

HOW TO START A CALENDAR:

Conversations on the first Women's Associations in Albania
after 1991

VALENTINA BONIZZI

Introduction

The Calendars were one of the elements included in the first exhibition of *Diaries: LindArt & the Albanian Women Artists Association*. The exhibition opened in 2022, after I had spent the previous few years trying to dig into the work of the Linda association, the first and only association of women artists in Albania after the end of the communist regime in 1991. Conceived in 1993 and founded in 1994 by 14 women artists working within the art scene at the time, Linda responded to the need for creating new learning opportunities in a context in which old patriarchal traditions continued to shape the development of culture and visual art. The collective opened the LindArt Cultural Center in 2000, and between 2001 and 2010 they developed a program that produced exhibitions, workshops, and other events.

After a series of failed attempts to find a home and

support for the *Diaries* project, I decided that the possibilities offered by a newly founded space, Boulevard Art & Media Institute,¹ seemed to be the right way to begin sharing this research with the public. Currently, the *Diaries* are in the process of becoming an archive intended as a commons, looking at the collective artistic production of the 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s in Albania, through the lens of LindArt and the Linda Association. When the first *Diaries* exhibition opened on the 23rd of June 2022, the show contained the Calendars, written on two long lightbox tables and spanning from 1990 until 2010, the year the LindArt Center closed. As the opening act of a process of sharing, we reclaimed the work of LindArt by including their program within the established map of artistic happenings in the country during those years. In between the tables, a pen offered the possibility for the public to intervene, making the process open and participatory. And, indeed, there was active participation – as probably, I think, there was the need, or a longing, to reclaim individual representation within a collective, within the official historical narrative of the post-communist decades. The latter narrative, constituted through patriarchal values, emphasized growth into a fast-paced capitalist economy, and geopolitical negotiations within Europe, but it also built a bridge between a ferocious communist regime and pluralism, and many of the political actors from the past did not completely leave the scene, but instead continued to participate in the political challenges of the country.

¹ Boulevard Art & Media Institute is a newly founded space in Tirana by Valentina Bonizzi and Sonila Abdalli, which opened on 23 September 2021. For more, see the space's website: www.bulevard.al.

Alongside this official narrative, the Calendars offer a different set of perspectives. The Calendars become a form of personal storytelling, through dialogue, that can enter intimately into the dynamics of making spaces. I hope that through this process, they bring to light some elements that allow a critical perspective to grow, only after having felt a bit closer to these stories, by avoiding the perpetuation of the isolation of the characters within these narratives.

The *Diaries* and the archive are in the process of being “written”, in a way that places the personal within the collective: an archival work that is becoming a way of ‘building a home’, with all the complexities and the politics that this process entails.

In the following pages, I present some of the dialogues that have been necessary to understand the context in which the Albanian Women Artists Association existed. They aim to foreground the roles that women have played and the experiences they have had in the decades explored by the *Diaries* project. These dialogues represent a very initial step that intends to create the basis for more critical perspectives to grow in the future.

Eleni Laperi is an art historian, writer, and curator who was born in Tirana in 1949. She was the president of Linda, the Albanian Women Artists Association (1993-2010) and the director of the LindArt Center, a space activated by Linda, operating between 2000 and 2010. Eleni is an active independent writer.

Vjollca Meçaj is a lawyer born in Durrës in 1951 but who grew up in Tirana. She founded the Association of Women

Lawyers and was also an active member of Refleksione, the first women's association in Albania. Today Vjollca is retired as a lawyer, but she is still active in dialogues with civil society.

Refleksione is a nonprofit nongovernmental association established in Tirana on 27 February 1992. Refleksione was founded by a group of college-educated women who were concerned about women's rights in Albania immediately after the change from a totalitarian regime to a democracy. Refleksione brought together women from all walks of life, and from various political and religious groups, who initially engaged in efforts to educate themselves and other women about their rights and to look critically at how the political, economic, social, and cultural changes taking place in the country were affecting women and girls. Over the years Refleksione grew into a leading service and advocacy organization that works towards achieving gender equality in Albania.²

² For more on the Refleksione association, see their website: <https://refleksione.org/>.

FROM THE LINDART ARCHIVE: THE FOLLOWING
EXCHANGE IS TAKEN FROM A 1994 TVSH
DOCUMENTARY ON THE LINDA ASSOCIATION.

The documentary was filmed by Xhemal Reci. The interviewer is Mimoza Ahmeti, a well-known writer, poet, painter, and singer, born in Kruja in 1963.³

00:42 - 00:49

Mimoza Ahmeti: The way you organize yourselves, as friends who create together, and sort out tasks collaboratively: does this give you an advantage in what you do? Or is it just an ethical approach you have to the arts?

Eleni Laperi: We... we decided to gather, to create this association of women artists not because we think that women artists should work and operate in a separate association, but because it is society that has created this separation into women artists and men artists. In my opinion there can be no such distinction, no division into male artists and female artists. There are only good artists and bad artists. There are well-known artists and unknown artists. There are artists who get the chance to experience their fame while they are still alive. There are famous artists, who are still unknown. This was our goal, for us to have the opportunity to help each other out. It is crucial for us because,

³ Translated from Albanian into English by Blerina Kanxha.

I don't know why, but throughout their lives, women are treated as if they are isolated entities. Something that was such a revelation for me, was discovering that it was only in the 1500s, through a book written by Baldassare Castiglione, that the need for women to be educated was first addressed, the need for them to know how to read and write, for them to learn something about the arts, in order to teach women how to behave in society. Not to prepare them for a career, but to prepare them for marriage – to become beautiful backgrounds for their husbands. This manual was only for aristocratic women because education was prohibited for other women. Only nuns were taught how to read and write.

Throughout the history of humanity there have been women artists. Great ones. Pliny the Elder, the historian, in ancient times, mentions: Timarete, Eirene, Helena of Egypt. Over the years, during the Renaissance, there were great women artists. There were the Anguissola sisters in Italy. As time has passed, there have been an increasing number of women artists and now women have managed to become nearly equal to men in the art scene. Because during the Renaissance, women began to be allowed to work, to paint, but either way, they were allowed only to deal with still lifes, and portraits. They weren't allowed to paint nudes. They weren't allowed to paint historical themes: large, important tableaus. Only through great effort, only the ones with strong personalities – only those women have managed to oblige people to accept their works. This was one of the reasons that led us to create an association of women artists.

