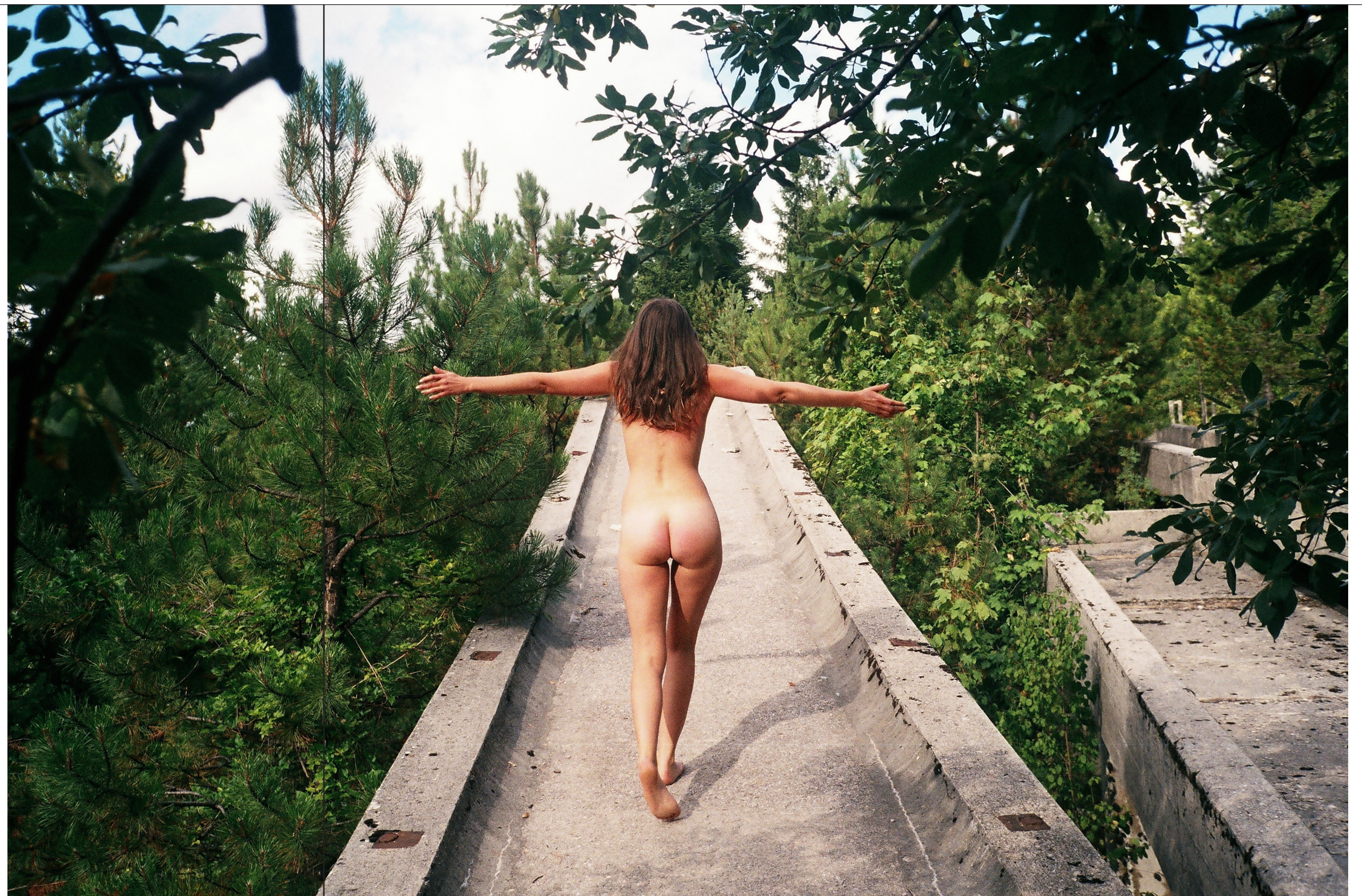


MARIANNE MARIĆ



Olympic Bobsleigh Tracks
Series of 15 photographs,
Analog photography,
Trebević, 2012

Tito's Tank
Analog photography,
Sarajevo, 2012
(following spread)







French Women
Analog photography,
Series of 20 photographs
Musée de Belfort, 2014

Naked girls on chariots, facing the stuffed bear of a dictator, curled up in the folds of French flags, soft and irreverent curves, like impromptu appearances in a world marked by history, one which Hegel says will end with the evidence of the Spirit. Marianne Marić is a French artist who has worked between Paris, Berlin, Mulhouse, Sarajevo and Belgrade. Her photographs bear witness to a joyous force, like the triumph of desire.

