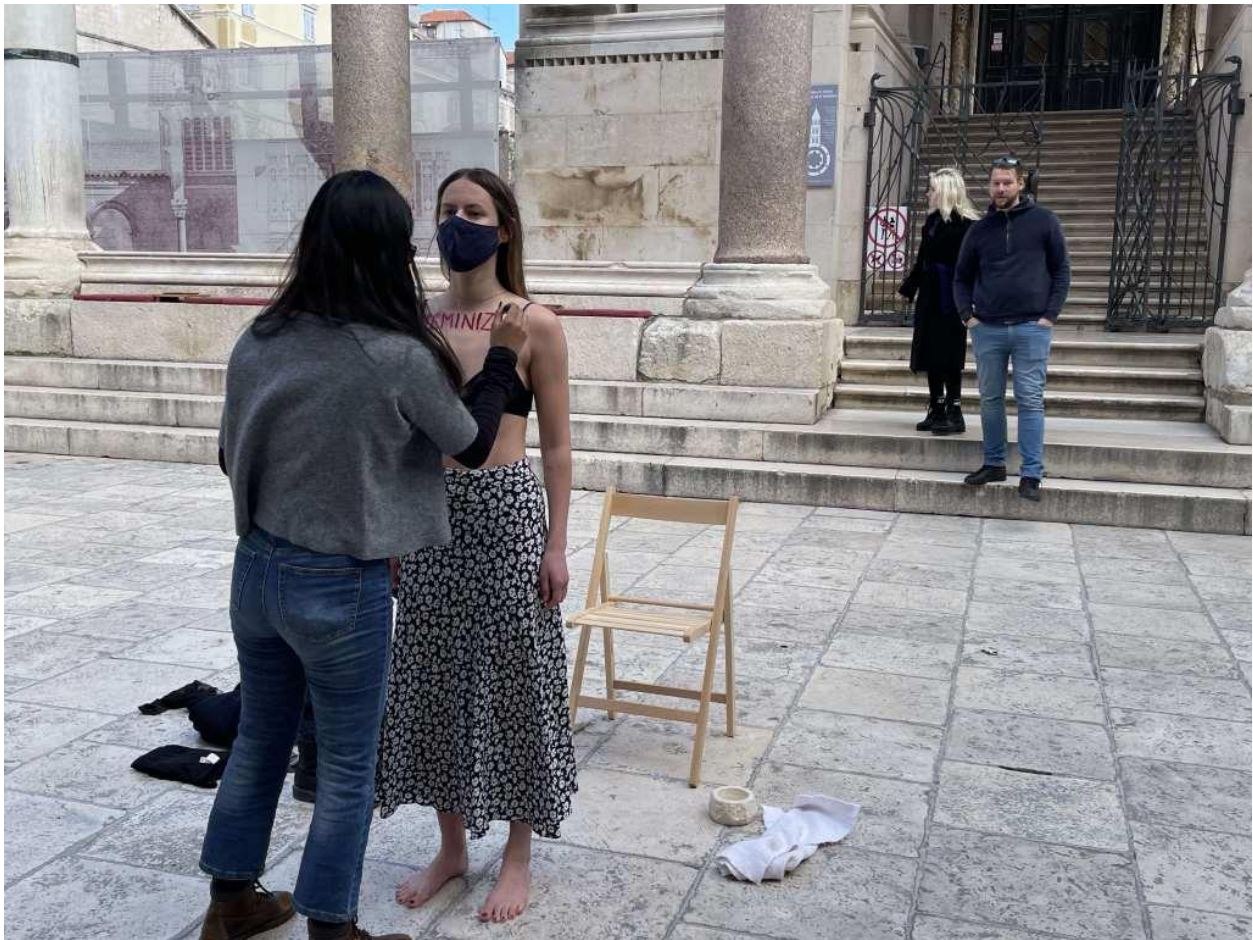


Feminism Forgives

Ines Borovac developed and performed for the first time *Feminism Forgives* in front of the Saint Domnius Cathedral in Split on April 7, 2021, in the frame of *Misplaced Women?* workshop led by Tanja Ostojić, inviting the audience to embody sexually liberated Mary Magdalene, the role of institutionally stigmatised woman and the unexplored powers she carries...