ELENI LAPERI

13 January 2020

*The conversation took place at Kino Bar, Tirana*⁴

Eleni Laperi: I was born in Tirana, but our house was outside of the city in the middle of a big field. I was brought up in contact with nature, with the grass. I loved walking barefoot on the grass. We had livestock, poultry, [and] a garden where we worked in our free time. So, I grew up in Tirana – my school was in the city, but I lived like in a village – outside the center. My eldest brother was an officer in the army, and he loved to draw. I would watch him enlarge photographs of actors from the movies, for example; he divided the page into squares, and did the same to the photos, making them bigger. So I started to do the same, when I was in high school here in Tirana. Then I applied for the University of Arts, which at the time was called the High Institute of Arts. I had been given some tips by Zef Shoshi on how to approach the admission competition for the Institute. This was in 1967. I participated, and I was accepted into the Painting Atelier. I completed my studies and graduated in 1972, and then started to work as a designer in a magazine called *The New Albanian Woman* (*Shqiptarja e re*), published by the Union of Albanian Women (*Bashkimi i Grave të Shqipërisë*, BGSh) – an organization that, like every other organization at the time, was part of the propaganda system of the Albanian Party of Labor (*Partia e Punës e Shqipërisë*, PPSH), the party in power.

⁴ Translated from Albanian into English by Edlir Velaj.

Valentina Bonizzi: Can we go back to the Institute? What was the structure of the Institute, and what did you learn there?

E.L.: In those years, the Visual Arts section of the Institute had only the painting studio and the sculpture studio, and it was a five-year program. Later, other branches were added, such as graphic arts, applied sculpture, textiles, and so forth. In addition to painting and drawing, we also took theoretical subjects, such as art history, Marxism, and Russian. What did I learn? Not much, because it was only when I finished my studies that I realized that I was ready to start them all over again, since I finally knew what I had to do in school. Fortunately, I was able to read Italian and French, so I made friends with one of the Institute's librarians. I would check out books to read, books that at that time students were not allowed to take. Because not all library books were accessible to everyone. Not all students at the school could look at whatever they wanted to in the library. There were times when they were allowed to go to the library and see any book they wanted. There were other times when only a limited list of titles were allowed. (It was very harsh, the way the education system depended on the policies of Enver Hoxha and his party.) However, I had the opportunity to read all the books I wanted, because the librarian trusted me. And I remember that I translated André Breton's *Manifeste du surréalisme* into Albanian. I remember because I gave the translation I did to my friends, to the other students in my class. It was a little, thin book.

V.B.: Do you remember the name of the librarian?

E.L.: She was Italian, Erika Strazimiri – she was a beautiful woman and a very quiet one. Once, she got so upset because I took out a book to show to my classmates, and she said “No, please Eleni, it is not allowed!”

V.B.: But she was Italian and she was here under Communism?

E.L.: Yes, because she was married to Gani Strazimiri (founder of the Institute of Cultural Monuments in Albania). He was an architect and had studied in Italy in the 1930s. So they met there, they were married and they went to Moscow together, I think it was during the first years after the war. Then later she lived in Tirana with him. She is no longer living, but she has two daughters in Italy. Through her, I had the possibility to read books you could not find in other places. Then, after I finished school, I had another friend – Flutura Grevi – who worked at the library of the Union of Writers and Artists, which was in the center of Tirana. She also gave me books from the library there. I remember I read a lot, including literature too: Umberto Eco, Kafka, Faulkner...

V.B.: And do you remember if the Union [of Writers and Artists] had more male members than female members during those times?

E.L.: Most of them were men of course. But there were also women who were members of the Union.

V.B.: But...?

E.L.: There was a kind of rule for acceptance into the Union: if you completed your studies at the High Institute of Arts (later the Academy of Fine Arts), you automatically became a candidate for membership in the Union of Writers and Artists. But the problem for artists was that there were no materials on the market: there was no material, for example, for a painter, so in order to have materials – to obtain canvas or paints – you needed a document, permission from the Union of [Writers and] Artists... because the supply was very limited. There was another thing the Union did, to organize artists: based on the productivity of the artist, or on the importance of their work, they were given *leje krijuese*, i.e., creative sabbaticals. In Sweden they do the same thing. Artists who received a *leje krijuese* were supplied with an atelier, a monthly stipend, and the freedom to set aside their work obligations wherever they worked, for a period of a few months up to a year. This is where you could most clearly see the differences between men and women. It was mostly men who benefitted from the creative sabbaticals, the *leje krijuese*.

V.B.: And why not women?

E.L.: Because they said... I'll give you an example. When I was working at the National Gallery of Arts, I started doing research on artists who had studied in Italy or in other European countries, before WWII. Among them were the sisters Sofia and Androniqi Zengo. They were two sisters who had studied in Athens, and graduated there. For the 500th anniversary

of Skanderbeg's death, the Union of [Writers and] Artists organized a big exhibition dedicated to the national hero. During my research, I found a letter by Sofia Zengo in the archive of the National Gallery, addressed to the head of the Union of [Writers and] Artists, asking permission for her and Androniqi to participate in the competition. Foto Stamo, the secretary of the visual arts section in the Union answered her, saying that the two women were not able to realize large-scale compositions, and that they should thus continue to work on portraits, landscapes, and still lifes... So, they had this idea that women sculptors and painters were not skilled enough to do big compositions, on important themes, historical themes. And if you look at the works made in that period, in museums and galleries, or at the monuments made in those years (maybe even now too), you can see the dearth of women artists among the authors of these works.

V.B.: But during your time at the High Institute of Arts, I'm guessing all of your teachers were men?

E.L.: Yes, all except one woman, Dhorka Dhamo, who taught art history. She gave us some lectures on the history of art, but the others were men, yes.

V.B.: And when you became a designer you said you were working for the magazine of the Union of [Albanian] Women, *The New Albanian Woman (Shqiptarja e re)*: how was that women's context?

E.L.: The magazine *The New Albanian Woman* was the

only illustrated publication dedicated to the subject of the Albanian woman. It was published by the Union of Albanian Women, a political organization (as all organizations were, at the time). The offices of the magazine were in the building that housed the Party's Central Committee (the building that now houses the offices of the Parliament and of the Ombudsman [*Avokati i Popullit*]), on the third floor. The Union of Albanian Women was in the same building. The head of the organization, Vito Kapo, was a member of the Central Committee, and she was the wife of one of the main representatives of the Political Bureau (consisting of the most important Party members, those who lived in the 'Bllok', near Enver Hoxha.) But the women who were there, or the instructors in the organization, were not there for their intellectual capabilities, but because nearly all of them were married to persons who had important positions in the hierarchy.

