

Kristina Leko, AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WORKS >>>



Above: The Magic Cake. Underneath: Installation site, the Pastry Shop Gunduliceva in Zagreb. On the left: the production team of the cake, the Zagreb Pastry Company. Photo by Boris Cvjetanovic.



Zagreb 1999. Slastičarni: Kristine.

B.c.

A MAGIC CAKE

Object / Multimedia Installation in a Pastry Shop in Zagreb 1999

In 1999 I made a magic cake that was officially being produced and sold by a manufactory in Zagreb during three months period in the pastry shop in the center of the city. The Cake has its own video-story and complex sound installation. It is a work dedicated to a person, made primarily for personal use although presented extremely public. "It will cause the final happy ending of my unhappy love story", I said to myself working on the project.



HISTORY OF A CAKE

Video 20 min.

In this video work I tell my love story in four languages (Croatian, French, German, English) clarifying its political and historical context i.e. the reasons why it didn't work at the time. Beside the documentary images of the cake production, the found-footage material from the World War II has been used, the three most beautiful images of the WW II: a camel in North Africa 1942, the first meeting of the Allies in Teheran 1943, and the liberation of Paris 1944. For a while, I felt that my personal destiny was nothing but an outcome of big historical events. Above and on the following page. History of a Cake, video stills: North Africa, 1942, Teheran 1943, Paris 1944.



Personal Distribution of my Magic Cakes

In the year 1999/2000 I had been distributing my cakes for free in different occasion (ex. Film festival in Split, Oreste project at the Venice biennale), buying them off from the pastry manufacturer while waiting my happy ending to occur. It actually did occur two years later. Above: With my cakes and myself in the middle, Valerie B. and Marina G. in Venice 1999. Right. Neli and Ana.



Les nouvelles de Zagreb, installation view, four-channel video and object installation, Bibliotheque Gabrielle Rois, Quebec, 2000.

LES NOUVELLES DE ZAGREB

Video-Diary, 1999/2000, 56'

This video project was developed for the biennale of art in situ in Quebec, as an installation for the Gabrielle Rois public library. In this video diary, I tried to put together all the relevant information on my country and myself personally. I wanted to make an artwork through which one would be able to learn almost everything on politics, economics, culture, and public life in my country, but also get familiar with my private issues, my life, and the life of my family. It is juxtaposition of found footage material from the Croatian Television News and of my reports, my personal "news" recorded in my kitchen.



The diary gives an insight into a period from August 1999 till March 2000, where I recorded my reports once per month. It denotes social changes, and reflects those on my personal situation and on life of people around me (my mother, grandmother, friends). It was a period of important political changes in Croatia: our Social Democrats got in power after 10 years in opposition, and the president Tudjman, whose authoritarian governing marked the period of the 1991-1995 war as well as the years that followed, died. Above. Stills from the video.



The Flag Room, 2005, installation views, ACC Galerie Weimar.