Ines Borovac: "Feminism Forgives" Misplaced Women? workshop Split, 2021. Photo: Tanja Ostojić

During my adolescence age, I have been faithfully attending the Sunday mass as considering myself Christian. Unfortunately, my approach towards Church was superficial at a time. Looking at it now, it is clear I was motivated by the lack of religious diversity in my social and family circle. I didn't pay much attention to what the priest was saying nor applying or understanding the ideology of the Christian community as much. Nonetheless, my physical presence was soaking up the Christian ideologies, more than I wanted and could control. The influence was undeniably present inside of my body. Entering the sexual awakening as a teenager, I was a little bit disappointed. The intensity

of the sexual desire was not as expected, on the contrary, it was barely present. Whereas, when the desire would appear, it would come in bursts and would make me feel uncomfortable, dirty and guilty for feeling the pleasure I was allowed to feel.



Ines Borovac: "Feminism Forgives" Misplaced Women? workshop Split, 2021. Photo: Tanja Ostojić

Croatia is still a religiously homogenous country where more than 90 percent of the population is identifying as Christian, not leaving the young generations much space to explore and own their body and identity. Thus, the performative piece is inviting the audience to identify with the character of sexually liberated Mary Magdalene. With the symbolic gesture of washing the feet (just like Mary Magdalene did to Jesus when she was asking for redemption for her sins), performative act is inviting the audience to embody the role of institutionally stigmatized woman and the unexplored power she carries. Contrary to the Biblical story, the audience was not washing the feet of the forgiver's body (Jesus) but mine, feminist body with the red letters written on my chest saying "feminism forgives". Wearing nothing but a skirt and bra, I set exposing my feminine vulnerability radiating the motherly strength of understanding and care. Therefore, instead of begging for forgiveness, with the gesture of washing the feet of the misplaced feminist body, I took a

role of the medium through which one is encouraged for the “sins”, opposite to the atonement and change.



Ines Borovac: “Feminism Forgives” Misplaced Women? workshop Split, 2021. Photo: Tanja Ostojić