I started working at the magazine in 1972, when there was a kind of freedom around, at a time when I sewed my own trousers... Because at the offices of the Union of Albanian Women, we also got the magazine *Burda*, a fashion magazine with sample pages to help you sew your own different pieces of clothing. So I dressed like a 'European woman', which created problems for me. The instructors went to Vito Kapo and said: Eleni is extravagant, and she has ideological problems. I also played guitar, and I followed the 70s lifestyle... They also kept close track of the designs I was making for the magazine. I was trying to do something different. I had just finished my studies, and when you are young you think that you can change the world easily. So I wanted to do something really different. I consulted

the magazines that came to the offices of the Union of Albanian Women, like *Heures Claires*, a French women's magazine. I copied the style of lettering and the page layouts, and so the style of *The New Albanian Woman* changed completely, to the point that one day one of the women in charge of the magazine told me, "You cannot use this kind of design and lettering, you have to use the Albanian lettering style". So I answered, "Okay, then give me the Albanian lettering style and I can do the design". I had these kinds of problems up until the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 80s, when things began to change everywhere. They started having "worker inspections" (*kontrolle të punëtorëve*) in central state institutions, organized by the Party, by Enver [Hoxha]. So, they came to the magazine where I worked, and they decided that myself and two colleagues, Natasha Lako and Juliana Jorganxhi, both poets and journalists, both open-minded women, would have to leave the publication – because we had come directly to a central state institution straight out of school. So they sent me to an enterprise that made labels and packaging for different products: that is, not to a cultural institution but to a production context, because I had to "be educated" with working class ideals... So I started to work in the Cartographic Enterprise (Ndërmarrja Kartografike).

But in 1989, at the end of the 1980s, Albanian production was in a state of deep crisis and the country completely impoverished, because they could not sell any products outside Albania. And one of the reasons for this was the aesthetic quality of the packaging. So the Ministry of Light Industry decided to change the models of its products, the boxes used for wine, and the labels on products. So they came to the design offices, where

I worked with four other painters. We competed to design new packaging for a product, and I won. In April of 1989 they sent me and the director of my office to Italy. They wanted us to see what graphic designers working in industries did outside Albania, and to bring the knowledge back to our own work. In '89 I went to Bari, Rome, and Trieste. It was a huge shock for me. When I was on the plane, as we were flying over Rome, I thought "Oh my God! They have lied to us our whole life..." Because since we were young, we had been taught that Tirana was the most beautiful and green city in Europe, and when I saw Rome... I was shocked. It was something that changed me completely. It was my first direct contact with European culture. I saw Michelangelo, the *Pietà*. In Bari, they invited me to stay there and work with them... but I was married and I had three sons... I thought of the consequences they would suffer. It was impossible.

When I came back, I told the administrators at the ministry, the ones who sent me to Italy, that if they wanted us to do better work, they needed to get us materials, equipment... everything had to change. I didn't work there for much longer because the Ministry of Culture asked me to work for a gallery in Tirana, called the Art Salon (Salloni i Artit), run by that same ministry. This was an institution that sold paintings by Albanian artists exclusively to foreigners, because the Albanian Lek was of such low value that the state needed foreign currency. So I worked in that gallery, next to the National History Museum, in the center of Tirana, where there's now a bank. It was a space of 250 square meters.

V.B.: Do you remember the name of the Minister of Culture?

E.L.: It was Alfred Uçi, he was also a writer and a philosopher. He helped me a great deal, protected me against insults and accusations. They wanted me there because I was able to communicate in Italian, in French, and a little bit in English... so I helped them earn a lot of money in foreign currency at the Art Salon. Once there was Jewish man from Vienna, a banker, who came. He bought over 20 paintings, and he wanted to commission Albanian artists to paint the stories of Jews in Albania during WWII. So I brought a lot of money to the ministry. And there were people who went to the ministry [to complain], even the director of this enterprise called the Center for the Creation of Artworks (Qendra e Realizimit të Veprave të Artit, QRVA), it was a foundry where they cast sculptures in bronze, and administratively it was in charge of the gallery [where I worked]. So the director of the center went to the ministry and said: "Eleni has contact with foreigners and she gets books from them." Because the primary clients of the Art Salon were ambassadors and people working in the foreign embassies. And they did give me books, art books. So the Minister [of Culture] called me to his office, together with the director. At the time I kept a diary of everything I did at work every day, so I took that with me. The director started talking about the books, and I answered that yes of course I had talked with them and received books from them, but that this was my job: to talk to the clients, this is why I had been hired. Then he accused me of taking money from foreigners. But the cashier of the gallery was

the niece of the director, and I said that I couldn't possibly have taken any money because I did not touch the money – she was the one who worked with the money. Then the Minister told the director: “You should be kissing Eleni's hands, for all the money she has brought in for the state... so leave her alone...”.

Later, the 90s came, when everybody was thinking about how to profit or to steal something. One of the employees of the Ministry of Culture wanted to take this gallery [the Art Salon] for themselves. It was one of the directors in the ministry, and together with some Italians, they wanted to privatize it and turn it into a supermarket. They told me I needed to leave my job because the space would be used for a different purpose. They sent an Italian architect to study the space. I talked to him, and he confirmed that they wanted to turn it into a commercial space, and he even told me the names of the people involved. So I wrote an article about this whole situation. Then this director in the ministry swore they would take me to court for slander, but I had the Italian architect's testimony. When the Minister found out about it, he got furious. So the Art Salon was saved, and it was integrated into the National Gallery of Arts, where I started to work.

V.B.: What year was it?

E.L.: In 1991 or 1992, just after the end of the regime.

V.B.: Was it a difficult time?

E.L.: Very difficult. It was like being punched in the face,

and everything turning around 180 degrees. I started working as a researcher in the National Gallery of Arts, in the research department. My job was to carry out studies on Albanian and foreign painters in the institution's archive. This was a department that – in the history of the National Gallery – had sometimes functioned and sometimes had been closed down completely, but now it was fully staffed. In the beginning, we encountered many difficulties, because we had to change the way we thought about art, we had to change our way of looking at the works of our artists. I had to read a lot, including books on the philosophy of art. Because there were big gaps in our knowledge about the theory and history of art, about philosophy, etc. For example, the only thing we had learned in terms of philosophy was some knowledge on dialectical materialism. It was very strange because we studied Marx and Engels, and we had learned, for example, what they said about Düring but we knew nothing about what Düring originally said... So we only had half the knowledge about these theoretical matters. Everything was incomplete in our education... and furthermore we lacked any direct experience with artistic phenomena from the rest of the world. We had to change our way of thinking about education. So I kept looking for ways to fill these gaps in my knowledge, especially once we were able to get Internet access in the National Gallery.

