



# FAMILIAR FANTOMS

Group exhibition curated by Residency Unlimited curator in residency: **Veronika Molnár**  
Featuring works of Residency Unlimited artists in residency:  
**Agrina Vllasaliu | Alma Gačanin | Glorija Lizde**

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**Saturday, May 13-Sunday, May 28, 2023**  
Opening Reception: Saturday, May 13, 11am-6pm

**Live performance & reading on May 20, 1:00pm**  
Viewing Hours: Friday, Saturday, Sunday, 11am-5pm

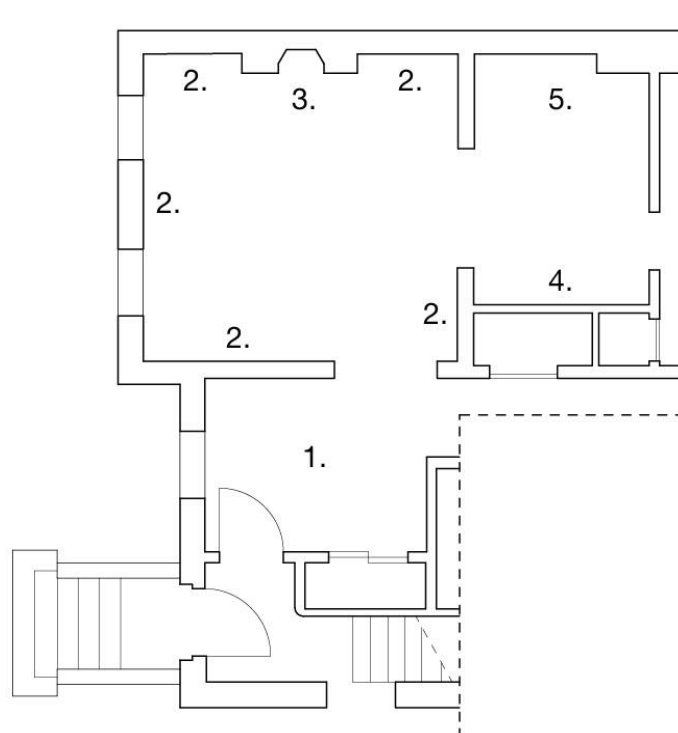
Contact us for a viewing appointment for weekdays at [info@residencyunlimited.org](mailto:info@residencyunlimited.org)

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## About the Exhibition:

Growing up in the aftermath of the Yugoslav Wars, Young Visual Artists Awards (YVAA) artists Agrina Vllasaliu, Alma Gačanin, and Glorija Lizde explore how collective, intergenerational, and personal memories of war have shaped their identities and family histories. The exhibition title references Slavenka Drakulic's essay, *My Father's Pistol* (1991), in which a *familiar phantom*, a long-forgotten ghost of war, resurfaces when she first holds her father's Beretta. In the works on view, all kinds of ghosts haunt the viewer: the land that keeps score of the battles that scarred its surface, the home abandoned before it could ever be inhabited, and the raincoat carrying the weight of history.

Notions of belonging, migration, and nationhood are brought together in poetic meditations via photography, video, installation, and text. Presented in the United States for the first time on Governors Island, a former military base, the site-specific iterations by Vllasilu, Gačanin, and Lizde create a dialogue with the built environment where the specters of history are ever present. With a war currently waging in Europe, the fabric of another society is torn, and all-too-familiar ghosts of the past return to pose the same questions again.



**1. Alma Gačanin, *Yellow Raincoat*, 2021**

digital print on photo glossy paper, video (sound, 3:12 min.), yellow tarpaulin

The *Yellow Raincoat* is based on a childhood memory of Gačanin. The artist was four years old when the siege of Sarajevo began (1992), and wearing bright colors on the streets was forbidden. Almost 30 years later, in a video performance, the artist journeyed from her old family apartment to the marketplace in a cape-like yellow dress—honoring the little yellow raincoat she was only allowed to wear inside the house and outgrew by the time the war ended.

**2. Glorija Lizde, *Fearless Youth*, 2019-2022**

archival pigment print on Hahnemühle paper, digital print on adhesive paper, archival photograph, text, video (silent, 12:24 min.)

Glorija Lizde's photography series, *Fearless Youth*, is based on the eponymous unpublished autobiography of her grandfather, Hasan Lizde, who grew up in a Muslim village in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and whose youth changed abruptly when he decided to join the Croatian fascist Ustashe army during World War II. Following her grandfather's book as a compass, Lizde traveled 1800 km throughout Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Slovenia to photograph the locations he visited while in service. Along with landscape photographs, Lizde reimagined archival family photographs as self-portraits using family memorabilia, such as military medals weighing down her shoulders. Weaving together past and present, the artist juxtaposed excerpts from her

grandfather's autobiography with entries from her travel diary, creating a dialogue between generations and grappling with how family and collective trauma has shaped her identity. The excerpts are scattered across the gallery space, inviting the viewer to wander around and discover the parallel travel stories of the artist and her grandfather.

