

APPEAL FOR THE OLD BRIDGE, MOSTAR

by GORDANA ANDJELIC-GALIC, Artist from Sarajevo/ Bosnia & Herzegovina

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The entire public and media world of Bosnia and Herzegovina has recently been flooded with news about the visionary mission of the Austrian artist Michael Puehringer (without any intention of undermining his substantial artistic biography, w.m.puehringer@chello.at) whose intention is (and he already raised € 970,000) to shackle the Old Bridge in Mostar and install his 14-ton artwork on it.

As if carrying the heavy burden of its numerous problems is not enough, all that Mostar would need now would be this "hump".

Being an architect and an artist Mr Puehringer (should be aware that the symbolism of the reconstruction of the Old Bridge, which stood in (and united) that place for 450 years, is an artistic act and an artwork in itself, and as such it sends out the clearest and most eloquent message about the necessity and inevitability of uniting and living together in Mostar. There is nothing to add to that!

Mr Puehringer would like to add something to a symbolically and artistically fantastic artwork; as if topping the Keops pyramid with something that would additionally emphasise the power of the old Egypt (which would, visually and as a symbol, automatically become ludicrous)

What is the actual aim of the artist: the need to aid harmonisation of human relations in Mostar? Disturb the perfect harmony of the Old Bridge by investing € 970,000 in an utterly unnecessary and needless intervention?

Mr Puehringer should know that the Old Bridge is in the heart of every citizen of Mostar regardless of which political fraction or "side of the river" they belong to and that any intervention on this priceless and UNESCO protected monument means pouring salt on an open wound.

The Old Bridge is a holy place, a shrine, and as such it is not to be disturbed, if not out of belief then out of respect.

It would be an extraordinary marketing move for Mr Puehringer to place anything weighing 14 tons on one such monument and in a country that has experienced all the horrors of war.

Why doesn't Mr Puehringer try to close Prater for a month or even a year, which is how long he intends for his installation to stay on the Old Bridge, (without loading anything into it or onto it), in order to alert the world to the situation in Mostar and support its weary citizens?

I also ask myself, what is the artist intending to do with the artwork after the intervention? Leave it to us as "cultural heritage"?

What if he tries to temporarily or permanently install it on one of the bridges in Linz, St. Martin Kirche or the Old Cathedral? It would be interesting to see the reaction of the Austrian public to the installation of a "hump" in their own surroundings.

It is about time to stop the practice of arbitrary international allocation of "artworks" (in cooperation with local art dabsters) of questionable or at least artistically non-evaluated quality.

After Bosnia and Herzegovina was turned into a scrapyard for all kinds of chemical, biological, medical, technological, electronic and many other sorts of worldwide junk, let's prevent this from happening on a cultural and spiritual plane.

It is enough that we brought ourselves into the situation where, unfortunately, foreigners have to implement political solutions for us but let's not allow our cultural and spiritual autonomy and authenticity to be taken away!

Please forward this appeal to all addresses in your contacts!