for the transformation of the world. I commission you, from Paris, whence you bear, to bring a paradigmatically impossible gift of the damaged movement of artistic, intellectual and political exchange. I commission a subversion (or détournement) of the game of an impossible artistic commission to the impossible game of exchange of gifts or – potlatch, whose economy of the impossible gift, of the giving what I am incapable of giving, is equally apt to subvert artistic work.

In its 14<sup>th</sup> number, dated November 30, 1954, the Lettrist bulletin named *Potlatch* poses a riddle with answers in number 15:

What is *Potlatch*?

1. A Soviet spy, main associate of Rosenberg, detected by the FBI in 1952?
2. The practice of extravagant giving, requiring a return gift, the basis of economic exchange in pre-Columbian America?
3. A word with no meaning invented by the Lettrists for the title of one of their publications?

The subversion of the idea of potlatch or unproductive consumption, of pointless “prohibited” destruction (of things, time, energy) because of the desire for reputation swerved off to the Lettrist International, and later to the Situationist programme of “The Gift” of Marcel Mauss and the economy of giving and the ceremony of waste of Georges Bataille in “The Accursed Share”, pursuant to the anthropological work of Franz Boas about total prestation, about the festival of giving (of obligating and degrading) to the burning of property, for example, among the North American Indians, in which the winner was the one that could take the biggest donating-economic loss.

On June 22, 1954, in the first number of *Potlatch* – Information Bulletin of the French section of the Lettrist International, the editorial board stated:

**You receive it often. In *Potlatch*, the Lettrist International deals with the problems of the week. *Potlatch* is the most engaged publication in the world: we are working toward the conscious and collective establishment of a new civilization.**

In the same number is an instruction for the “Psychogeographical game of the week”.

Depending on what you are after, choose an area, a more or less populous city, a more or less lively street. Build a house. Furnish it. Make the most of its decoration and surroundings. Choose the season and the time. Gather together the right people, the best records and drinks. Lighting and conversation must, of course, be appropriate, along with the weather and your memories. If your calculations are correct, you should find the outcome satisfying. (Please inform the editors of the results.)

Between June 22, 1954 and November 1957, 29 numbers of *Potlatch* were sent out for free:

We don't care about you having a good memory of us. But this is about concrete forces. A few hundred people are arbitrarily judging the thinking of a whole epoch. Whether they know it or not, we have got them in our grip. By sending *Potlatch* to people in influential positions we can break this circle where and when we want. We have chosen our readers at random. Perhaps you'll be lucky enough to be one of them.

The first edition was printed in 50 copies, and during the three years, the print run came up to 400 to 500 copies. The strategic intentions were to create a movement to link the artistic avant-garde with a revolutionary criticism of society, the guidelines of which were in 1958 taken over by the Situationist International.

You might bring the impossible film *Howls for Sade*, the first attempt at showing of which (with shrieks) was interrupted 60 years ago, on June 30, 1952, as on the second anniversary of this situation we are recalled by *Potlatch* no. 2, June 29, 1954. The first integrated screening (with howls) was held on October 13, 1952.

In the evening of June 30, 1952, the film "Howls for Sade" was first screened in the self-proclaimed Avant-garde Film Club. After twenty minutes of confusion the screening was broken off by the outraged audience.

Voice 1: *Howls for Sade*, a film by Guy-Ernest Debord b/w, 75 m.:

Voice 2: *Howls for Sade* is dedicated to Gil J Wolman.

Voice 4: But no one talks about Sade in this film.

Voice 3: A sizable commando of some thirty lettrists, all wearing the filthy uniform that is their only really original trademark, showed up at Cannes determined to provoke a scandal that would draw attention to themselves.

Voice 1: Happiness is a new idea in Europe.