### **3. Agrina Vllasaliu, *The Ice Palace*, 2022**

video (silent, 5:19 min.)

In Agrina Vllasaliu's video installation, *The Ice Palace*, the slideshow consists of short video sequences taken in the home and surroundings of the artist's family house in Prishtina, Kosovo, which they decided to flee in 1991 due to the impending threat of the Yugoslav War. The artist's family has been geographically dispersed ever since, only returning to the house during the summers. Vllasaliu's video captures the uninhabited, empty spaces that reveal her family's failed attempts to fill the house with the warmth of a home and convey her ambiguous relationship to her homeland. Building on the Albanian phrase, "The walls are cold because no one heats them," the video was projected onto a thin infrared heating panel in previous iterations. On Governor's Island, the artist used the fireplace of the KODA/RU house—a former residential building—instead.

### **4. Agrina Vllasaliu, *Thaumatrope*, 2022**

digital photograph

*Thaumatrope* depicts the dark attic of Vllasaliu's family house in Prishtina. Behind wooden beams, a figure, the artist herself, is portrayed in a wedding dress and a red scarf over her head, a tradition that is known in the Albanian-Muslim culture. Vllasaliu's face is concealed, just as the life she would have lived had her family stayed in Kosovo. The photograph conveys an alternative reality, and its title refers to an optical illusion: a thaumatrope is a disc with two different images on the front and back that appear to merge when it is set in rotation. The photograph is only partially attached to the wall to allude to abandoned objects stored in one's attic.

### **5. Alma Gačanin, *Workshop*, 2021**

video animation (sound, 2:29 min.), archival photographs, sink with grease

The archival photographs featured in Gačanin's *Workshop* depict Yugoslav workers, including the artist's father, in an auto repair shop celebrating Labor Day in the early 1980s in current-day Bosnia and Herzegovina. The photographs evoke the working class's good times before the Iron Curtain's fall and a sense of Yugo-nostalgia. In the accompanying animation, a dancer takes center stage, singing the theme song, "You only live twice," of the 1967 James Bond movie. In the end, the figure swallows the workers, as they never got a second chance after the breakup of Yugoslavia. Grease is an indispensable part of car mechanics' work, and its placement in a sink emphasizes the presence of something impossible to wash or clean thoroughly. With this choice of materials, Gačanin refers to Yugoslavia's internal colonization of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which resulted in its underdeveloped state compared to other former Yugoslav republics.



**Agrina Villasaliu** (b. 1990, Pristina) combines various materials and media such as painting, photography, video, installation, and sculpture. Her current approaches to art go hand in hand with her studies in the field of geography at Humboldt University (Berlin). Agrina's interests focus on migration, individual and collective conceptions of identities, and the transmission of cultural practices and narratives from a feminist perspective. As a bilingual child of parents that migrated from Kosovo, she explores the boundaries between home and homeland, identities and cultures.

**Alma Gačanin** (b. 1988, Sarajevo) is the winner of the 2022 ZVONO Art Award for Young Visual Artist in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Alma Gačanin is an artist, poet, and feminist whose practice is based on researching the specifics of labor and the precariousness of certain professions for which she attended professional training. She is particularly interested in value theory, biopolitics, and social reproduction. Alma Gacanin explores the link between artistic practice and earning a living through drawing and performance.

**Glorija Lizde** (b.1991., Croatia) is an artist working with staged photography. She obtained her Bachelor's degree in Film and Video from the Academy of Arts Split and her Master's in Photography from the Academy of Dramatic Art in Croatia. Her work has been shown in both group and solo exhibitions. Lizde's works are part of private and public collections. She is the recipient of the Radoslav Putar Award 2022 for the best young contemporary artist in Croatia as well as the recipient of Dr. Éva Kahán Foundation artist in residency program 2022.

**Veronika Molnár** (b. 1996, Budapest) is a curator and writer currently based in Budapest. She has been the Artistic Director of Liget Gallery, one of Budapest's longest-standing nonprofit galleries, since November 2022. Molnar received her MA in Art History from Hunter College, the City University of New York, in 2021 with the support of the Fulbright grant. Her research interests lie at the intersection of artistic activism and environmental justice; her curatorial and writing practice currently focuses on artists and collectives who have been engaging with the topic of the planetary climate crisis.

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