

## D.M., THE ARABIAN GULF CHAPTER

**Isak Berbic**

**2 May 2012**

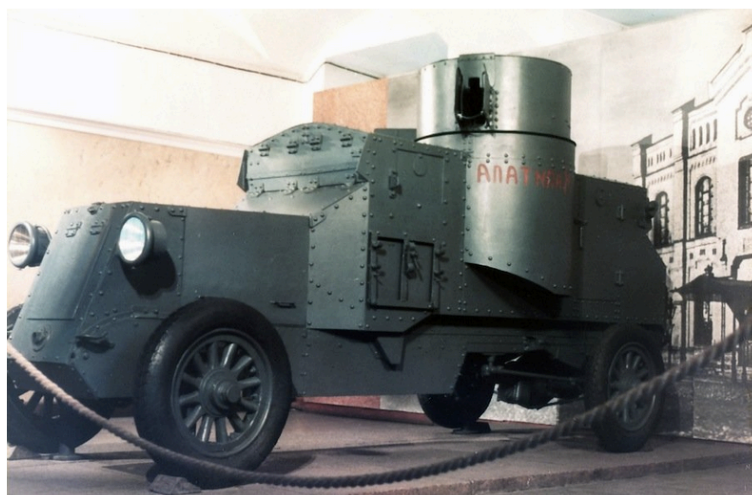
The work of Sarajevo-born, Sharjah-based artist Isak Berbic deals with history, tragedy, exile, and the limits of representation. His recent artwork investigates the overlaps of documentary and fiction alongside the complex polemics of contested politics and elided histories. For Ibraaz, Berbic presents *D.M., The Arabian Gulf Chapter*, a series of images about a protagonist based on stories from his uncle, who worked in the region in the 1970s, and looks at how such narratives are imbricated – through fact and fiction – into broader historical events.

### D.M., THE ARABIAN GULF CHAPTER

*D.M., The Arabian Gulf Chapter* is about the work and travels of engineer 'D.M.' in the Gulf during the region's construction boom. This project assembles photographic material, drawn from private, found and media images, and tells a story of expatriate life, political conflict, a rare vacation, and life back home. The narrative, presented as a sequence of photographs and footnotes, records fragments from the life of the engineer D.M., an expert in thermostable materials for the production of industrial chimney stacks.

D.M.'s work took him, and his camera, through the Gulf, and on into Libya, Lebanon, East Germany, Italy, the 'Non-Aligned' states, and Africa between 1970s and the 1990s. Implicating historical events as understood through an individual's history, and thereafter complicating the binary of fiction and nonfiction, Berbic

proposes the history of a person being formed by global politics. Speculating on the visualisation of personal and social histories, and the cultural, ideological, socio-political and aesthetic production of memory, *D.M., The Arabian Gulf Chapter* recalls a region upon which history has written and rewritten itself through the thwarted tales of individual ambitions and personal disenchantments.



Isak Berbic

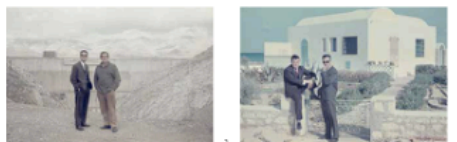


Fig 1. On this particular visit engineer D.M. surveyed the construction process of a hydroelectric center near the Dead Sea. D.M.'s construction site was another 100 kilometers into the Jordanian desert.

Fig 2. The host stood outside of the frame. The photograph features only the two countrymen.

Fig 3. D.M. did not intend to report on the border incident before reaching his room and briefcase.

All images from:

Isak Berbic

*From the Life of Engineer D.M.*, 2012

Photographs

All images courtesy of the artist

A section of this project, *D.M., The Arabian Gulf Chapter*, was in part originally commissioned and produced by the Dubai Culture & Arts Authority.



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## About the author

**Isak Berbic** is a photography, moving image and performance artist from Sarajevo, currently based in Sharjah, UAE. Isak Berbic studied Photography, Film and Electronic Media at the University of Illinois at Chicago. In Chicago, he practiced art, worked in theatre, and was art director of a political monthly magazine. In 2007 he moved to the Middle East, where he teaches photography and media at the College of Fine Arts and Design, University of Sharjah. Berbic has exhibited his work at the Singapore Biennale 2008; Dojima River Biennale 2009, Osaka, Japan; Jatiwangi Art Festival 2008, Indonesia; The First International Photography Biennial, Tehran, Iran, 2007; Normalization in Honor of Nikola Tesla, Galerija Nova, WHW Zagreb, Croatia, 2004. He participated in Expanding Documentary: Sound, Image, Text 2011 the 8th Biennial Conference held in Aotearoa New Zealand; the International Symposium on Electronic Art, ISEA 2008 Singapore; Take a Deep Breath: an interdisciplinary symposium, Tate Modern, London, UK, 2007. In 2010, Isak Berbic was an artist in residence at the Transart Institute, Berlin, Germany. His solo exhibition *From the Life of Engineer D.M.* premiered at Novi Hram, The Jewish Museum in Sarajevo, July 2011. In 2012 he participated in the Sharjah March Meeting, Art Dubai and the Sikka Art Fair.