Voice 5: "Just as the projection was about to begin, Guy-Ernest Debord was supposed to step onto the stage and make a few introductory remarks. Had he done so, he would simply have said:

‘There is no film. Cinema is dead. No more films are possible. If you wish, we can move on to a discussion.’ ”

Voice 1: What a springtime! Crib sheet for the history of film: 1902: *A Trip to the Moon*. 1920: *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari*. 1924: *Entr’acte*. 1926: *Potemkin*. 1928: *An Andalusian Dog*. 1931: *City Lights*. Birth of Guy-Ernest Debord. 1951: *Treatise on Slime and Eternity*. 1952: *The Anticoncept*. *Howls for Sade*.

Voice 2: Like lost children we live our unfinished adventures.

Twenty four minutes of silence with a darkened screen...

You might bring me instructions for a rational embellishment of the city, an educational game with hot intellectual topics instead of boxing matches, a serial radio game about educational values, strategies for utopian artistic potlatch, *exchange of what I am not able to give*. You might bring me tactics for an impossible work on the borrowed typewriter on which Michele Bernstein typed all the numbers of Potlatch. You might by post “bring” a gift of an impossible artistic Potlatch to all whom the “community is given as a gift” and to those whom a minimal exchange is not allowed and who will “reify and freeze” your gift.

Tanja Vrvilo

**I thought over the suggestions for a commission. The most provoking was that one about bringing an impossible gift, or as Tanja wrote: You might “bring” by post the gift of an impossible artistic Potlatch to all for whom “community is given as a gift” and those who are not allowed even minimal exchange and who will “reify and freeze” your gift”.**

**I decided then, taking my cue from the Situationist journal *Potlatch*, to start up an on-line bulletin called *Boomerang*. In *Boomerang* the focus was on the ideas that I would give all those I sent *Boomerang* to my still unproduced works and projects as the hot artistic themes and current situation of the bulletin. By public announcement of my personal, carefully nurtured ideas which by being made public on the pages of *Boomerang* became common property and by an open invitation to readers to take them over, I opened up a circle of reciprocal present-making. *Boomerang* was potlatch. Read *Boomerang!* I send the first issue of *Boomerang*. I impatiently await reactions. Writing amuses me, I follow events on the Zagreb art scene, think about what comments to make on them, draw attention, advise curators and artists of possible solutions to the problem, make preparations for new *Boomerang* issues, turn over the pages of my notebook, decide to publish the most interesting ideas.**

No 1

June 2012

*Boomerang*: Bulletin for information and advertising meant for Zagreb artists and their representatives or agents

*Boomerang* is the outlet for top, genuine creative contemporary artists in the battle against the pharisaic.

*Boomerang* is giving away its best ideas. The editors of *Boomerang* will supply the Zagreb art scene with the most up to date themes for new world-significant artistic works.

*Boomerang* is an exceptionally useful bulletin of information and advertising essential for the salvation of art . Let's work on the aware and collective establishment of a new Croatian culture.

You'll get *Boomerang* as often as necessary.

– Editors

#### **DEBORDISM. SILENCE IS PLASTIC. SOON BURNS UP.**

#### **PROVE TO OXYTOCIN THAT YOU LOVE IT.**

Among the many hormones in the human body there is o-xy-to-cin. The central nervous system produces it, and the pituitary gland secretes it. Our oxytocin develops a positive feeling for other persons. It secretes most during touching or looking into each other's eyes, among women in the phase of pregnancy and motherhood, during orgasm, and in all emotionally positive and pleasant situations (scandal, love, fun). It has existed millions of years and is a crucial factor in the development and reproduction of life.

Oxytocin is also produced artificially, and in medicine is used – as a therapy for mastitis!!! to decontract the muscles during labour and still experimental in the treatment of certain forms of autism?! AND THAT'S IT?

Why isn't oxytocin being mass produced, distributed and consumed. What are the obstacles and reasons preventing it being broadly and systematically consumed? What stops the expansion of common human values such as empathy and assertiveness? Together with scientists aware of this social, cultural and ultimately political scandal, we require all top and genuine Zagreb artists to join without more ado in every action to the benefit of oxytocin. The editors will acknowledge every initiative along these lines as *Boomerang* works.

