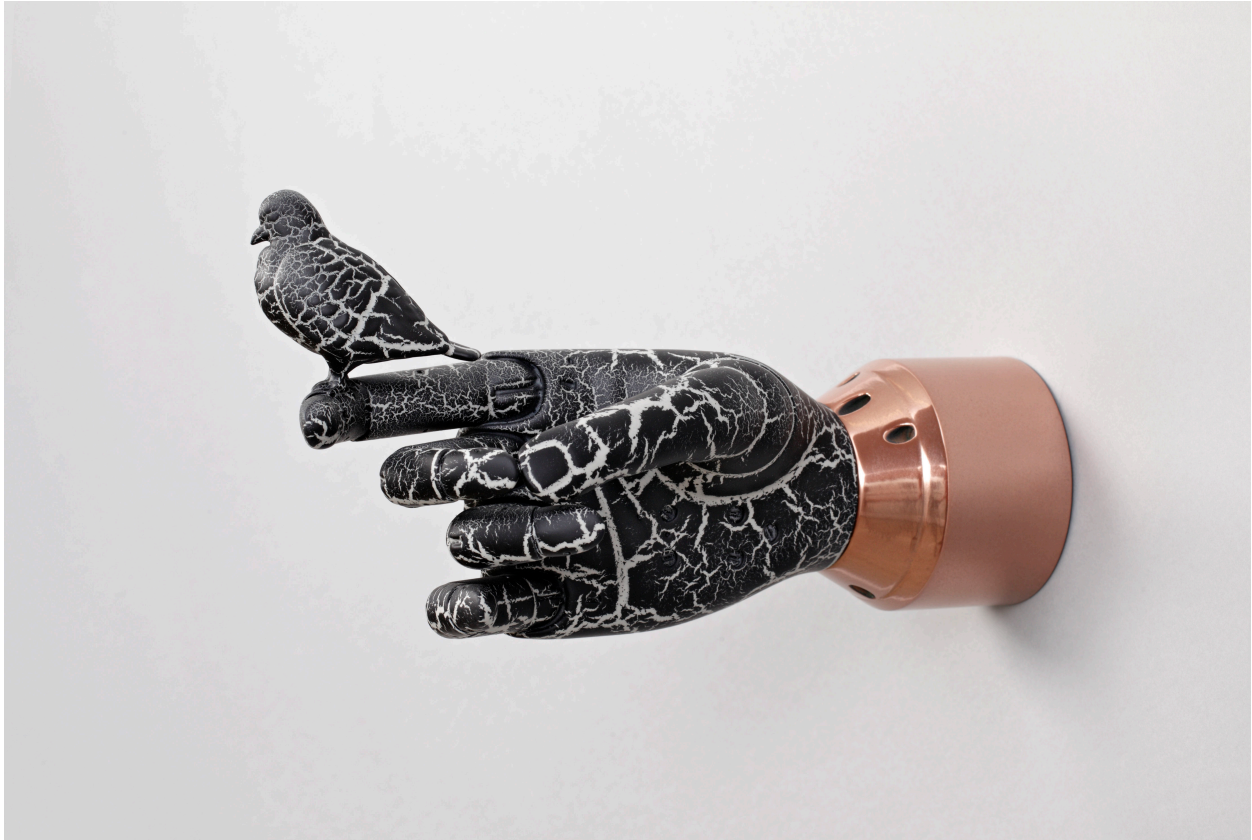


**Teacher's Guide:** for Aleksandra Domanović's *Mother of This Domain* on exhibition at Plug In ICA from September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015 to January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016.



Aleksandra Domanović, *Little Sister II*, 2014, Laser sintered PA plastic, polyurethane, Soft-Touch & copper finish 9 x 11 x 22 cm, courtesy of the artist and Tanya Leighton, Berlin.

#### **Contents:**

- i. Introduction to Plug In Institute of Contemporary Art
- ii. Learning Objectives
- iii. Context of Exhibition
- iv. Framework for Gallery Visit
- v. Background Information
- vi. Worksheet
- vii. Sources

#### **i. Introduction to Plug In Institute of Contemporary Art:**

Plug In, established in 1972, was Manitoba's first artist-run centre. For the first 15 years of its history, Plug In was one of the first (and few) organizations on the prairies to focus exclusively on the production and exhibition of contemporary art. The interest in contemporary art, coupled with a sense of isolation from large-scale cultural institutions such as the Winnipeg Art Gallery or the National Gallery, originally attracted artists to Plug In. Belief in the idea of an

artists' network as a social, aesthetic and economic alternative to those represented by commercial and public galleries was the foundation of Plug In.

Throughout its forty year history, Plug In has encouraged and nurtured the development of independent arts group in the province that each address an identified community need (e.g., Video Pool was spawned by Plug In, as was Mentoring Artists for Women's Art and Counterparts: the Winnipeg Gay and Lesbian Film and Video Festival).

