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**THE RETURN OF THE CRAFT  
– THE REAFFIRMATION OF HANDWORK  
AS AN ARTISTIC STATEMENT IN  
CONTEMPORARY ART IN SERBIA**

*Abstract:*

By conducting a comparative analysis of four contemporary works that employ embroidery, the paper discusses the reaffirmation of handwork in contemporary art practices in Serbia and investigates the meanings generated or intended to be generated by the phenomenon. The overview of the genesis and the history of embroidery will indicate the dichotomy of the medium and technique as an artwork or a nonartistic, traditional process, scarce in contemporary art in Serbia but imbued with the potential of a socially focused articulation. Using the examples of the association Apsolutno's *Le Quattro Stagioni*, the traditional embroidery employed by Škart/NEpraktične žENE, and the documentary embroidery, i.e., multi-year, collaborative projects of Vahida Ramujkić and Tanja Ostojić, the multiplicity of approaches to embroidery will be analyzed to determine the different meanings achieved at the levels of participation, inherent in contemporary artistic practices.

*Key words:*

handwork, documentary embroidery, participatory artistic practices, critical artistic statements

## Introduction

Tracing a history of embroidery inherently means tracing a history of femininity, defined as a society-imposed construct of “the behavior expected and encouraged in women” (Parker 2010, 2). Extensively analyzing the mutually defining nature of embroidery and femininity, differentiating constructs of femininity, lived femininity, the feminine ideal, and the feminine stereotype, Parker mapped out the trajectory of the meanings imbued upon the technique. Constructing the implication that embroidery is a domestic craft inherent to women marginalized the form in art terms while simultaneously attaching to it the weight of “desired” feminine qualities, such as gentleness, docility, submissiveness, virtuosity, and, ultimately, powerlessness. (Parker 2010)

Aligning with the efforts of the historical avant-gardes to “reintegrate art into the praxis of life” (Bürger 1984, 40), embroidery was among the methods that permeated the practices of predominantly female artists associated with Dada, Surrealism, Russian Constructivism, and Bauhaus. Almost simultaneously, the subversive capacities of the intricate stitch were employed by the British Suffragettes, adorning the banners and parasols during protests. That change in the framework to associate embroidery with femininity as an expression of empowerment, not powerlessness, was not fully grounded until the 1960s and, more precisely, until the next decade and The Women’s Liberation Movement by overturning the polarities of masculine-feminine, domestic-public. (Parker 2010, 189–197, 204–215) Although the analysis is predominantly set in a European context, the feminine facets of embroidery Parker detected and defined align with the Yugoslavian/Serbian context, which will be outlined in more depth in the following chapter. In Yugoslavian and post-Yugoslavian constellations, the question of embroidery used to be situated in the domains of folk art, decorative art, or at the most applied arts, permeating the realm of fine arts relatively recently, in the second half of the 20th century in the form and modernist definition of the tapestry. However, contemporary art embraced the stitch’s capacities, possibilities, and subversive properties, disrupting the framework of something folk, domestic, mundane, feminine, docile, pictorial, and decorative, adopting elements of embroidery that operate outside the historical limits of the method.

If the framework of embroidery changed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, contemporary art changes or intends to change the paradigm by approaching the form as an instrument to initiate meanings rather than reduce it to a form defined by pictorial qualities as decorative, applied, or fine art. A comparative analysis of the association Apsolutno *Le Quattro Stagioni*, executed in neo-gobelin, Škart collective’s project *Nove kuvarice*, which evolved into an independent collective NEpraktične žeNE, Vahida Ramujkić’s documentary embroidery, and Tanja Ostojić’s multi-year collaborative project, the *Lexicon of Tanjas Ostojić*, demonstrates the multiplicity of



The Apsolutno association, *Le Quattro Stagioni* (1996–2002). Photo: Bojana Janjić.  
Courtesy of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade

approaches to needle handwork and phenomena generated, such as the questioning of a patriarchal division and capitalist organization of labor, affirmation of collaboration, emancipation and women’s work as artistic work.

