



SLOVENIA

# Metelkova, artistic squatting in Ljubljana

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FORGET CHRISTIANIA AND OTHER FAILED, UTOPIAN "ALTERNATIVE" SPOTS. IN THE HEART OF LJUBLJANA (SLOVENIA'S CAPITAL), IN WHAT WAS A 19TH CENTURY MILITARY BARRACKS OF THE AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN EMPIRE, LIE ONE OF THE LARGEST AND ARGUABLY MOST SUCCESSFUL URBAN SQUATS IN EUROPE. THE SELF PROCLAIMED METELKOVA "MESTO" (METELKOVA "CITY") IS AUTONOMOUS BUT NOT ANARCHISTIC, LIBERAL BUT NOT LAWLESS, AND HAS BUILT - DURING THE LAST YEARS - ITS IMAGE FIRMLY ON ITS ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL CREDENTIALS. IT ALL STARTED 20 YEARS AGO, AFTER SLOVENIA GAINED INDEPENDENCE IN 1991, WHEN A GROUP OF YOUNG ARTISTS DECIDED TO OCCUPY THE ABANDONED BARRACKS, NO MORE THAN A DOZEN BUILDINGS, TO CREATE AN AUTONOMOUS ZONE. NOW METELKOVA HAS BECOME THE FOCAL POINT OF THE COUNTRY'S ALTERNATIVE CULTURAL SCENE, ATTRACTING THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE (YOUNG PEOPLE) FROM ALL OVER EUROPE. EVERY YEAR METELKOVA HOSTS MORE THAN 1500 EVENTS, FROM THEATRE PERFORMANCES AND MUSIC CONCERTS TO ART EXHIBITIONS, WORKSHOPS, LECTURES ABOUT INTERNATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS SUCH AS IMMIGRATION CRISIS IN EUROPE OR GAY & LESBIAN RIGHTS. THE "COMMUNITY" THAT "GOVERNS" METELKOVA (ARTISTS AND MANAGERS OF CLUBS AND GALLERIES) MEETS EVERY MONTH TO DISCUSS THE MAINTENANCE AND PROSPECTS OF THE SQUAT, BUT HAVE NO PRETENSIONS TO UNDERMINE LJUBLJANA AUTHORITY. SO MUCH SO THAT IN 2006 THE MUNICIPALITY DECLARED METELKOVA A NATIONAL CULTURAL HERITAGE SITE, PROTECTING IT FROM FURTHER DEMOLITIONS OF BUILDINGS, AND STILL FINANCES SOME OF THE CULTURAL PROJECTS COMING OUT FROM HERE.

ANABEL CERNOHORSKI OF  
THE ALKATRAZ GALLERY





STREET ART ON METELKOPVA  
BUILDINGS, PREVIOUSLY AN AUSTRO-  
HUNGARIAN MILITARY BARRACKS









STREET ART AT METELKOPVA MESTO, PREVIOUSLY  
AN AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN MILITARY BARRACKS







ERASMUS STUDENTS MAKING A VIDEO ABOUT METELKOVA MESTO







A SCULPTURE ON THE ROOFS OF METELKOVA







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