

WE ARE NOT THINGS

As part of an art showcase in Belgrade, for two hours, I sat, slumped over a desk; my fingers and long hair tied into a ponytail, dipped in a bowl of black and white acrylic paint. I invited people to use me as their 'brush' to paint.

As light turned to dark, the sound of the chair facing me creaking as it was dragged and sat on was repeated many times. Unfamiliar voices filled the space above my scalp, and I felt warmth through palms, big and small. By the time night fell, my ponytail was covered completely in acrylic. Some paint still remains in the seams between my nails and my skin.

Just a few minutes into the performance, pins and needles formed under my bottom and started to spread down my thighs. My skull weighed heavily over the tiny area of forehead that was in contact with the desk. I struggled with the unnatural feeling of surrendering my weight under the control of others. Hardest of all was the wait- time never passed so slowly.

The second the performance was over I immediately stood up but felt weak in my knees as foreign sensations spread through my entire body.

So grateful to be alive, again.



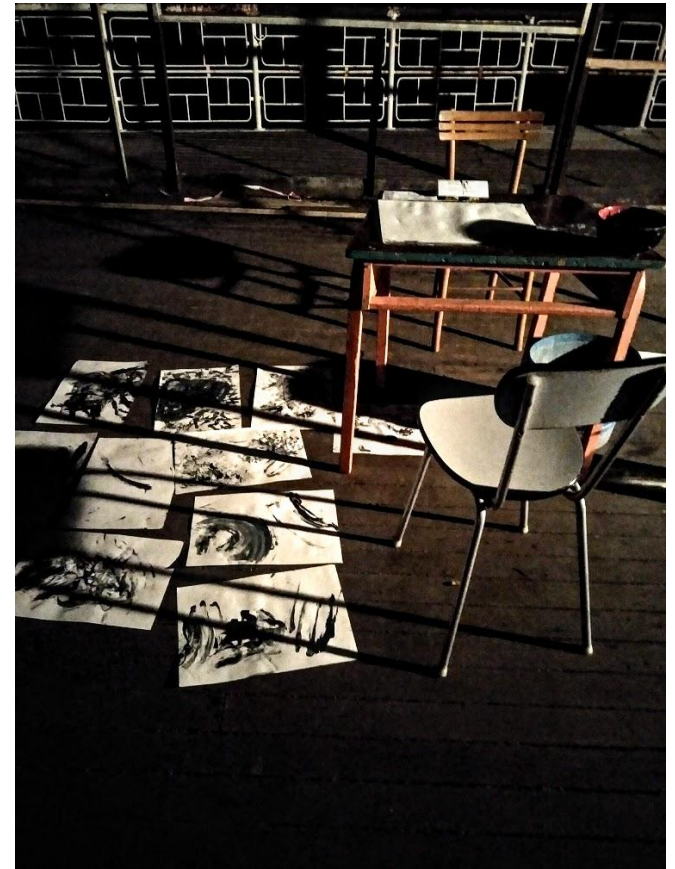
A mentor congratulated me, saying I had 'succeeded'.
Some said the idea was 'well-conceived', the experience 'touching';
others described it as 'depressing' or felt it was 'disturbing'.
When friend asked whether things turned out like what I wanted,
I found myself without a response.

Two days later, after letting thoughts sediment,
with nothing to do, nowhere else to be,
sitting by myself, quietly,
finally,
it hit me.

That evening, I found something.
I found a space where

I feel you; you feel me.
I see you; you see me.

Beyond appearances, devoid of labels, sans facades,
just you, and me, co-existing.
A feeling that will continue to exist,
however much places change or fall apart.
A memory that will continue to replay in my mind,
however much time passes.



However hard I try,

I am not, and
cannot be
a thing.

You are not, and
cannot be
a thing.

We are not, and
cannot be
things.

We cannot, and should not, live our lives treating people like things.

*I want to see you,
I want you to see me.*

We have the power to change how we live, and shape the way others live.

You know what I mean?