The young women you have photographed are often in places marked by politics and history, their presence is incongruous. How did you photograph these images in Sarajevo, particularly in the room with Tito's bear? Why did you choose to work around this geographical area of Europe and its history?

My father was a Bosnian Serb, he never taught me to speak Serbian, I never went to Yugoslavia. I also have an older sister who died. She had gone to Paris to become a model. It happened when I was a child and my family did not talk about it. I needed to understand my family history. In 2011, during

Tito's Bear
Analog photography,
Sarajevo, 2012

an exhibition, I met Pierre Courtin who is a gallery owner in Sarajevo. Looking at my work, he noticed my surname and raised the question of my origins. That was the trigger, I decided to leave for Sarajevo for five months. I went on a bus with very little money. I first spent a lot of time studying at the library. I wanted to understand why there were people nostalgic for the former Yugoslavia and Tito, while my father was saying negative things about it. I also talked a lot with the historian Nicolas Moll. I wanted to be precise, to appropriate this part of the story. Only then did I start taking photographs. Tito's bear was in the Sarajevo Museum of Natural History and it was his favorite animal. Today this museum is closed for lack of means.

One has the sense that the vitality of these young women ruptures with the military elements, as if beauty could make a mockery of the past and bloom again over the ruins of a political history. Is there anything that beauty can wring from history?

The Roses of Sarajevo, the title of the series of photographs I made there, has this ambiguity. At first glance, we think of something light-hearted, almost silly, when in fact it is the name they give to the bomb craters that scar the city. These are the traces of the war. Yet my photographs also allow those who look at them to realize that Bosnia is no longer at war. I value humor although it is never a calculated thing. There is also a happy youth in Sarajevo, artists who today live from their work and enjoy international recognition. It is a city where I loved living. On the other hand, I find the fate of Belgrade difficult, since the Serbs are considered the villains of its history. I hope to return to work in Belgrade soon. People are unhappy with the cuts that were made following the break-up of the former Yugoslavia.

One can imagine that it was at times dangerous to take these photographs.

It was sometimes complicated. I wanted to avoid places that had become touristy. One of the photographs was taken on a Bobsleigh track in Sarajevo. It is an important venue that is reminiscent of both the 1984 Olympic Games, which was a moment of pride for Yugoslavia, but also, these Bobsleigh tracks that surround the city became strategic during the war that followed. They enabled the siege and were mined. Even today, there are still mines there. So for this photograph, we had to pay the taxi driver handsomely as he did not want to go there and was afraid for us. It was also necessary for us to remain in the part that had been tagged, indicating that the area was free from explosives. I work according to different processes, sometimes things are thought out very early on and I do research for

a very long time before making an image. But it also happens that shooting is more spontaneous, I also do street photography. The photograph of the four naked girls in front of the French flags was made very quickly. I was with friends at the Citadel Museum in Belfort and we were waiting for a meeting. The idea came up suddenly and I did not have much time to put it in place.

Are the heroines in your photographs close friends? How do you choose them?

Some are close friends. Others are girls I meet and who inspire me. I never photograph professional models. I cannot define what attracts me and justifies my choices, I only know that beauty is absolutely everywhere. There is a relationship of trust and kindness with people. At first I never photographed their faces, that came gradually. I need the girl to understand that she is not the one who is on the photograph, but that it is a creation, that there is a gap with reality, that the person enters my universe. Even if the bodies vary, basically, it's always my eye, it's always the same girl, the one I photograph.

The bodies in your images are always feminine, young, vigorous, there is here an image of femininity that is both humorous and powerful. Eroticism is also an important aspect of your imagery. Have you been influenced by a specific form of feminism?

It's tricky because I do not recognize myself in the aggressiveness of certain current feminist discourses. It bothers me, it seems to me that some female artists make too much of a gesture and that it is often just posturing. Of course, I love figures like Peaches or Lydia Lunch. I am a feminist in the sense that I experienced the rejection of one or the other. In the circle of documentary photography, while I was in Sarajevo, Belgrade, where quite a few French artists also went, I was criticized for staging naked bodies. In fashion, the girls I photograph were considered too big ... I do not use expensive clothes, I look for beauty in ordinary bodies, those of everyday girls who have flaws. I do not try to create provocative images, there is no calculation. Humor is important, I do not like the idea of using some form of pathos. My work probably has an autobiographical dimension but it is not direct, it must be something that is offset, with irony, something you wouldn't notice if you weren't searching for it. ♦