I learned quickly about how to use technology, the computer, and it benefitted me a lot. It gave me the opportunity to create connections with galleries and museums around the world, and I was able to get invitations to them: for example, the Hyacinthe Rigaud Museum in France, the National Museum of

Art in Bucharest in Romania, the Museum of Modern Art in New York... I had the possibility to go to these institutions, as a guest. At the National Gallery [in Tirana] there are three or four artworks by Romanian artists, by Nicolae Grigorescu, Magdalena Rădulescu, and some others. There is also an artwork by Rigaud, the French painter. So I went to France and to Romania, and from my contact with researchers there I started to understand how much was missing from our knowledge... I was also able to get in contact with the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York because we wanted to start an education program using art, and they invited us. We went to New York for two weeks to see how MoMA organized and used the artworks in the museum's collection to work with children, families, and adults. They showed us how they generated revenue for the museum. We participated in a meeting of the museum board, members of which included the Lauder family, the Ford family, all these well-known families who supported the museum. I was there with Gëzim Qëndro, the director of the National Gallery, and Suzana Varvarica, a researcher at the gallery. So, we came back to the National Gallery and we started the education program, and it was amazing! This was in April of 2000. Whereas our visits to Romania, to Paris, and to the Rigaud Museum in Perpignan (thanks to the Courrant program organized by the French Embassy) took place in the 1990s.

So I started to learn about how a museum works, and how to utilize artworks in an educational sense, in relation to the public. We saw how works of art were displayed in museums, not just in exhibitions. We also learned about displaying works of art in various different media, like photography and painting,

under a single shared theme. From these experiences, we were able to organize an education program, which went very well. The participants were children of all ages, from the first years of elementary school up through high school. Then in 2000 I had the chance to create a project for a Center for Women Artists. But before that, in 1994, we had already founded an association of women artists in Tirana. It was [founded by] myself together with other women artists: Suzana Varvarica, Lumturi Blloshmi, and others.⁵ This was the first women artists organization in Albania, after 1990. And we had started to do a lot of activities. I can show you my CV: they are all there. And then in 2000 the Pro Helvetia foundation in Tirana wanted to finance a project for a cultural center. Thanks to the involvement of Vjollca Meçaj, a lawyer, I learned about this opportunity and I wrote up a project for a Cultural Center for Women Artists, which we called LindArt, because “linda” in Albanian means giving birth, and we meant this in the sense of giving birth to art: a little romantic, but... all the same, that was our mindset at the time...

Because of the support from Vjollca Meçaj, the director

⁵ List of the Founding Members of the Linda Association in 1993, and at the time of the association's legalization in 1994 – in alphabetical order: Anila Zajmi, born in Tirana in 1958; Djana Miziri, born in Durrës in 1951; Drita Saliu, born in Burrel in 1952; Eleni Laperi, born in Tirana in 1949; Fabiola Jozja, born in Tirana in 1973; Flutura Preka, born in Shkodër in 1970; Ikbal Beli, born in Tirana in 1950; Ikbal Kalaja, born in Shkodër in 1959; Ketil Jazexhiu, born in Tirana in 1950; Lindita Çapunji, born in Tirana in 1964; Lumturi Blloshmi, born in Tirana in 1944; Marjana Eski, born in Tirana in 1951; Mimoza Arapi (not found); Najada Hamza, born in Tirana in 1966; Raimonda Mato, born in Librazhd in 1957; Rikarda Nenshati, born in Shkodër in 1965; Silvana Nini, born in Tirana in 1969; Suzana Varvarica Kuka, born in Tirana in 1955; Xheneta Kadillari, born in Shkodër in 1959; and Zanafira Heta, born in Tirana in 1963.

of the foundation, Christian Zindel, approved the project I had drafted. We got the money, and that same year we found a venue and started to organize the space for the cultural center.⁶ It remained active until 2010, when I felt really tired because I had put in a lot of my own money and because there was so much corruption everywhere... [While we had the center] we did a lot of activities, several exhibitions in galleries and museums both in Albania and in other countries. But the first and most important exhibition we did was *Dare to Be Different*,⁷ organized in 2001 in the city of Fier. Thanks to help from our contact with the Slovenian philosopher Marina Gržinić, we were able to bring some of the best-known women artists from all over the Balkans. This was a really tiring exhibition [to organize], with a very small budget. In 2007, also from Pro Helvetia, I got support for a project called 5.6, which developed the program for a photography school. In the courses we organized for that project, we invited some internationally known photographers to teach young Albanian artists. We did several photographic exhibitions,

⁶ The address of the LindArt Cultural Center was: Qendra Kulturore LindArt / Projekt 5.6, Rruga “Kajo Karafili”, Nr. 54, Tiranë, Shqipëri.

⁷ The artists who participated in *Dare to be Different* were: Gulsun Karamustafa (Turkey), Sejla Kamerić (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Renata Poljak (Croatia), Rudina Xhaferri (Kosovo), Zake Prelvukaj (Kosovo), Merita Koci (Kosovo), Zvonka Simčić (Slovenia), Esra Alicavusoglu (Turkey), Esra Ersen (Turkey), Secil Yersel (Turkey), Tanja Ostojić (Serbia), Vesna Duni (North Macedonia), Irena Paskali (North Macedonia), Aliki Moschis (Greece), Eleni Theofilaktou (Greece), Adelina Popnedeleva (Bulgaria), Alla Georgieva (Bulgaria), Marilena Preda Sanc (Romania), Tinkuta Pary (Romania), Diana Miziri (Albania), Lumturi Blloshmi (Albania), Suela Muça (Albania), Doris Sala (Albania), Elsa Martini (Albania), Merita Spahija (Albania), Rudina Memaga (Albania), Mira Brojka (Albania), Flutura Lace (Albania), Suzana Varvarica (Albania), and Riketa Mamaj (Albania).

and also the international Sotiri photography prize, which was done with the support of the Korça municipality.

V.B.: How was the Center for Women Artists perceived?

E.L.: In the beginning, when we had financial support, we did all kinds of activities, ranging from exhibitions with professional artists, and workshops with Albanian and foreign women artists, to literary events, work with children, etc. We had support and people wanted to come when we organized events. We had a big audience. But this only lasted as long as we were able to get enough financing to pay the rent, the people who worked there, and also the guests we brought in. We never got any support from the state.

V.B.: What did people think of feminism at that time in Albania?

E.L.: It was not received very well, because it met with resistance from our male colleagues. They turned this idea of having a feminist movement into something funny, a joke, so that women artists did not want to express themselves in terms of a movement for women's rights. They were interested in doing just art, but not in calling themselves feminist...

V.B.: So there was no discussion about the role of the woman, for instance, in the exhibitions or in their work?

E.L.: There was, and there were discussions in the

trainings, and in meetings with various women, with women from other countries: Canada, elsewhere in the Balkans, Switzerland... We had these conversations, about the condition of women, of women artists, and about the reasons for these conditions, about how to get out of this situation.

V.B.: But then it was never pushed forward by the context here?

E.L.: Maybe because activism was seen as something that had no connection to art. There were works of art that expressed the desires of the woman as an artist, but there wasn't a desire for these works to be presented as part of a feminist movement.

V.B.: Was there awareness about the existing literature on the feminist movement?

E.L.: Nothing directly, really... there was a workshop, for example, conceptualized by the artist Tanja Ostojić, where she discussed the situation of women in art. But the participants did not want to express themselves as activists for the feminist movement. There was always this kind of...