– Amela Frankl

**ECONOMIC NOOK**

In the advertising brochure for the opening of her Salon de beauté in 1932 in Paris, the writer Colette wrote: Are you for or against a writer having a second job? Guided by the idea of never allowing herself to be put down, Colette got out of a financial jam by opening a beauty salon and creating cosmetic lines for face- and body-care. What a fantastic leitmotif for a fresh and original work. Have you been thinking about how to get out of your own jam?

Risk it, *Boomerang* gives you total support. Don't wear your knees out in vain, be effective. Open your own beauty salon and *Boomerang* will in return hail your micro-entrepreneurial step with enthusiasm and adopt it as part of its own project.

– Amela Frankl

**WARNING**

We aren't signing anyone else's petitions. We are signing our own work only.

– Editors

**ANNOUNCEMENT**

With great pleasure we announce one of the themes of the next issue of *Boomerang*: heroism, a trifle about copyright.

– Editors

A cloudburst of ideas is foretold after the first issue of *Boomerang* comes out.

**RESERVED**

Our central idea is that of the construction of situations, that is to say, the concrete construction of momentary ambiances of life and their transformation into a superior and impassioned value.

– Guy Debord

In the very first number of *Boomerang* that I published in June I suggested the reader should take up the idea for a work on the topic of oxytocin, which I prepared for the last commission and produced a few months later. Without any worrying about copyright, I lent it to, gifted it to the readers of *Boomerang*.. to see who would make a good piece out of oxytocin, you or I?



No. 2

July 2012

Bulletin for information and advertising meant for Zagreb artists and their representatives or agents

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– Editors

## A DEBORDISM

A cuddly lamb is going to suffer from obesity in the end.

## HEROISM

This theme has particularly endeared itself to the editors of *Boomerang*.

In the work *Ethics of a Hero*, Amela Frankl hails the courageous answer of Ms Ida Biard Amrain, comparing it with the answer of a Horace, the excellent and unshakeable hero of the eponymous tragedy of Corneille. May he be an example to you all, Don't keep your ideas about heroism to yourselves, set them out at once and become a *Boomerang* favourite.

– Editors

## OUT LOUD ABOUT COPYRIGHT:

A kick in the bum to the cosmos!

Amela Frankl

## EXERCISING INTELLECTUAL INEBRIETY

3 x Heimat + one more beer= ???

## POST NUBILA PHOEBUS

*Post nubila Phoebus* is the title of a failed work of mine. The idea was so good. It was a hair's breadth away from being shown.

Cluster gave consent for the use of the music, the graphic designer prepared the font, All that was left was to find the loungers, but in Croatia that summer of 2011, there was not a single free lounge to

be found. After a year of mourning, I place *Post nubila Phoebus* at the disposal of Boomerang.

– Amela Frankl

#### ANNOUNCEMENT

Anyone who can provide at least fifty free loungers can without any pangs of conscience sign the work *Post nubila Phoebus*. Contact tel 01 2312406 or mob. 098 942 1133

– Editors

#### REASON

We require the users of the verb *propitivati* [to question] to send to us ASAP, up to the next edition of Boomerang, its utilitarian meaning. Otherwise the editors will mark down all texts that contain this verb.

– Editors

#### GALETA'S MORAL

All readers of Boomerang, watch, archive and carefully listen to the artist I L Galeta speaking to you at: <http://youtube.com/watch?v=250p1zrVXCE>

– Amela Frankl

#### RESERVED

We don't give advice and we have no ultimate solutions. We just suggest a few directions for experimental research. And while we are now together defining some of them, there are others waiting to be defined.

– Guy Debord

**After the publication of the second issue, a reaction reached the editors:**

**July 3, 2012**

.....  
Document: mail

From: Kata Mijatović

To: Amela Frankl  
.....

My complete support!

No. 3

August 2012

Bulletin for information and advertising meant for Zagreb artists and their representatives or agents

*Boomerang* is the outlet for top, genuine creative contemporary artists in the battle against the pharisaic.

*Boomerang* is giving away its best ideas. The editors of *Boomerang* will supply the Zagreb art scene with the most up to date themes for new world-significant artistic works.