### **The Yugoslavian / Serbian Framework**

An investigation of the specificities of the historical position regarding embroidery within a Serbian and a broader Yugoslavian context reveals a slightly different situation, foremostly determined by a polarization between folk embroidery and artistic embroidery. The contrasting distribution of meaning directly influenced the impression of the technique or medium and the label under which each of the two was nested, imposing a significant division framed by two comprehensive exhibitions and their subsequent accompanying catalogs. Published by the Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade in 1980, a catalog devoted to Yugoslavian Folk Art cemented the position of traditional embroidery as an ethnographic and domestic phenomenon, manifesting the cultural and national identity of a specific region regardless of artistic quality, further propelled by an overview of various objects divided by territory, i.e., individual Federal Republics of Yugoslavia. Additionally, the position of embroidery and tapestry, among other techniques, is elaborately and occasionally poetically associated with femininity, evoking images of “mothers’ calloused hands weaving and stitching” compared to men doing the carving (Stojanović 1980). Although, or perhaps precisely because, the author opted

for a highly suggestive approach, traditional folk processes of weaving, knitting, and stitching, i.e., types of work related to textiles in any capacity, were, or are still, directly ingrained in social consciousness as women's work (Popović 2011), which is only aided by the fact that, grammatically, terms such as weaver, embroiderer or seamstress are feminine nouns in the Serbo-Croatian language, out of which only the latter corresponds its English counterpart.

Without presuming that traditional folk embroidery lacks artistic qualities, on the contrary, the domain of applied arts adopted the term "artistic embroidery" to refer to a specific corpus of sacral artifacts. Justifying the inconsistency of such a discourse, Stojanović argues the lack of profane, civilian objects documenting the development of textile decorative techniques. The extensive analysis of artistic embroidery in Serbia from the 14<sup>th</sup> until the 19<sup>th</sup> century demonstrates the presence of both men and women embroiderers within the archival documentation, with the significance of the fact diminished by two conclusions – firstly, the assumption that embroidery "was part of the upbringing and domestic education of women," and, secondly, crediting men as painters and masters creating the patterns, followed by the monastery and court workshops, or individual weavers and embroiderers. (Stojanović 1959).

Contrary to strides achieved in European and American art, although it should be underlined that such efforts are only recently being reexamined and reevaluated<sup>1</sup>, it seems that the first half of the 20th century remained relatively unchanged regarding the general attitude towards textiles and fabrics in art. Initial research was heavily guided by exclusively tracing the evolution of tapestries, concluding that there had been sporadic mentions of "wall hangings" and carpets exhibited in Belgrade after 1930 and isolated examples of artists educated abroad extending interest to tapestries, with two artists gaining prominence, Mira Kovačević and Branka Hegedušić, as authors executing their own samples and the patterns of painters. (Stojanović 1963, 3–4) However, recent extensive research by Bojana Popović illuminates the Belgrade climate toward applied arts during 1914-1941, underlining the dominant and slowly-changing rhetoric of applied arts as decorative, feminine, and, subsequently, lower in the hierarchy of the arts. Manipulating fabric, including weaving, stitching, knitting, coloring, and lace-making, was introduced as a school subject, a skill to learn that would emancipate women, focusing on the functionality of handwork and its decorative elements. (Popović 2011, 131–138)

Following the matrix established by world tendencies, post-war Yugoslavia witnessed a revision of the processes of weaving and stitching adopted by men and women artists (in an almost equal measure), who investigated the capacities of fabric as an extension of their artistic explorations. The emergence of courses within

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1 Institutional endeavors include the exhibitions *Radical Lace and Subversive Knitting* in 2006 and *Pricked: Extreme Embroidery* in 2007 organized by the Museum of Arts and Design in New York. (Parker 2010, xii)



