FAMILIAR FANTOMS
Residency Unlimited, Colonels Row


Live performance & reading on May 20, 11:00am

Growing up in the aftermath of the Yugoslav Wars, Young Visual Artists Award (YVAA) artists Agrina Vilxasaliu, Alma Gačanin, and Gloria Lizde explore how collective, intergenerational, and personal memories of war have shaped their identities and family histories. The exhibition title references Slavenka Drakulić’s essay, My Father’s Pistol (1991), in which a familiar phantom, a long-forgotten ghost of war, resurfaces when she first holds her father’s Beretta. In the works on view, all kinds of ghosts haunt the viewer: the land that keeps score of the battles that scarred its surface, the home abandoned before it could ever be inhabited, and the raincoat carrying the weight of history.

Notions of belonging, migration, and nationhood are brought together in poetic mediations through photography, video, installation, and text. Presented in the United States for the first time on Governors Island, a former military base, the site-specific iterations by Vilxasaliu, Gačanin, and Lizde create a dialogue with the built environment where the specters of history are ever present. With a war currently waged in Europe, the fabric of another society is torn, and all-too-familiar ghosts of the past return to pose the same questions again.

Residency Unlimited (RU) is one of the 2023 Governors Island Arts Organizations in Residence

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