

## slobodne veze //loose associations

contemporary art practices

### Tonka Malekovic: FUTUROBOTANY

29/10/2015 · by slobodneveze · in Tonka Malekovic art. ·  
**FUTUROBOTANY**

environmental city-specific installation, Forum Gallery, Zagreb 2015



(<https://slobodneveze.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/malekovic-2.jpg>).

The exhibition *Futurobotany* has been inspired by the urban wilderness, or perhaps accurately, the unstructured greenery within the city, and still more accurately and interestingly, the lesser known species, the often invasive, self-sown and recalcitrant plants that appear in the odd nooks and crannies of the city that have been forgotten or are faced with comprehensive urban transformation in the direction of visions that are often extremely problematic and tend to generate heated public discussion.

Placing the emphasis on the plants and playing with the temporal matrixes within the exhibition format and drawing the visitor into the game are an attempt to destabilise the anthropocentric position of the observer/city-dweller. The exhibition takes them into a phytocentric and somewhat dystopian vision of the city, shaped in the form of an environmental installation, within the gallery venue at its heart, with fragments of the display sending them back to check things out, at the current moment.

The subtext of the show is the constant alteration of the face of the city and attempts to look at it or read it in a different way. The city is not just the utilitarian habitat of people. It is the interface for constant competition, of taking over and occupying space, not only by people and their institutions, politics, arrangements and technologies but by some other biological species and processes, which, in some much wider temporal perspective might prove to be much more powerful figures and the real rulers of urban territory.

The space on which attention is focused is the centre of Zagreb, on the whole the tract from Koturaška Street to the Bus Station, on the south side of the railway line, the urban transformation of which is imminent, and already started in the development of the Black Tower and ancillary structures in Strojarska Street.

On a stroll along the route described, the walker will never have the impression of being in the heart of a European metropolis. From the half-demolished huts and houses, through the burned out roofs burst *paulownias*, in the Gredelj (company) boundary fence a trunk of invasive *ailanthus* has developed. Footgoers squeeze through the broken walls and run across the line. Wooden cottages and huts or garages prop each other up, and over them climb creepers, from the shattered tarmac pokes the obstinate and relentless shoots of Chinese sumach. The walker has to wonder if what he sees is the distant future of cities, in which the pertinacious plants break through the shells of former dwellings and the traces of humankind. But this is now, a present that in the given moment can already be observed as the past, thanks to the knowledge that we are at one of the symbolically and economically most important locations in Croatia, in the very heart of the metropolis, soon to be clad in a new garb by the visions of urban money interests.

For more information: <http://www.kic.hr/galerija-forum/tonka-malekovic-futrobotanika/>  
(<http://www.kic.hr/galerija-forum/tonka-malekovic-futrobotanika/>).

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