THE FLAG ROOM

A one-room video and object installation 2005

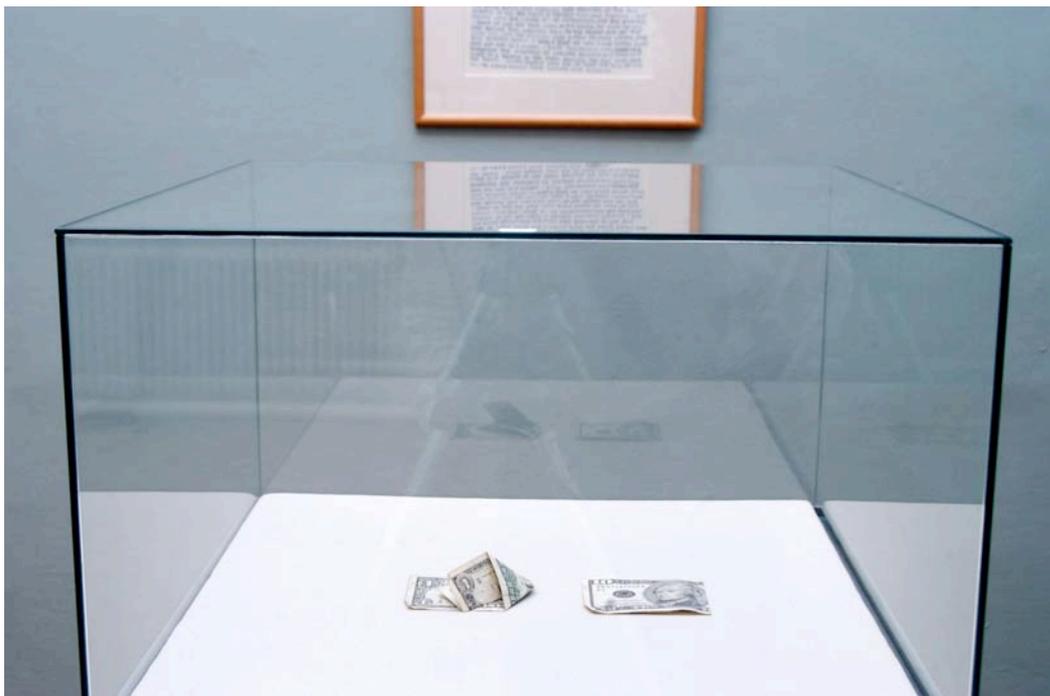
In 2002/2003 I spent one year in the USA, and witnessed the last preparations for the war in Iraq. It was very difficult to understand what was going on and to fit in. Since I wanted to share this extraordinary experience with my friends but also with my audience once I was back in Europe, every time I would watch TV, I started recording what I was watching. That way 80 hours of TV programs from February and March 2003 was collected. Parallel to that, I started reading different books in order to inform myself about the history of the country where I was a guest. Howard Zinn's book "A People's History of the United States" is my favorite book related to the matter, a history of the biggest nation written by an union activist with a socialist point of view. In the flag room, the audience could browse through my video archive, and read the book. One-room installation: TV & video set, 20 VHS tapes recorded LP; Howard Zinn's book "A People's History of the United States", red sofa, painted walls, two potted plants.

NINE STORIES AND ELEVEN DOLLARS

Self published booklet, found objects, handwritings, 2003

This is another work originating from my one-year stay in the USA. It is a self-published booklet which contains 9 short stories telling about my experiences in contact with people on the streets of NYC. As a newcomer, I was struck with the alienation and lack of trust between the individuals. Therefore, after a while, I started making notes of the events and encounters that touched me in one way or another. Nine stories entitled "Brief encounters with strangers", take-away booklets, are accompanied with two objects which originate from two events described in the stories: a one dollar bill, and a ten dollar bill. The two stories related to the dollar notes are presented as hand writings as well.

The booklet was first published in 2003 on the occasion of the exhibition *Balkan Consulat* in <rotor>, Graz. Its second edition, also in a German translation, came out in 2008 for the exhibition *Friendly Enemies* in Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst Leipzig. The booklet is my third self published booklet, which all have been hand bound with tri-color striped thread as a reference to the civic and democratic heritage of our times (égalité, fraternité, liberté).



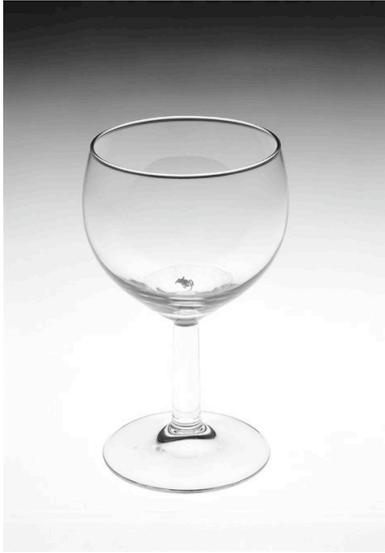
Nine Stories and Eleven Dollars, installation views, Rotor, Graz, 2003.



MES OBJETS TROUVÉS

A Collection of Found Objects with Historical References since 1992

Since 1992 I collect significant objects. My collection includes at the moment more than 20 items. It materialize thoughts, feelings and events of the last decade. *Un objet trouvé* is a crossing point where my personal biography meets the issues significant to the society I live in. By multiplying the objects, writing about them, and by exhibiting them, I try to tell who "I" am, who "we" are and what happened. The glass is a good example of how an object treasures the history. It was found in 1993, a sad year of war with death, sorrow and guilt everywhere. The text that follows is from a catalogue published in 2000. There is a series of 5 short texts/photos and two-channel video installation about *The Glass* (please, see: *Gekauft in Graz*). *The Glass* refers not only to the war experience but to the economical conditioning of Eastern Europe, and to our local history of shopping which was affiliated with crossing the borders either to Austria (in the 1980s) or to Italy (in the 1970s).



