

PLOHA

Taking part in and researching ritual as a means of getting in touch with oneself and others is a recurring element in the work of Kostana Banovic. Her latest film, *Ploha* (Hop) documents a journey that she undertakes with her teenage daughter and son to Sarajevo, her city of birth – which she left years ago as result of her family's incapacity to deal with the unexpected death of her father. Showing Sarajevo as a place of multiple identities itself, *Ploha* actually started with the need to explore identity issues of (her) children being part of a family in the diaspora. As a result *Ploha* deals with the notion of distance: the emotional and geographical distance between a mother and her city of birth, and between the children and their parent's country of origin, as well as the distance between the mother and her children.

In an attempt to bridge the gap between expectations and reality and between past and present, Banovic brings her children to various places that are of importance to her. She tells her as it seems not always overly interested children fragmented, sometimes half-remembered personal stories and folk-tales about the city and its origin, and points at the changes the city underwent over the years – still bearing the visible and invisible marks of the last war. Most of the scenes are shot by a cameraman, but some also by the children – as to give them authorship too, to enable them to find their own way to relate to a place that is so unfamiliar to them. The scenes are intermingled, sometimes actually coincide, with episodes in which the three of them (emotionally) discuss the falling apart of their family through divorce. The absence of the children's father is being interwoven with the loss of Banovic's own father and the loss of Tito as the father of the former Yugoslavian nation. Each sequence in the film is concluded with archive material of an annual event dating from the Tito era, consisting of an estafette during which numerous people ran across the country, passing on a baton containing a message for their president.

In another attempt to make the children familiar with their parents' past and background they undergo certain rituals that have been of importance to their mother. On one of these occasions an imam tries to cure the son from stuttering – a condition that started when he was required at an early age to learn a fourth language due to his parents move to yet another country. It is an important given in the family's history, as it was at that moment, that Banovic decided to only speak Dutch with her children.

Parallel to her previous film *Sey – the economy of love* (2005), *Ploha* shows highly private moments of the artist's life, and simultaneously raises questions of the complex morality of dealing with others in a layered, even ambiguous way. Transcending questions of the politically correct though, the work seems to reflect and negotiate the reality of everyday life.

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