V.B.: These were also the years when the Tirana Biennial happened... Did you participate?

E.L.: Not directly. In order to create a forum for discussion about various subjects, we had organized these discussions, which we called "Plato's Dinners". The workshop

with Tanja Ostojić, which had included a series of discussions around the dinner table, coincided with the opening of the Onufri prize exhibition. Tanja talked with [curator] Edi Muka, and one of these discussions around the table was included in the Onufri programming, inside the National Gallery. But this was part of Tanja's work.

V.B.: But the Tirana Biennial was organized by Edi Muka and the National Gallery of Arts. Did they invite the Center for Women Artists to participate? Did they recognize the fact that it existed?

E.L.: No, as I said, we only ended up there thanks to Tanja's initiative.

V.B.: Let's say the Tirana Biennial was organized today. In all likelihood, they would acknowledge [the Center], if only to be politically correct.

E.L.: It's possible. Perhaps something has changed in our mindset in general. Now, perhaps it's different – although I don't know the contemporary art scene very well, since I'm focused on a different time period in my studies. But it has always been difficult for women artists in Albania. Before the 90s, and at least for a couple of decades after, women artists were treated as "second-rate artists". You could clearly feel this when you went to ask for financial support. Just like before the 90s, when most of the recipients of creative sabbaticals (*leje krijuese*), who had studios and ateliers, were male artists, while only a few women

had studios to work in, and generally two or three people worked in the same studio... What I experienced first-hand was the impossibility of finding support for activities with women artists, at the point when the funding from the Pro Helvetia foundation ended. This impossibility [of finding funding] was also what led to the closure of the LindArt Cultural Center of Women Artists in 2010.

VJOLLCA MEÇAJ

6 June 2022

*The conversation took place at the Academy of Others,
behind the Jordan Misja Artistic Lyceum⁸*

Vjollca Meçaj: So, where do we start from?

Valentina Bonizzi: Let's start with you.

V.M.: What do you want to know about me?

V.B.: I would like to know your first memories of Tirana.
Are you from here?

V.M.: Yes, I'm from Tirana. Actually, I was born in Durrës because my father was in the military and at the time I was born he used to move around a lot. I was born in Durrës but I don't remember much, as I was only a few months old when we moved to Shkodër, and I remember only a few things from there as well because I was only 4 years old when my parents moved to Tirana, and they have moved again since then. I attended school in Tirana, from elementary school all the way through the end of university. I used to live in Durrës Street (Rruga e Durrësit), and I went to the Qemal Stafa School, one of the best schools in Tirana. After high school, I studied law. My faculty was where the Engineering faculty is today. It was good for me:

⁸ Translated from Italian into English by Valentina Bonizzi.

I had a red bike because it was easy to move around Tirana, there were very few cars. And if I think about it now, it was beautiful during the spring when the greenery came out, because I was taking the road by myself to get to the law school. It's a nice memory that comes to me now. When I did my studies, not everyone could go to university.

V.B.: When were you born?

V.M.: In 1951, I'm old. But I'd like to live life until I have no more energy left! So, I finished high school in 1968 and 4 years after that I graduated [university]. So, as I was telling you, during that time not everyone could go to university. There were two criteria. The first was the political status of your family: so, for instance, those who had relatives who were condemned by the regime, even if they were excellent students, could not continue their studies. The second criteria were your high school results. So I decided to study law. To be honest, I did not know much about the subject, but when I started [my studies] I felt it was in line with my spirit, in relation to social justice. After studying, the state would offer you a job – you did not choose your job. So they assigned me a position in Vlorë, to start a career in procurement. It was there that I met my husband, Edmond. After one year, he was transferred to Berat.

So we moved there together, and after 8 years we came to Tirana. My husband came first, and then I followed him when I had my first child. In Tirana, I left my career in the tribunal and I became a legal expert for the Ministry of Education and Culture, which were joined together back then. The Minister at the time

was a lady, Tefta – Tefta Cami. After 3 or 4 years the government decided to divide the ministries, one for culture and the other for education, and I chose to work in the Ministry of Culture. The Ministry of Culture and the Arts was a new stage in my life. I worked there for 7 years and when the regime changed, I was still in that position. I worked with two of the acting ministers during the democratic turn in Albania; the first was Preç Zogaj – he was a poet, a very open person. In that ministry not many people understood about legislation, as they were all artists and most of those who had worked in the ministry before democracy were sent away. This was in 1991.

V.B.: So, in 1991 you remained at the Ministry of Culture?

V.M.: I was there before as a lawyer and as secretary general, and then I remained there. They needed someone and I was the only one who knew the legislation on relevant matters very well. To bring in someone [new] to learn everything from scratch was difficult; many people had difficulties in finding their way. I also remember that the ministry was on Durrës Street, where the Ministry of Education is now. I was assigned to go and understand how a ministry would work in a different system, in this case a democracy. They needed someone who understood the organizational principles as well as the legislation. So, they sent me to Italy. So I went to Rome, and I was hosted by different departments at the Ministry of Culture there. And I knew Italian; I learned it by myself.

V.B.: Do you remember when you went to Rome, which month it was?

V.M.: It must have been August or September because I remember we were still wearing t-shirts. And I remember very well where I was staying, it was at a hotel in Piazza Venezia called Tre Papi. It was located in a small street that opened into Piazza Venezia. They instructed me: you will sleep here, here there is a restaurant and you can eat there three times a day and all you have to do is sign, and then here in front there is a station, you have to take line 64, and they gave me a bunch of tickets.

The first day, they accompanied me to take me to the department of the Ministry. And I remember the Minister or the Deputy Minister saying in meetings with all the managers: Vjollca is from the Albanian Ministry of Culture, and she will have to learn from all the departments, so she will be your guest. So I was taking notes all day and I talked to them, and I was taking time off on the weekends.

V.B.: Do you remember who the Minister of Culture was at the time?

V.M.: No, it was a long time ago.⁹

V.B.: How long were you there for?

V.M.: Around a month and a half.

⁹ This was during Giulio Andreotti's government; he resigned in 1992.

V.B.: How did you feel regarding the things you were learning?

V.M.: First of all, I felt so much responsibility that it scared me enormously. Just thinking of going back to Albania and having the responsibility to reform the Ministry was for me a huge challenge. I was thinking that it was not easy, because you can observe some things, and you can pass them on and reorganize, but it was difficult: it could not be done immediately because there was a lot of legislation that had to change, and there were legal norms that had to be organized first.

And so that was the first step, but results did not come immediately. The main issue was that art was not a public good anymore. Instead, it was private property and that was the main difference, and myself, as a lawyer, I understood that we first had to change the constitution, the civil code, and to organize the legislation about private property – both material and intellectual – which was missing, because during the regime this aspect of the law was not developed.