The Apsolutno association, *Le Quattro Stagioni* (1996–2002), detail. Photo: Saša Reljić. Courtesy of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade

academies<sup>2</sup>, professional workshops<sup>3</sup>, and exhibitions<sup>4</sup>, paired with the artist's rising interest from the 1960s onward in the pictorial possibilities of tapestries (Stojanović 1963, 4-5; Teofanović 1984, 9–17) might suggest that the craft finally permeated fine art. Still, two critical aspects illuminate the nuances associated with such a conclusion. The evolution of embroidery in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century within a Yugoslavian constellation was directly determined by the modernist definition of a tapestry as predominantly monumental textile artworks lauded for their pictorial qualities. Expressing open disregard for technique in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Teofanović-Salihagić 1988), tapestry could be construed as a misnomer or an umbrella term that absorbed embroidery, reducing it to a method in service of an art form. Secondly, the modernist structure comprised a workshop-led production with some or no input from the artist, who often prepared the stitching sketch executed by professionals. (Stojanović 1963, 4)

2 Textile departments are established in art schools across the Kingdom of Yugoslavia during the period between the two world wars, while tapestry-making as a discipline enters the curriculum of the Academy of Applied Arts in Belgrad in 1953. (Stojanović 1963, 4)

3 In 1961, Boško Petrović, painter and tapestry artist, founded the first tapestry-making workshop, titled *Atellje 61*, in Novi Sad. (Stojanović 1963, 4; Teofanović 1984, 9–11)

4 Socialist Yugoslavia was especially adamant on deepening French-Yugoslavian relations, resulting in an exhibition of Yugoslavian tapestries in Paris in 1960 (Teofanović 1984, 13) and a touring show of Contemporary French Tapestry in Belgrade, Zagreb, and Ljubljana in 1966. (Komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom 1966)

The contemporary art examples that will be discussed in the following chapter of the paper demonstrate the multifaceted potentials of embroidery that are still either scarcely present in Serbia or articulated within a broader discourse regarding fabric and textile in art. Still, such discourses reveal a necessity to reexamine and reevaluate the history of the craft in order to understand its emergence in contemporary practices better and the implications it manifests, as indicated by a recent endeavor by the exhibition *HAND JOB: What do we know about contemporary nontraditional embroidery* held at Remont Gallery in Belgrade in November 2022.<sup>5</sup> As shown by the four examples we consider in the next chapter, contemporary art shifts the paradigm of artistic embroidery and folk art, disregarding or intentionally opposing the modernist framework of the tapestry, to embroidery in art as an artistic statement and/or instrument capable of generating socially engaged, personal or collective meanings and implications.

### **The Four Faces of Contemporary Embroidery**

The association Apsolutno<sup>6</sup> executed *Le Quattro Stagioni* (1996) as a photo-action comprising four photographs filmed during four seasons of the year 1996, each depicting one of the members of the collective dressed in 19th-century attire at a memorial cemetery in Sombor. The choice of location, a memorial cemetery devoted to World War II partisans built on the grounds of the Orthodox Church, adjacent to a neo-Serbian-Moravian chapel, is purposefully chosen as one layered with symbolism, echoing an ideological crisis initiated by the transitional character of the aftermath of the Dayton Agreement. The temporal aspect of the work executed in each of the four seasons is further enhanced by the photo-action initially published as a pseudo-calendar in 1997. (Associazione Artistica Apsolutno 1997) In 2002, *Le Quattro Stagioni* was executed by professional weavers in a neogobelin (petit-point) technique, representing a technological turn by transforming digital images of the original photographs into embroidery patterns. (Asocijacija Apsolutno 2015, 24) However, by not only transmuting the work into needlework but setting them appropriately in heavy baroque frames, the association Apsolutno established another layer of meaning within the work, alluding to a specific type of handwork and a socially-profused context. The long-lasting presence of the

5 Pairing the works by woman artists, including Mía Arsenijević, Nina Babić, Saša Bezjak, Milica Dukić, Mirjana Dotunović Mustra, the NEpraktične žeNE collective, and Mojca Segačnik, (Stojsavljević 2022) the exhibition highlighted the contradictory polarities of embroidery, operating within the framework of femininity and feminism.