The Glass⁹. Object found in 1993.

One day I left a glass of water in my studio. When I found the glass a couple of days later, there were traces of evaporated water and a little dead spider in it.



The Purse. Object found in 1992.

This is the purse my grandmother had for years before I noticed it. She says she bought it in Trieste¹ in 1971². I noticed the object in 1992³, deeply impressed by its two tiny details. The two clasps.

⁹ I was moving out on my own and in 1991 I bought this Ikea glass in the Austrian town of Graz - a town that became an affordable shopping centre for food and household goods in the recession period of the 80ies.

¹ Trieste, Italy was the favourite shopping centre in the economically prosperous seventies for the middle-class masses from the north-west regions of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

² The year of the Croatian Spring - a mass democratic and national movement which was supported by Croatian political leaders but was knocked down and suppressed by the Yugoslav federal authorities.

³ The year I took the purse to my place. I had to return it to my grandmother on several occasions. In the summer of 2000 the negotiations with my grandmother came to an end and after eight years I managed to obtain permanent ownership of the purse.



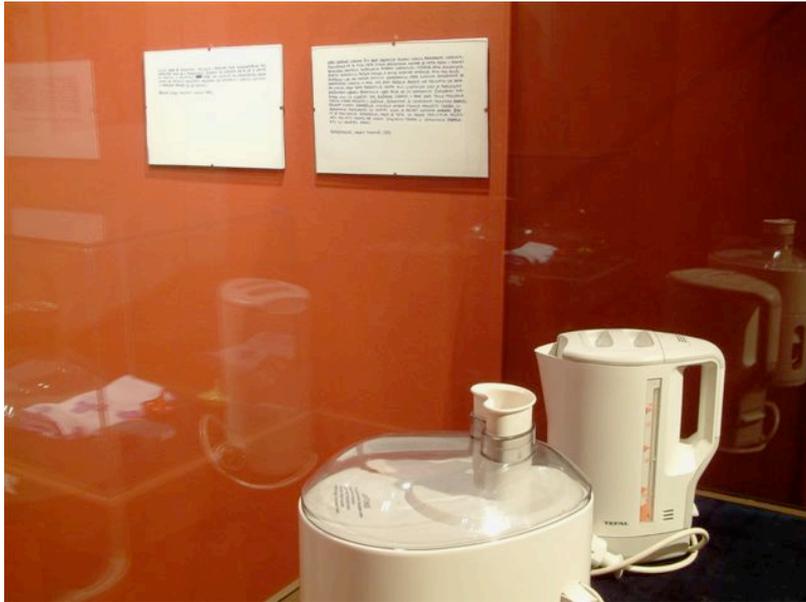
The Glass, found object, 1993.



The Knife and its Trademark, found object, 1993.



The Juicer, found object, 1999. The Container for Earphones, 1993. The Kettle, 1992. A brick, 2000.



A partial presentation of the collection, HDLU, Zagreb, 2006.

UN MAGASIN EXPÉRIMENTAL (MES OBJETS TROUVÉS)

Exhibition and Temporary Shop Studio of the Museum of Modern Art Zagreb 2000

During the period from 19 December 2000 to 7 January 2001. I sat in the gallery every day, believing that I was sitting in a real live shop, that in the decades to come, the whole thing would grow into a chain of little shops that people would come out happy because they had managed to exchange their money for material proof of an advance in their cognition of the so-called material world, the world of objects. And that with the acts of purchase, every individual perception would be fixed at a level from it would never be able to regress. / from the catalog

In this exhibition I showed my collection of found objects as well as all the multiples I made in last years. The exhibit was a total environment that included my works since 1992, as well as me personally explaining my objects, telling their stories, selling and exchanging the multiples.



Left: Installation view. The Juicer and Its Protection Forms. Found objects, 1995. Ceramic multiples of the juicer packaging, casted clay, 1997. Above: Exhibition view, the front room, and my customers with their objects, bought or exchanged, Josip Racic Studio of the Museum of Modern Art, Zagreb, 2001.