There were some forms of private property during the [communist] regime: some people had private houses, but they were small things. The situation was very different. I went back to Italy again, to get training about writing the first legislation on intellectual rights. I worked on the first law about this, which was very limited compared to the Italian one because our constitution had not changed yet; it changed in 1998.

Even in terms of civil society, we worked with a law from the communist regime. There was a simple law about non-governmental organizations, which was not a very developed

field, but it existed as a law and for 4 or 5 years we used that law. I registered the Soros Foundation, since it was under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture. I prepared the documentation and checked everything; I then presented it to the Minister of Culture and he signed the decree. It was the Ministry of Culture that offered the Soros Foundation a space in the Pyramid, where the Enver Hoxha Museum used to be. On the first floor, to the right, there was the Soros Foundation office. The Hoxha museum had been inside the Pyramid, the one that is being rebuilt right now, and after the fall of the regime it got emptied. All the things in the museum disappeared and I don't know where they put them. Afterwards, they decided to put something else in this building – like a commercial center? I'm not sure what to call it – and we ended up placing Soros on the first floor.

V.B.: So, Soros was inside the Pyramid – that's interesting...

V.M.: Then they took a small villa because there was resistance from the political managers of the government as, in my opinion, they did not understand the importance of civil society in democracy.

V.B.: So, you left the ministry in 1993?

V.M.: Yes.

V.B.: And then you became a lawyer?

V.M.: Yes. I started to work as a lawyer; I used to work with Italian companies because Italian businesses were the first to arrive [in Albania after the end of communism]. Luckily, they were not interested in going to court, so they were asking me how to solve their problems in a legal sense, because you need a lot of time and money for trials. All went well until – in 1997 – there was the civil war: the government collapsed and all Albanians lost their savings. People lost what they had, and the businesses left. In that period, I was working with other colleagues who were members of the Association of Women Lawyers because during this time all the law institutions needed resources.

V.B.: When was Association of Women Lawyers founded? In which year?

V.M.: That was in 1994. But before that I was also a member of the first association for gender equality, Refleksione (Reflections). I was still working for the Ministry of Culture, so I helped register Refleksione in 1992.

V.B.: What was Refleksione?

V.M.: The director of the National Library, Valdet Sala – it was her initiative. We were around 11 women: there was Prof. Andromaqi Gjergji, Delina Fico, Filloreta Kodra, etc.

V.B.: I would like to read the statute.

V.M.: Yes, we did a good job, since we wanted to offer

consultancy to politicians on how to develop women's policies because we were all women. Not only women with an education, but we also had a good knowledge of the state, and good contacts abroad, so we could offer some ideas that came from citizens outside the parliament.

V.B.: I would like to ask you, in relation to Eleni's association [the Linda Association]: you knew each other before, right?

V.M.: Yes, we knew each other from secondary school. We were not in the same class because Eleni is a year older than me, but we knew each other because there were not many students at our school.

V.B.: And do you remember the activities they did?

V.M.: No, this was about the Association of Women Lawyers, not Refleksione, a group that dealt more with politics. We created this association for women's development on equal rights. One of the services that we offered was free legal representation for women in need. We were offering a lawyer to those that could not pay for one, and we would also register associations. So Eleni knew through her other colleagues that with me, she could officially register their association at no cost.

V.B.: I understand.

V.M.: Myself and others participated, as a group, to

create a new legislation for non-profit organizations. There were American specialists who came to help us, and this was a big problem – because if you look at it today, at the time we were embracing any help from anyone coming from outside [the country]. But there is a big difference in the jurisprudence concepts between common law and European legislation. We followed, and still do, the European principles of legislation. Instead, when this assistance came from the United States, this created a contradiction in the legal concepts. So we prepared the law considering both legislative frameworks, the American and the European.

V.B.: So you met Eleni a while later?

V.M.: Yes, she said she was about to create the association [of women artists] and she brought the main principles they had for this organization: what they would do, how it was organized. The main functions of the board were already written in the law. So, all this had to be transformed into documentation: the statute, a deed of incorporation, and the list of founders. All these documents had to be presented to the court for approval, according to the new law. After that, this association had to be registered. So, we prepared all the documentation and we went before the judge, with the names of the founders, and we presented to the court all objectives and future activities of the organization. After the approval, we came back with the tribunal's decision on the organization.

REFLEKSIONE

16 February 2023

Interview conducted at Boulevard Art & Media Institute

*In conversation: Valdet Sala, Vjollca Meçaj, Delina Fico
– founders of Refleksione (Reflections)*

Delina Fico: I will tell you because I was the one coordinating the network of the initial women's groups in Albania. I was the first one coordinating the Women's Center, and the Women's Center coordinated the first informal network of women's groups in Albania. There were 12 of these groups. Eleni's group was one of them, and we didn't have much to do with her other than the fact that she would come to these meetings and she was sometimes – though not always – part of the joint activities. I'm not sure if she was part of the joint efforts we took related to the first law on reproductive rights. So we didn't deal too much with each other. I don't remember – do you remember any joint activities with Eleni's organization?

Valdet Sala: I do remember following their activities.

D.F.: What I'm saying is that the way Refleksione worked won't help you understand how Eleni's organization worked.

Valentina Bonizzi: It's not about understanding how the Women Artists Association worked, but about understanding the context in which a women's association developed in those times. So, they developed for their own reasons...

V.S.: When I say that the first time we [Refleksione] met in the National Library is – for example, Vjollca was not there earlier, but she was not in that meeting in the library because that meeting in the library was not official. Because they used the library so much, it was the right place to meet with Delina [Fico], with Mirela [Kumbaro], and where we met officially to create the organization was at my house. It was downstairs, yeah? We didn't have much space, so downstairs was the kitchen and we used the cellar and that was the first meeting of all the members. I mean all women together. But the library was, you know – I'm meeting with Delina and we were kind of looking into what she is, what she represents, what's her vision for the future – so those were kind of individual meetings because we were not sure how it would go. You can't establish something if you don't have people who fit into the same philosophy, desires, and vision for the future. So, they were individual meetings. I was with her because we were together in the same big institutions, but the approach we developed came very gradually, in a very spontaneous way...

Vjollca Meçaj: Maybe in the first 1 or 2 months, but later we were obliged to register and then the legal story began.

V.B.: I wanted to understand what happened before, because with this part of the story I understand the necessity. I'm curious, when you say the same philosophy and the same vision, what do you mean?

V.S.: What I meant was that we were in a period of deep

changes. I was an idealist: I believed in the ideals of socialism and then you saw that in practice it didn't work. So it was a difficult period, and you had to reflect on the inside – what had you done right and what had you done wrong in your life, and what was your individual responsibility for this? How do you want to be in the future? So, you realize that you build the future, but it's not only you that builds the future – the community's attitude is something that might change for better or for worse and you can't be alone in this. You have to be realistic because things don't go the way you like it, because I wanted socialism to be a reality. So, even today when there are people who dream of it, I don't because I lived through it.