6 Formed in Novi Sad in 1993, the association Apsolutno comprised four members (Zoran Pantelić, Dragan Rakić, Bojana Petrić i Dragan Miletić) operating as an interdisciplinary collective focused on exploring aesthetic, cultural, social, and political aspects through multimedia engagement. (Asocijacija Apsolutno 2015, 5)



*Embroidered Lexicon of Tanjas Ostojić*, 2017. Documentary Embroidery/embroidery on Cotton, 200 X 160 cm. Coauthors: Jelena Dinić, Tanja Ostojić (Banja Luka), Tanja Ostojić (Berlin), Tanja Ostojić (Trn), Tanja Ostojić (Udine), Tanja Ostojić-Guteša, Tanja Ostojić-Petrović, Tanja Petar Ostojić, Tatjana Tanja Ostojić, Tatjana Ostojić Alabama, Sunčica Šido i Vahida Ramujkić. Workshops facilitators: Tanja Ostojić (Berlin) and Vahida Ramujkić. Photo: Nikola Radić Lucati. Courtesy/copyright: Tanja Ostojić

Wiehler's Gobelins in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia established a framework of a pseudo-luxurious object, thus embellished with a heavy, intricate frame, stitched most often at home by a working-class woman, enabling the (self) identification with the elements of a (socialist) feminine ideal. (Tucakov 2020). In light of such a context, it can only be assumed that the professionals doing the needlework of Apsolutno's *Le Quattro Stagioni* are women, as suggested by the grammatical feminine gender of the occupations in Serbian, a fact possibly intentionally obscured. The reversal of the position of a mass-produced Wiehler's Gobelin pattern regarded by their owners as a unique, luxurious item is strongly contrasted in the professional but single execution of the association's reiteration of the work.

Collaborating since 2008, Belgrade-born artist Vahida Ramujkić and Tel Aviv-born Aviv Kruglanski developed the process of documentary embroidery as a method of documenting reality in real-time, stitching without previously prepared sketches. Framed by the restrictions of the technique and guided by the principles of collaboration in a public setting, the collaborative-participatory practice of

documentary embroidery engages the community with the lengthy concept of stitch-by-stitch, harnessing the power of the bond generated by the process. Given that the first edition of Parker's seminal study was first published in 1984, it is reasonable to accentuate the "bond between women" generated by group needlework (Parker 2010, 215), subverted in Ramujkić and Kruglanski's concept of documentary embroidery by the opposite genders of the artists, furthering the undermining of patriarchal and capitalistic gender-imposed roles by initiating workshops in Cairo, Barcelona, Bristol, Belgrade, Warsaw, Bitol, etc. (irrational.org; Kruglanski, Aviv i Vahida Ramujkić 2010; Čubrilo 2018, 509–510) actively and equally engaging male and female embroiderers in the creation of a documentary tapestry, amalgamated using individual works. Besides adopting a gender-open framework, three significant points shape the methodology of Ramujkić and Kruglanski's documentary embroidery concept. The first is organizing documentary embroidery workshops or 'offices' in a public space instead of housing the process within an (artistic) institutional framework, i.e., operating beyond a museum, gallery, or cultural center. That first point is directly correlated to the second notion of carefully chosen workshop locations and contexts, which include engaging the peripheries of cities or communities existing on the peripheries of society, such as, but not limited to, the workshop in the Jessy Cohen neighborhood in Holon, Israel (2011), realized in a suburban area in Tel Aviv inhabited mainly by refugees and low-skilled workers; the multi-day workshop with drug addicts and convalescents at TRA.FO, Kassel (2011); and the one in the diverse neighborhood of Musrara, Jerusalem (2014), realized in two different locations, the Israeli and the Palestinian neighborhoods without any contact, as two tapestries united into one at the end of the workshops.<sup>7</sup> Centralizing the marginal through the specific methodology of documentary embroidery, comprising a vital final point of co-authorship, foregrounds a process-oriented, non-gender-specific system abandoning the pictorial as a governing principle for the sake of the personal experience that is previously acquired or generated and stitched into the tapestry.

