

Alban Muja: Family Album

Tracing stories of the 1998–99 Kosovo War

February 9–July 13, 2021

Artist Conversation:
Tuesday, March 16,
2021, 1–2pm EST

Gallery Hours:
By appointment on
Tuesday–Thursday,
12–5pm

The International Studio & Curatorial Program (ISCP) announces *Alban Muja: Family Album*, the first solo exhibition in the United States by Kosovar artist Alban Muja. A 2011 ISCP alumnus, Muja's exhibition will be a restaging of his 2019 exhibition *Family Album*, originally shown in the Pavilion of the Republic of Kosovo at the Venice Biennale. A conversation between Alban Muja, Ksenia Nouril, and Kari Conte will take place on March 16 at 1pm EST, introduced by Ambassador Frymëzim Isufaj of The Consulate General of the Republic of Kosovo in New York.

Alban Muja lives and works in Pristina and Berlin. His work takes the form of video installation, short films and documentaries, drawing, painting, and performance and is largely influenced by the ongoing processes of social, political and economic transformation in his native Kosovo and across the wider region of the Balkans. Through his practice, he investigates history and sociopolitical themes, and links them to his life in Kosovo today.

Alban Muja: Family Album features a three-channel documentary video installation which traces the stories of several children living in Kosovo during the time of the Kosovo War in 1998 and 1999. As the war progressed, nearly 800,000 citizens were forced to flee their homes for safety in neighboring countries, including a teenaged Muja. Images of these refugees—many of them children—were captured by photojournalists. The starting point of *Family Album* is a photograph that Muja found of himself with José María Aznar, Spain's Prime Minister at the time, in a Spanish-run refugee camp in Albania where Muja was living with his family. This led him to think about other refugee children from the war who were represented in the media, and so he tracked down the now-adults from some of the most well-known images of children from the war. *Family Album* pivots around interviews with four of these former Kosovar refugee children, bringing visibility to their experiences and memories, while building upon the narratives handed down to them.

Muja's *Family Album* considers the aftermath of collective trauma and pain and how it is processed and passed on to younger generations. The work also lays bare the limits and failings of the media by uncovering the stories and complexities behind images that were exploited and thus rendered one-dimensional to the viewer. The power of the archive lies in its potential to be activated, and Muja fills in its inherent lacunae.

This exhibition is curated by Kari Conte, curator, writer, and ISCP Senior Advisor, with Alison Kuo, ISCP Residency Program Manager.

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The 2019 Venice presentation of *Family Album* was curated by Vincent Honoré.

Alban Muja has exhibited his work at the Ludwig Museum, Budapest; 3rd Industrial Art Biennial, Istria, Croatia; MOMus Experimental Center for the Arts, Thessaloniki; Kumu Art Museum, Tallinn; Guangdong Museum of Art; Museum Of Contemporary Art – Skopje; MeetFactory, Prague; Forum Stadpark, Graz; The James Gallery, New York City; City Art Gallery of Ljubljana; Zhejiang Art Museum, Hangzhou; Museum of Fine Art, Split; Trieste Contemporanea; Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Rijeka; National Gallery of Kosovo, Pristina; Museum of Fine Art, Split; Gagosian Gallery, Beverly Hills; Slovak National Gallery; Staatliche Kunsthalle, Baden-Baden; 28th Ljubljana Graphic Biennale; nGbK, Berlin; National Gallery of Arts, Tirana; Cetinje Biennale and others.



Alban Muja, *Family Album*, 1999, photograph, 59 ½ × 27 ½ in. (100.33 × 69.85 cm). Courtesy of the artist. Photo by Skendar Muja at the Hamallaj refugee camp, Albania.

This exhibition is supported by The Consulate General of the Republic of Kosovo in New York; Hartfield Foundation; Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation; New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council; New York City Council District 34; New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature; NYC COVID-19 Response and Impact Fund in The New York Community Trust; Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation; VIA Art Fund; and William Talbott Hillman Foundation.

About ISCP:

Founded in 1994, ISCP is the fourth-largest visual arts residency program in the world and a global leader in the field of visual arts residency programs. ISCP supports the creative development of artists and curators, and promotes exchange through residencies and public programs. Housed in a former factory in Brooklyn, with 35 light-filled work studios and two galleries, ISCP organizes exhibitions, events and offsite projects, which are free and open to all, sustaining a vibrant community of contemporary art practitioners and diverse audiences. Over 1,500 artists and curators from more than 85 countries, including the United States have undertaken residencies at ISCP.

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