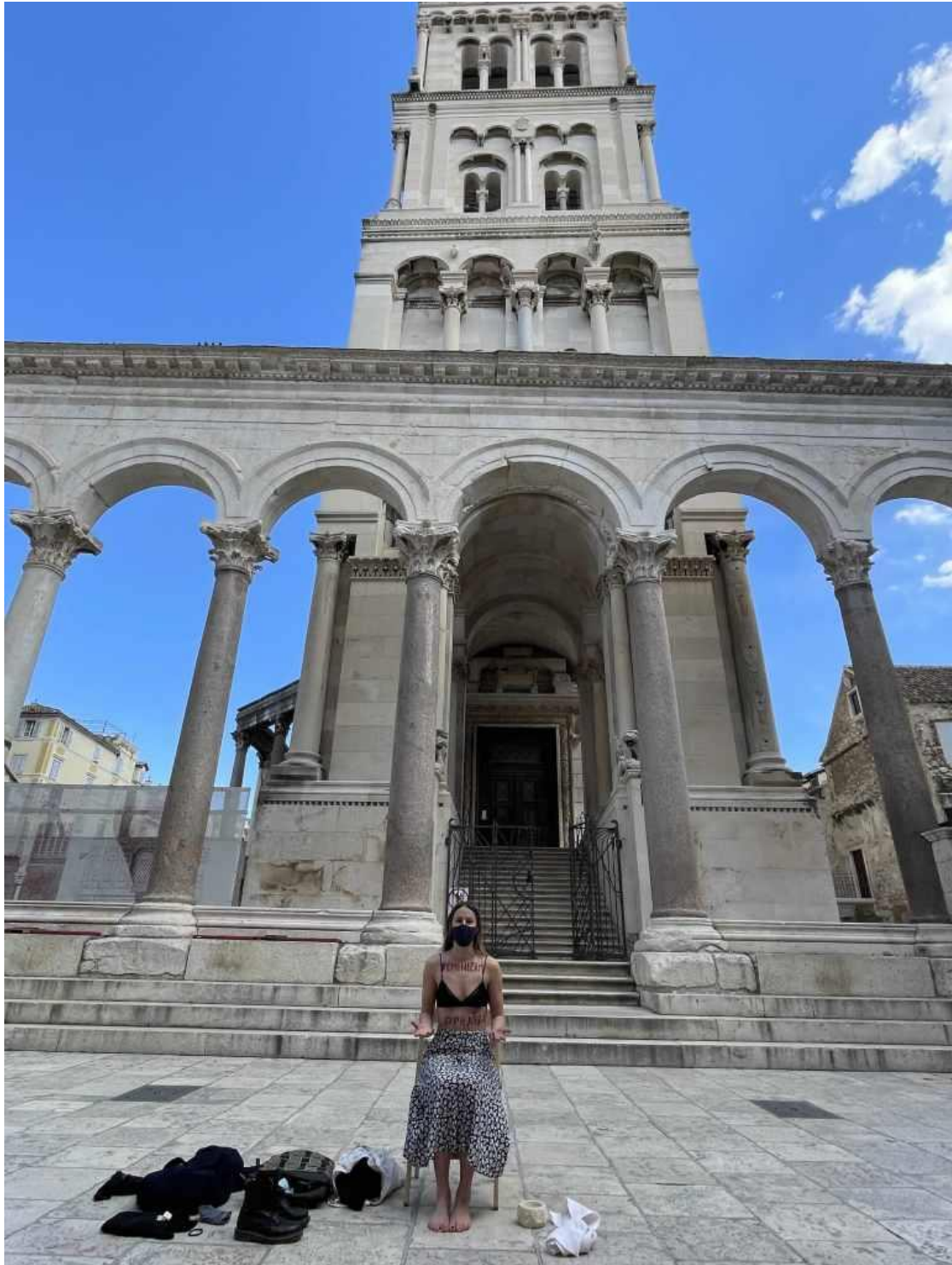
The performative act took place in front of one of the oldest churches in the region, the Cathedral of Saint Domnius (Katedrala Svetog Duje) on April 7, 2021. The performance lasted 30-40 minutes, influenced by the weather conditions, cold wind, low temperatures and very cold stone ground, my wet feet were lying on. I could not help but notice that the people leaving or entering the Cathedral were ignoring the performance, acting like it wasn't happening (avoiding the eye contact and bypassing), – which could be seen as denying such realities and rejecting liberated female bodies from the Christian community, labelling them as marginalised bodies. Parents were turning away their curious children looks or even changing the walking route not to confront the performance. Ironically, while I was taking off my clothes, the male passers stopped to observe and show interest, showing us the transparency of the patriarchal culture in Croatia. Apart from female participants of the workshop, there were other brave woman who challenged their inner Mary Magdalene and participated in activation the performance. At this point the performance expanded from the workshop circle towards the interaction with other bodies, making me endlessly happy.

On this occasion, I would like to thank all the women who've embraced Mary Magdalene during the performance (Kristina Tešija, Lisette Nicole Josseau, Alejandra Robles Sosa, Jasmina Šarić, a group of South-American tourist girls, Tanja Ostojić, Mia Bradić, Neli Ružić...) and the ones who are still carrying and searching for her inside themselves. Thank you Tanja Ostojić for holding the workshop and all the other beautiful participants I met; Culture Hub Croatia girls for organisation and confronting the Split with such topics; Andrea Resner for commitment and creation of the digital archive.



Ines Borovac: "Feminism Forgives" Misplaced Women? workshop Split, 2021. Photo: Tanja Ostojić

Ines Borovac (b.1996) is a student at Design Academy Eindhoven (NL) where she is enrolled on the Masters program of Social Design. In her design work, she is often working with performance and body as the locus for social change and critique. Ines is currently working on her thesis project where she is researching the topic of patriarchy in Croatia, performativity of the patriarchal values and Croatian traditional dance. She holds a bachelor degree from the School of Design, Zagreb
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Ines Borovac: "Feminism Forgives" Misplaced Women? workshop Split, 2021. Photo: Tanja Ostojić

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This performance has been developed and performed for the first time in the frame of *Misplaced Women?* workshop led by Tanja Ostojić, in Split, April 6-8, 2021.

Performed by: Ines Borovac

Performance assistance: Alejandra Robles Sosa

Photos: Tanja Ostojić and Neli Ružić

Video recording & editing: Andrea Resner

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Ines Borovac: "Feminism Forgives" *Misplaced Women?* workshop Split, 2021. Photo: Tanja Ostojić