*The Lexicon of Tanjas Ostojić* partially intersects in methodology with the documentary embroidery by Kruglanski and Ramujkić, primarily since Ramujkić participated as a co-moderator of the first three of four workshops in total of *the Embroidered Lexicon of Tanjas Ostojić* (2017) upon Ostojić's invitation, followed by a contract signed by the two artists at the end of the project. Tanja Ostojić's *The Lexicon of Tanjas Ostojić* (2011–2017) comprises a complex, collaborative, long-term, multi-layered, and multidisciplinary project out of which the segment employing documentary embroidery is only a part. The chronological point of origin of the project, as described by the artist, is set in 2011, prompted by the invitation to propose a project for the Serbian Pavillion at the Biennale di Venezia in 2011, conceived as an intersection and an amalgam in a sense, of

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7 Vahida Ramujkić, email message to author, August 21, 2023.





Tanja Ostojić, *Lexicon of Tanjas Ostojić*, 2012–18. Collaborative art project. Workshop, MSU, Zagreb, April–May 2017. Photo: Ana Opalić. Courtesy/copyright: Tanja Ostojić

issues already inherent in the artist's work, including migration, gender politics, labor, etc. (Ostojić 2018, 7, 141). Investigating the nuances of identity, more precisely the personal, gender, geographical, historical, and socio-economic facets of identity, Ostojić initiated the project by locating and engaging her namesakes, or name-sisters, with the criteria being – having both the first and last name as the artist, whether they were born Ostojić or adopted the surname by marriage. Coincidentally, all thirty-three women of different generations, nationalities, and social backgrounds who accepted to participate in the project were either themselves or their parents born in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Starting from the artist's encounters with her name-sisters, the project evolved into interviews, collaborations, creative workshops, discussions, exhibitions, drawings, sculptures, a book, a cooking book, and public guided tours, which generated a (self-reflexive) community prompted by an initial Internet search. The first three documentary embroidery workshops, jointly led by Ramujkić and Ostojić, were organized in Belgrade, Banja Luka, and Zagreb in 2017, providing an appropriate slow-paced method to establish and deepen the bond between the namesake women. (Ostojić 2017, 13–14). Aligning with the concepts of documentary embroidery and with the ethical parameters of the *Lexicon*, the resulting tapestry, which used the artist-led interviews as its basis, is co-owned by all participants.<sup>8</sup>

8 Tanja Ostojić, email message to author, September 1, 2023.



Vahida Ramujkić and Aviv Kruglanski, Documentary Embroidery Circuit, installation view of tapestries realized in Štoj (2013), Aradac (2013), Bitola (2013), and Mostar (2014). © Vahida Ramujkić and Aviv Kruglanski. Courtesy of the artists.

Established in 1990 at the Faculty of Architecture in Belgrade, Škart is a collective comprising Đorđe Balmazović (Žole) and Dragan Protić (Prota) employing various methods such as poetry, design, performance, and participatory elements in their practice. In 2000, Škart initiated the *Nove kuvarice*<sup>9</sup> project involving the participation of single mothers to stitch a new version of the traditional kitchen towels by reversing the didactic paradigm. Although the collective extended its efforts toward challenging the gender-imposed norm, Škart's endeavors to engage males as embroiderers have not yet been realized equally successfully. (Шкарт 2012, 12–41) The empowerment of overtaking a mechanism conceived to propel and embed the homebound role first extended with Lenka Zelenović, who began devising her own verses for the *New Cooks*, which transformed into an independent entity titled NEpraktične žeNE<sup>10</sup>, with Zelenović, Brigita Međo, and Pava Martinović as the most active members. The transformation of a community of single mothers into poets or aphorists overtaking the textiles by stitching their own designs and messages, documenting personal narratives, experiences, and struggles, enabled, supported, and established a platform for their authentic voices to be heard (or seen), emancipating the women toward the development of independence and

9 The title of the project translates to *the New “Cooks” Embroidery*, referring to a traditional, domestic, and folk form of embroidery, comprising kitchen towels adorned with domestic motifs, often accompanied by didactic and moralizing messages for the housewife represented in verse.