*Boomerang* is an exceptionally useful bulletin of information and advertising essential for the salvation of art. Let's work on the aware and collective establishment of a new Croatian culture.

You'll get *Boomerang* as often as necessary.

– Editors

## A DEBORDISM

A single swallow makes miracles

## SYNERGY

Our Zagreb cemeteries have a big potential in tourism. They are in excellent locations and are comfy for eternity. Let's make them internationally known destinations. Death is by and large a taboo theme for everyone, except for avant-garde artists. They know how it goes: a dead artist = a good artist. Take part in the development of posthumous tourism. Send the editors of *Boomerang* ten names of internationally known avant-garde artists of your choice. Choose the avant-garde to repose in the wonderful Zagreb cemeteries, the avant-garde for which you will happily change the water in a vase of flowers, an avant-garde that will draw foreign and local tourists, and make our cemeteries not-to-be-missed tourist attractions. The editors will send a list of the ten most-voted for avant-garde names to the Croatian Ministry of Tourism, Zagreb Holding and the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. We shall require from these instances the undertaking of all matters of protocol aimed at the long-term development of this project. Only a dead artist is a good artist! We shan't sit with folded arms while we're waiting.

– Amela Frankl

## A MODEL BOOMERANG ACTION

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?NR=1&v=pI9j0Q81NnA&feature=endscreen>

**ATTENTION**

Those tired of art should at once unsubscribe from *Boomerang*.

– Editors

**REASON**

We require from the industrious readers of *Boomerang* not to use the word idea too facilely, because sooner or later they are going to have to prove, first to themselves, and then to others, what actually stands behind it.

– Editors

**CHOREOGRAPHY OF WORKS**

French King Louis XIV was an excellent dancer. He was outstanding in demonstrating his godlike and political power with his body. Art or power? One and the other. The idea for this work might interest certain Croatian artists. You are sovereign, in command of yourself and others, have your own artistic viewpoint. There's no easier task for you. Think up a choreography of your best works and dance them. NB – nude and barefoot are out.

– Amela Frankl

**NAME AND SURNAME**

So as to improve long-term cultural development, the editors of *Boomerang* call upon all responsible cultural individuals to abolish their associations and start operating on their own. Feel the efficacy of the actions you advocate for on your own skin.

– Editors

In search for excellent artistworks MMG, GKD and MK give their support to the editors of *Boomerang*.

**RESERVED**

The Situationist movement is appearing as an artistic movement, a research experiment on the way of free construction of everyday work and ultimately as contribution to the theoretical and practical struggle of a new revolutionary revolt. From now on, all cultural creation, and all proper changes of society, are subordinate to the advance of this unique and determined movement.

– Guy Debord

**And still, no return presents. I am disappointed. I decide to stop publication of Boomerang.**

**BOOMERANG BOOMERANG BOOMERANG BOOMERANG BOOMERANG**

October 4, 2012

Dear Readers

in the last three months, three numbers of the on-line bulletin Boomerang, created in compliance with the conditions of *What I Bear* commission no. 9, A utopia of artistic exchange, commissioned by Tanja Urvilo, have come to your mail addresses. In the spirit of the Situationist journal *Potlach*, in *Boomerang* I have published ideas for new works from my own notebook. The publication of these ideas was my potlatch to you, readers of Boomerang.

I would like to inform you that the task has been completed, and *Boomerang* is now ceasing publication.

Sincere greetings,

– Amela Frankl

**October 5, 2012**.....  
Document: email

From: Željko Zorica

To: Amela Frankl  
.....

Pity

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**Only one more note of sympathy for the appearance and cancellation of Boomerang followed.**

**Three issues of *Boomerang* were sent to more than 200 addresses of artists, curators and other figures in the arts field, by way of gift, but eliciting no replies.**

**Tanja, isn't perhaps that free exchange of gift for gift, that proposal of Guy Debord of long-ago 1954, as critique of the role of art in social and of revolutionary practice, even today a little too subversive?**