But, you know, it was an approach that all of us decided, and we were different generations, and that's why I thought that we are all reflecting on our experiences and what we are and what others are. I was so – not curious in the real meaning of curiosity, because I lived through adolescence in my family – but I wanted to explore what they wanted. My feeling is that you are yourself when you know who you are and when others know who you are. That means that before the age of 30 this is not going to happen because you don't know who you are, and the others don't know who you are either. So, I wanted this young generation that were all under 30 to kind of remake my own personal research according to their will, their dreams for the future. I found out that they were better than me. So probably in the group that was developed I was the oldest one.

D.F.: Another interesting thing was that, at the very beginning, we were doing more about the things that we thought

were important. We were not so much influenced by what was going on in the real world at the time with the women's movement. I would say in 1991, '92 and '93. Later, yes. In one of our first activities, we translated the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women because we thought it was important: it was a legal document that was crucial. So we focused on rights because we thought it was important at that time, so then later, probably in '93 and '94, we connected more with women's groups.

V.S.: We were not the kind of people who thought globally and worked locally.

D.F.: Although, I remember that there was this German group that we had a connection with at the beginning and that helped Refleksione – but they were also a simple group, they were a group of supporters. I actually wanted to say something that is good about the women's movement: we were not established because donors wanted us to be, or because somebody told us that it was the thing to do. At the beginning, we came together because we felt the need to. Even the issues we focused on were, in a way... the actions were on a small scale because we went with what we knew. It's not like somebody came to us and told us to do it because they were going to give us money. That's why I said that that was the case in '93 and '94, because [by then] we had ideas about the projects and the funding, but at the beginning Refleksione was about getting together and doing something. Anyway, we decided on the programs because we were obligated to present to the Ministry

not only the willingness to create an organization [but also what its function would be]. We decided on some points such as the reason why we created the association, etc.

V.S.: We were kind of identifying the needs, but anyway, we could go on for hours about that. But Valentina, tell us what you have on your mind.

V.B.: What were the most urgent needs for the association and for Albania at that time?

D.F.: So, are you saying the most urgent needs for the association per se, or the most urgent needs for women's rights?

V.B.: Women's rights, and how they were reflected in the association's work.

V.S.: This speaks for itself because what we developed was what we thought was needed. So we started with information: informing women about their rights. And we started with violence, which developed another dimension. You know, their rights were tied to legal rights, and this was kind of strategic but based on the needs at the time.

D.F.: The Refleksione Women's Association was one of the first groups, but there were other groups as well: you had the Forum of Independent Women, which was basically established by a group of women leaders that were active in the Women's Union (BGSh) during communist times, and then a little bit later

on there was the [Women] Artists Association, then the Disabled Women's Association, and then there was the Formerly Persecuted Women's Association – so you had a number of organizations that were established between 1991 and '95, and I think there were altogether 12 organizations. In this network, there were 12 groups because we also represented the Women's Section of the Democratic Party, the Women's Section of the Socialist Party – with Merita Ndreka – and I don't remember the other parties. Then there was also the Association of Businesswomen that Flutura Laknori established.

So, basically, you had a number of groups by the end of '95, around 12 groups, or 10 if we leave out the sections of the political parties, which covered a wide array of women's rights issues. All these issues that came up were important: disabled women's issues were important; businesswomen started to get organized; artist women started to get organized; and then you had the formerly politically persecuted women that had different rights and different issues. So, this is to say that Refleksione was not covering everything because there were also other players in the field. For example, the Useful to Albanian Women Association did a lot of humanitarian work. They found some donors from Switzerland and they started to distribute food to the poor, which Refleksione didn't do because it was more of an advocacy group. Refleksione created all these services but as initiatives that went on their own: Refleksione remained an advocacy group.

I was the first coordinator of the Women's Center that was created in 1994 – it became functional in August 1994. It was funded by the Soros Foundation, with \$14,000. There was

no Women's Center before that, and in just one year, in 1995, we had \$100,000, not just from Soros but from various donors. We did not have funding from the government at the time, but there was cooperation with them under the Ministry of Social Affairs, which has changed its name several times. Anyway, there was always a department there that dealt with gender issues and now it's just a director. Women's groups in Albania, including Refleksione, have always cooperated with them. At that time, there was no funding from the government, and I don't even know if there ever was funding from the government.

I knew nothing about women's rights before 1990, that's why I'm saying I was born a feminist. I never read the feminist texts. I might have – I knew something about civil rights...

V.S.: The 8th of March is related to Clara Zetkin.

D.F.: Yeah, but I didn't know much about the feminist movement. I knew about the plight of women's emancipation because it was also a main theme in communist projects, because they used to talk about women's emancipation and women's education. Actually, my mother used to be the Head of the Women's Union unit at the neighborhood level in the 'Bllok', so that was my first exposure to violence against women. I remember that there was this guy who was a professor, an English teacher, and his wife came to my mom because he was violent. He had burnt a cigarette on her neck, and my mom took her in and went to speak to his family. Anyway, I hadn't heard of Gloria Steinem or the wave of feminism, but the discussion of the emancipation of women was present because it was part of

the ideology. That's what I would say. I compare our experience to women's groups in ex-Yugoslavia because there was no interruption of development related to the world in ex-Yugoslavia. Their work was very much informed by feminist texts and that wasn't the case with us in the beginning; we just thought that we had to do something.

V.S.: I had contacts before from some movement organizations in Italy. Do you remember?

V.M.: In my experience – I also participated in the study trip to the United States, but I had contacts with the Italian association because the Italian ambassador's wife was a lawyer. She was accompanying her husband but she didn't have any engagements there. I don't remember well how we met. At the time, the Association of Women Lawyers had already been created and she had contacted them, so she intervened and we got together a group of [Albanian] women lawyers and traveled to Italy where we contacted Italian lawyers who were part of the feminist movement. At that time, like Delina mentioned, Albania prepared internal legislation, but it also needed to adhere to international conventions because previously, during communist times, we didn't have to do that. The first convention was the Convention for the Protection of Children's Rights and the second was the one on Violence Against Women. It was exactly the time when politics needed the feminist movement. We are talking about 1992-1993.

V.B.: When she [Vjollca] came to my house, she looked

at all the LindArt documents because we needed to have all the information and she tidied up everything and she said that artists don't know how to deal with documents! Then she worked out that there was one missing.

V.M.: At the Ministry of Culture, it was me who read the laws and saw everything in black and white. The artists were like: "And you with your laws!"