10 The title of the craft collective, which translates to Impractical Women, is a wordplay in original Serbian, highlighting the first and last two letters which form the word “no”.

forming a self-reliant, self-sufficient (artistic) collective. The NEpraktične žeNE collective received institutional attention and recognition with the show *HAND JOB: What do we know about contemporary nontraditional embroidery* mentioned above and with the exhibition *Impractical Women. Embroidered Wall Protectors (“kuvarice”) of the Present Time* held at the Gallery of the Museum of Naive and Marginal Art, Jagodina, in 2023,<sup>11</sup> confirming the subversive, empowering, and emancipatory potential of their needles, textiles, verses, and voices.

### The Potentials of Dichotomy

Except for the neo-gobelin edition of *Le Quattro Stagioni*, which explores and reflects the elements of a post-Yugoslavian context within a highly pictorial form and medium, Ramujkić’s documentary embroidery, which is also featured as a segment in *the Lexicon of Tanjas Ostojić*, and the *New Cooks*, do not rely on pictorial, decorative, or artistic qualities. Since the presence of a pattern to be followed hindered embroidery from being considered an art form, Parker distinguishes the abandonment of a sketch and the overturn of embroidery as a concept operating under the principles of “the personal as political” as a critical moment in artistic practices of the 1970s. (Parker 2010, 523) However, in terms of the examples of contemporary practices discussed above, particularly the collaborative projects operating within (or beyond) the legacy of relational aesthetics (Bourriaud 2002), there is a change in paradigm to the political as personal, the social as personal, etc. Further, in the case of documentary embroidery, the paradigm slightly deepens by transforming the consideration of the personal as collective, with the “collective” referring to the community generated by the process. Simultaneously, and mainly because of the focus on a non-artistic, traditional, folk, or durational practice, as instruments of generating relationships, self-actualization, or socially engaging structures, the needle and the stitch, excluding *Le Quattro Stagioni*, transform from functional, decorative tools to tools of the reaffirmation of handwork as a critical artistic expression that, by utilizing its subversive potentials and abandoning a binary framework, asserts specific attitudes regarding polarities, such as non-artistic – artistic; individualism – collective, and concepts of solidarity, empathy, gender constructs, capitalist organization of work, and distribution of labor.

With the change in the paradigm, how has the return of the craft affected the role of the artist? Foster’s formulation of the “artist-ethnographer” (Foster 1995) fits the role of Tanja Ostojić only partially (Čubrilo 2018), balancing the viewpoints of an objective moderator and (almost) equal collaborator. Detecting

11 *Непрактичне жеНЕ – „Куварнице” савременог тренутка*, 8. 3–26. 5. 2023. Галерија Музеја наивне и маргиналне уметности, Јагодина. <https://mnmu.rs/izlozbe/neprakticne-zene-kuvarice-savremenog-trenutka/> (14. 9. 2023)



NEpraktične žeNE – Embroidery by Brigita Međo, drawing by Vladan Nikolić.  
Courtesy of the Škart and NEpraktične žeNE collectives.

the ambivalence, Milevska coins the term “artist-initiator” (Ostojić 2018, 154) in the case of Tanja Ostojić, which could be reformulated or built upon as the “artist-mediator” or “artist-facilitator” corresponding with the roles of the Škart collective, Vahida Ramujkić, and Aviv Kruglanski, as well. An element of participation is at the core of the examples discussed above, although in varying degrees, forms, and meanings they generate. Extensively mapping out the multifaceted nature of the origin and evolution of participatory practices in 20th- and 21st-century art history and theory, Claire Bishop lucidly pointed out the tension between the social and artistic domains, created in part by requiring different sets of criteria, prompting an “imbalance between the artistic and social discourse” (Bishop 2012, 275–276; Bishop 2006), which, as demonstrated by the examples of the Škart project and documentary embroidery, is meliorated by embroidery or, in other words, handwork functions as a mediator and a link that unifies the two. Although contrary to Bishop, who predominantly employs the term participatory, Kester favors the term collaborative; both authors use the terms interchangeably, along with a plethora of other phrases that are nested within the umbrella term “participatory art”, such as socially engaged art, community-based art, experimental communities, dialogic art, littoral art, interventionist art, contextual art, and social practice. (Bishop 2012, 1; Kester 2011). Precisely because of the claim that participation has fused with spectacle (Bishop 2012, 277), there arises a need to differentiate and delineate the terms participatory and collaborative. Thus, the involvement of professional weavers who were hired to follow a pattern in Apsolutno’s *Le Quattro Stagioni* could be defined as participation that is delegated and, consequently, devoid