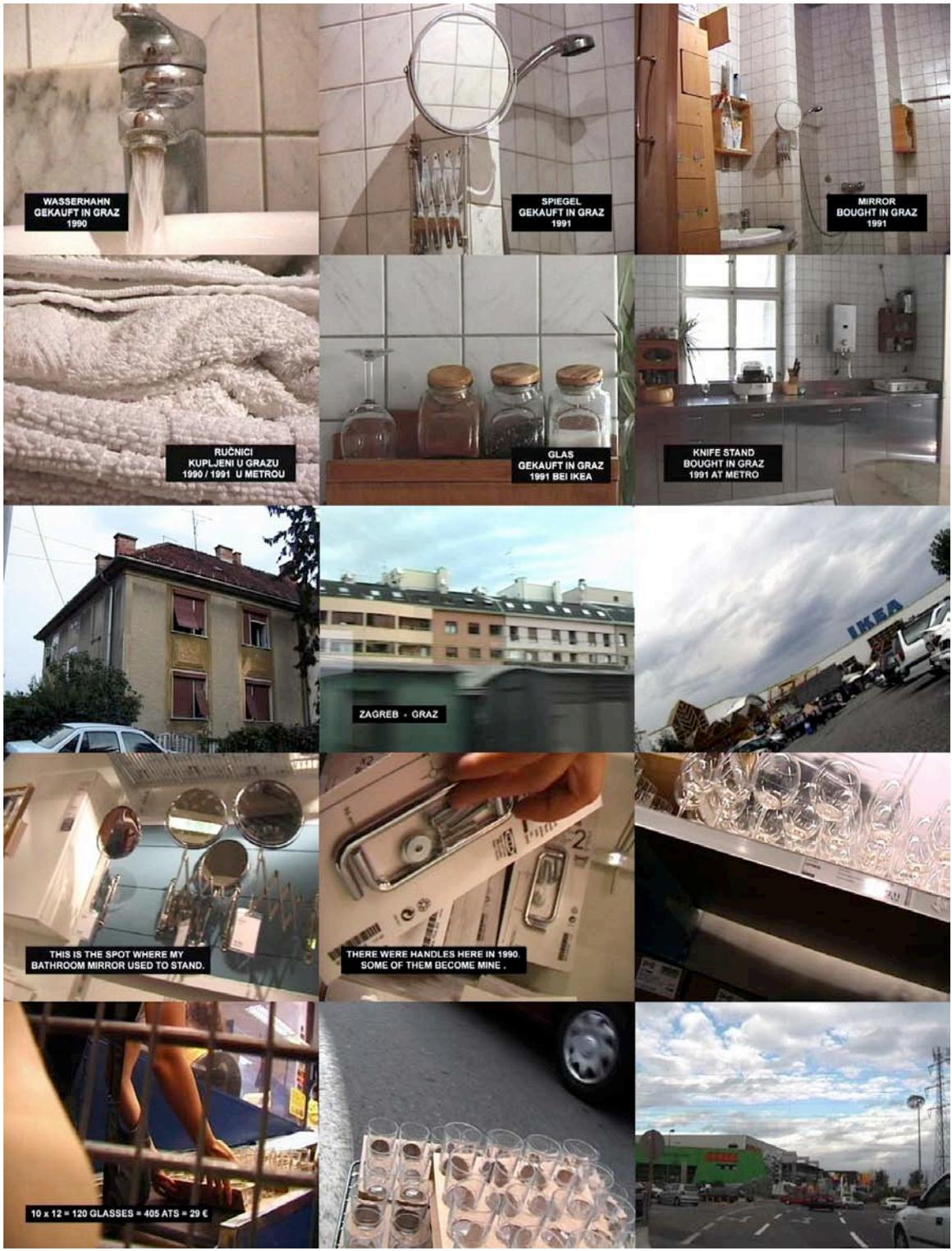
GEKAUFT IN GRAZ

Two-Channel Video Installation, Objects and Digital Prints 1993 / 2001

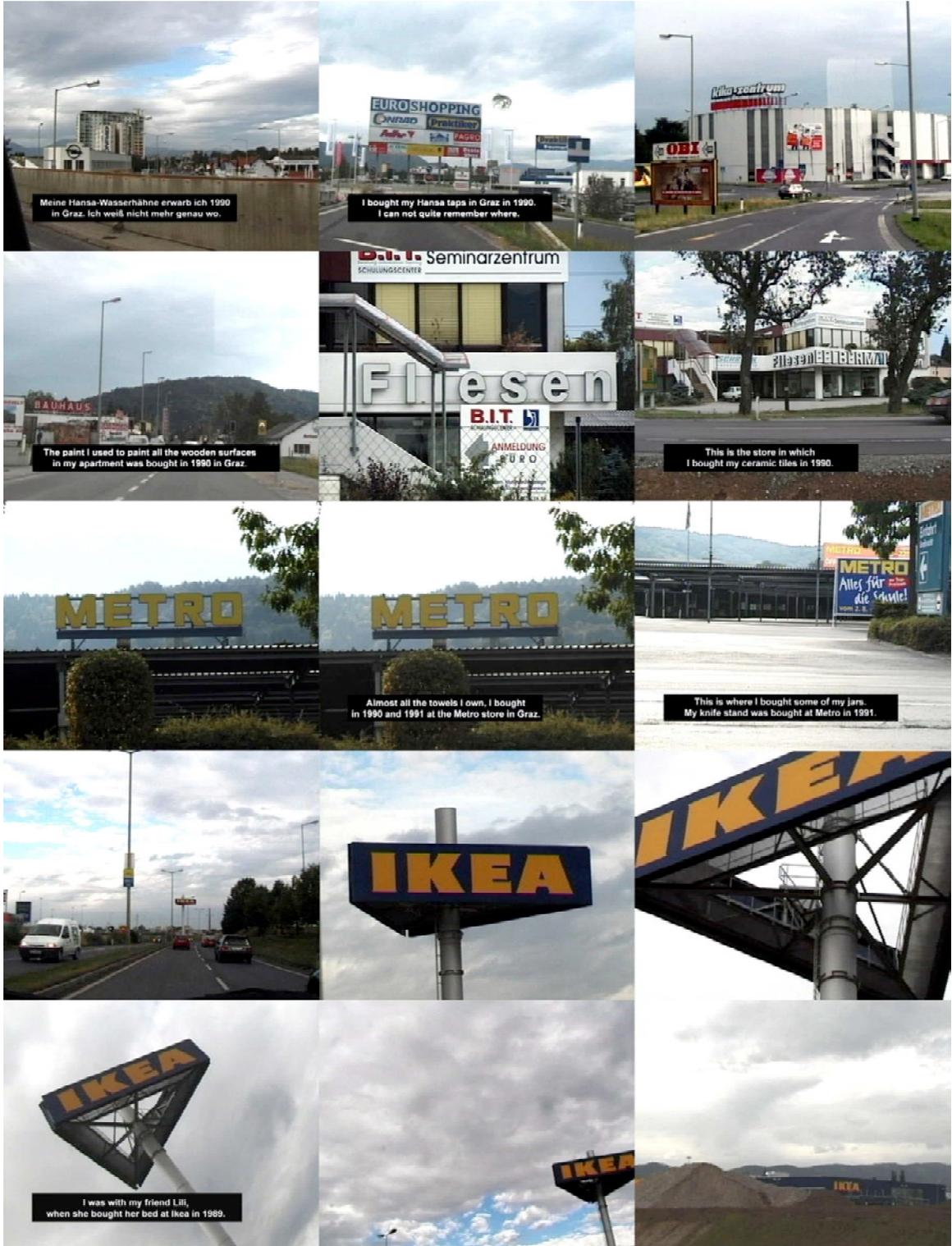
This complex room installation consisting of two channel video, objects (one found objects, a group of bought objects) and prints/texts is based on the story and complex historical references of *The Glass*, eventually the most important object in my *Mes objets trouvés* collection. With this two channel video installation I tried to communicate the complexity of economical relationship between Eastern and Western Europe, consumerism, socialism and capitalism, and our eastern European hunger for shopping by using my private and intimate issues as examples. The main idea of the video was to symbolically erase the period of time marked by severe changes - the economical transition from socialism to capitalism, the impoverishment of the middle class and by the war in my country - through buying again the same glasses at the same place, ten years later. However, it did not work. I had to buy the different glasses. The ones that I wanted to buy were no longer available.



Gekauft in Graz, 2001, installation view, Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst Leipzig, 2004. Detail of the work: video installation and objects.



Gekauft in Graz, 2001, stills from the video, video channel 1.



Gekauft in Graz, 2001, stills from the video, video channel 2.



Gekauft in Graz, 2001, installation view, GfZK Leipzig, 2004, video installation, objects & digital prints.