V.B.: Eleni didn't remember things very well, so through the documents we found out that they met in 1993, so these documents help us understand. But yes, I am also very interested in the translations as well. Did you organize protests for the 8th of March in Refleksione?

V.S.: Yes, because like Delina mentioned, the Women's Center turned into a reference point, so even if the idea started from a different organization. Later there was an open council where everyone brought ideas because we understood that you couldn't do anything alone. An association couldn't gather a large group.

D.F.: I think the first protest was the one on environmental issues. Do you remember, the one where we took a picture in front of City Hall? Probably in 1993-1994. Wait, not 1994 – it was in 1995.

V.S.: The 8th of March was a day of celebration during the entire communist period, so in our culture it was not a day of

protest. So there was not any rationalizing: people celebrated it because that's how it had been done before. It was not something on our agenda, honestly.

V.B.: Where was the Women's Center?

D.F.: In Tirana, near Myslym Shyri Street (Rruga "Myslym Shyri"). Now the Women's Center is called the Gender Alliance for Development Center, near the 'Bllok'. It's one of the leading women's groups in Albania.

V.B.: I am interested to know about the literature you used as a reference.

D.F.: I would say that initially it was the international conventions. The first thing we did was to translate into Albanian the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (which has already been mentioned) and we even organized an event to promote the convention at the Pyramid, at the American Center of Culture – we used their space. So, initially it was those texts. There weren't any feminist texts that we would refer to, and although the positions were all feminist positions, we didn't have a strong feminist awareness at the beginning. Not only among the women at Refleksione, but among all the women's groups in Albania. There were some women, not in Refleksione, but in other groups that didn't want to be labeled as feminist because there was this perception that feminists hate men and they are radicals. Not only Refleksione, but other groups in Albania had women who were feminists in

the way they were acting and living – but there wasn't a clear statement of feminist consciousness and belonging. The narrative was about women's rights. If you look at the literature, the texts, the posters, you wouldn't find the word 'feminism' there – that happened later.

The Forum of Independent Women, and Diana Çuli – she's a well-known writer – they started at some point, I don't know the year, a program to translate women's literature on feminism. This was in the 90s, probably 1996 or 1997. They translated some good books and literature, but it was later. Late 90s I would say, but I don't know. She would know the dates, but it was probably started by the Forum of the Independent Women, and Diana Çuli.

V.M.: I want to mention here a publication that was important in the judicial sense. There was a journal that we published at the Center for Women's Education because the professor at the university had recommended it to their students since it treated women's rights in the legal sense: in terms of violence against women and the application of the conventions. I don't remember the title, but I will bring it next time.

V.B.: I have to write this article, but the research is ongoing and I hope that we can meet again. Maybe for the 8th of March or for the exhibitions that will open in June.¹⁰

¹⁰ The exhibition and symposium of *Diaries: The Archive as Encounter* opened on the 27th of June 2023. The symposium took place over three days, 27th, 28th, and 29th of June. To learn more, click on the following link: <https://bulevard.al/en/whats-on/>.

How to start a Calendar...

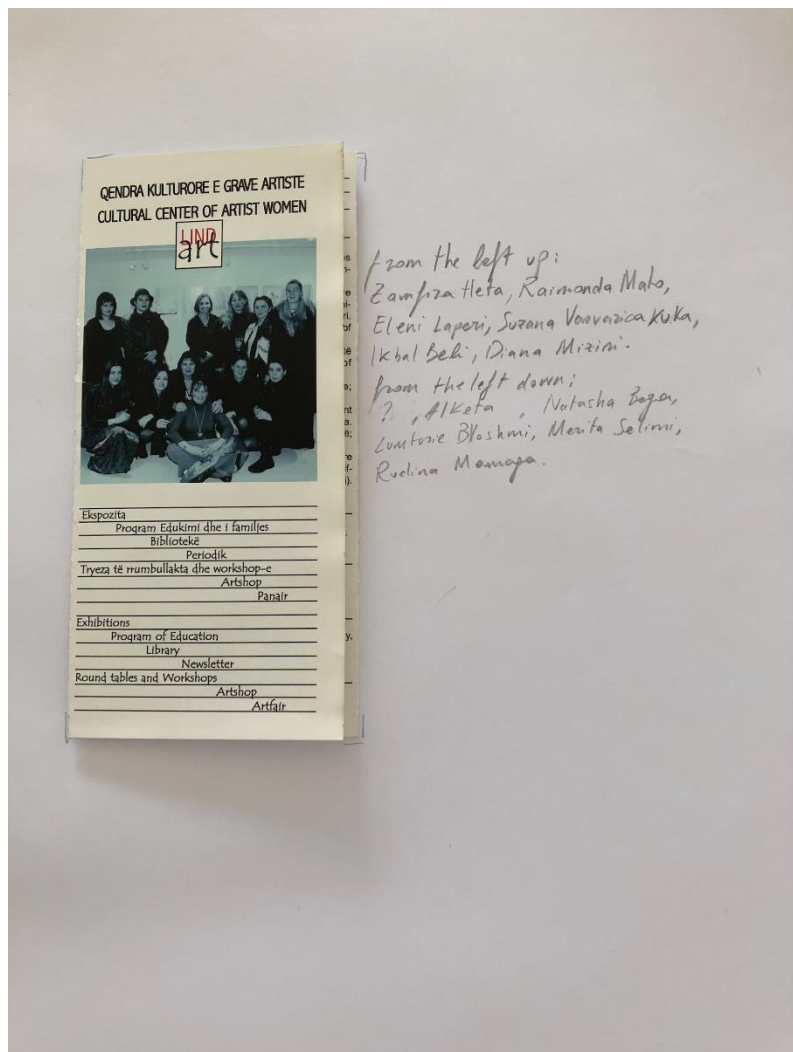


Fig. 1. Archival process of the LindArt Archive at the Academy of Others, 2022, photo by Valentina Bonizzi. Courtesy of the author.



Fig. 2. Still frame from the video documentation of the first gathering of the LindArt artists on the 17th of May 2022. The artists are shown watching the 1994 RTSh documentary on the Linda Association. Courtesy of Boulevard Art & Media Institute and the Academy of Others.



Fig. 3. The Photo Album, *Diaries: Lindart & the Albanian Women Artists Association*, 2022. Photo by Indrit Skëndaj. Courtesy of Boulevard Art and Media Institute.

How to start a Calendar...



Fig. 4. *Dare to Be Different* poster at Boulevard Art & Media Institute Lab and Library, part of the exhibition of *Diaries: Lindart & the Albanian Women Artists Association*, 2022. Photo by Indrit Skëndaj. Courtesy of Boulevard Art & Media Institute.



Fig. 5. Installation shot of *Diaries: Lindart & the Albanian Women Artists Association*, 2022. Shown in the image: The Calendars. Photo by Indrit Skëndaj. Courtesy Boulevard Art & Media Institute.