of any community-engaging elements. Oppositely, Škart's project, Ramujkić and Kruglanski's documentary embroidery, and *the Embroidered Lexicon of Tanjas Ostojić* present examples of participation that is collaborative, which is underlined by the issue of (co-)authorship, implicating a process in which the "high" position of the artist and the "low" position of the participants are leveled.

## Conclusion

In contemporary art in Serbia, the craftsmanship of embroidery and, particularly, the process define it as a catalyst, morphing and adapting to different circumstances, people, intentions, and meanings for instigating effects that go beyond the fabric, as demonstrated by the evolution of Škart's project to an independent collective, or by the documentary embroidery as examples of transforming the community, whether it is a naturally formed one or artistically generated. The dichotomy of embroidery as a medium, a technique, and a nonartistic process simultaneously enables the concept to exist in parallel in the realms of decorative, applied, folk, and contemporary art, and therein lies its transformative capacity. However, the process of weaving and stitching does not comprise any subversive potential by itself, as demonstrated by Apsolutno's example. Only when embroidery is coupled with participation, which is inherent to contemporary artistic practices, as in the cases of NEpraktične žENE, Vahida Ramujkić and Aviv Kruglanski's numerous documentary embroidery workshops, and *the Embroidered Lexicon of Tanjas Ostojić*, does the technique transform the textiles into a non-artistic expression targeting various issues by disrupting the pre-existing frameworks of gender roles, division of labor, and authorship. Precisely because of the historical position of embroidery as domestic, private, docile, didactic, feminine, decorative, and restricted in the domain of applied arts, handwork is reaffirmed as a non-artistic critical statement, transforming into a catalytic platform that probes the polarities of private-public, docile-willful, didactic-rebellious, feminine-masculine, artistic-non-artistic, implementing "the redistribution of the sensible", merging the manufactured with the produced (Rancière 2011), re-examining the organization of the world and the possibilities to change it through the mechanism of handwork-oriented collaboration.

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## **POVRATAK ZANATA – REAFIRMACIJA RUČNOG RADA KAO UMETNIČKOG ISKAZA U SAVREMENOJ UMETNOSTI U SRBIJI**

### *Apstrakt:*

U radu će se, kroz komparativnu analizu četiri rada savremene umetnosti, razmotriti pitanje reafirmacije ručnog rada u savremenoj umetničkoj praksi Srbije, kao i istražiti značenja koja taj fenomen generiše ili ima nameru da generiše. Sagledavanjem geneze i istorijata veza, ukazaće se na dihotomiju ovog medija i tehnike kao umetničkog rada ili neumetničkog, tradicionalnog postupka, koji je neznatno zastupljen u savremenim umetničkim praksama, ali koji sadrži potencijal društveno usmerene artikulacije. Na primerima *Le Quattro Stagioni* asocijacije Apsolutno, projekta *Nove kuvarice* umetničke grupe Škart, projekta *Leksikon Tanja Ostojić* umetnice Tanje Ostojić i dokumentarnog veza Vahide Ramujkić biće analizirana mnogostrukost pristupa vezu sa ciljem da se utvrde različita značenja ostvarena na nivoima participativnosti, inherentne savremenim umetničkim praksama.

### *Ključne reči:*

ručni rad, dokumentarni vez, participativne umetničke prakse, kritički umetnički iskaz