In the late nineties, after twenty-five years of operating as an artist-run-centre, Plug In began to re-envision its role in the local and national art community. Having arrived at a position of notable acclaim for its exhibitions and publications program, Plug In sought to have these programs matter in a larger way. To reach this goal, Plug In launched three initiatives to connect with larger audiences and expand the reach of its programming: the national and international circulation of exhibitions; the development of a website; and the creation of an audience development initiative. These changes marked Plug In's transition from an artist-run-centre to something that resembled both a gallery and a museum, yet was neither – an interim phase during which a new hybrid was taking form.

The descriptions, and various models of, "institutes of contemporary art" in the UK and the US confirmed that Plug In's mission, priorities, and activities fit best within an ICA model. And while this model is itself a relatively fluid one, for Plug In's purposes the ICA distinction meant: the generation of a thoroughly researched mix of exhibitions that offered multiple access points to contemporary art and ideas; insightful interpretation through publications, programs and events; and creating the facilities and environment for lively interaction among artists, art and audience.

With these goals in mind, in 2009 Plug In made the decision to move from its location at 286 McDermott to a new purpose-built facility for art and education in partnership with University of Winnipeg at the corner of Portage Avenue and Memorial Boulevard. This move tripled Plug In's exhibition space and expanded the ability to program multi-disciplinary activity that stretched what art, and what an ICA, could be. The facility was co-developed with the active participation of Plug In, and hosts three permanent installations by internationally renowned artists Jimmie Durham, Dan Graham, Rodney Latourelle and Louise Withoft.

Plug In expanded its mentorship opportunities by focusing on education in a number of ways, including making a summer residency (the Summer Institute) a regular part of its programming. The goal of the Summer Institute is to provide a space for professional artists and other cultural producers and (scientists, engineers, writers, curators, architects, philosophers, etc) to research and produce work, individually or collaboratively. This program serves a distinct niche in that it provides collegial support for artists at all stages of their careers, following their basic training (university, art colleges, or equivalent experience). Faculty is hired, and provides feedback and support to artists on a peer-to-peer basis. Each year 10 to 15 artists participate in the program. The idea of encouraging mentorship and facilitating an open discourse has always, and continues to be, integral to Plug In as an organization, and the Youth Education Program is built upon these premises.

## **ii. Learning Objectives:**

**Students will:**

1. Read and interpret visual materials—connecting art to diverse contexts and developing ways to speak about, and think through, contemporary art.
2. Communicate their ideas, experiences and feelings—developing critical reflection and thinking skills.
3. As part of the art workshop students will express their ideas visually.

**Assessment:**

The teacher will decide on the appropriate assessment of this activity and communicate it to the class.

**Curriculum connections:****Grade 9-12 Visual Arts**

- The workshop will allow students to make and create visual art
- Students will respond to the work in the exhibition and make connections to diverse contexts

**Grade 9-12 English Language Arts**

- Students will explore thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences while managing ideas and information
- Students will be asked to comprehend and respond personally and critically to installation, sculpture and video
- Community will be built by introducing students to a local cultural organization

**Grade 12 Social Studies****Global Issues: Citizenship and Sustainability**

- Areas of inquiry in the exhibition include media, gender, and identity

**Cinema as Witness to Modern History**

- Domanović's video *From Yu to Me* investigates the dissolution of Yugoslavia through a narrative following the creation of the .yu internet domain

**iii. Context of Exhibition:**

Aleksandra Domanović's work discusses relationships between the body and technology, historical and fictional narratives of women, and the dissemination and presentation of information in a time of omnipresent digital technology. The exhibition *Mother of This Domain* will bring together a body of work that spans her practice, including her serial projects *Paper Stacks* and *The Belgrade Hand* as well the video *From Yu to Me* and two installation-based works *SOHO (Substances of Human Origin)* and *Things to Come*.

**iv. Framework for Gallery Visit:**

Classroom preparation (before coming to Plug In ICA):

- As a class go over a selection of the provided resources.
- Answer the worksheet questions individually or as a group.
- In smaller groups discuss some of the themes you think will be important in the exhibition. Discuss your expectations and thoughts on what the exhibition and gallery will look and feel like.

#### Activity (at Plug In ICA):

- Participate in a tour of Aleksandra Domanović's exhibition *Mother of This Domain* guided by gallery staff. This may include an optional tour of Plug In facilities; including the office, permanent collection of artwork, and rooftop terrace (weather permitting).
- Watch Domanović's video *From Yu to Me* (34min 30sec) within the context of the exhibition.
- Communicate ideas, experiences and feelings in a question and answer period.
- Participate in a workshop

#### Optional activities (after coming to Plug In ICA):

- Many of the sculptures in the exhibition were produced using a 3D printer. To learn more about this technology the class could contact Assentworks (<http://assentworks.ca/>) for a tour of their facilities and equipment (including a 3D printer). Assentworks is a public fabrication workshop in downtown Winnipeg.
- Taking inspiration from Domanović's timeline ask students to create a drawing, collage, or piece of writing inspired by one of the events.

#### **v. Background information:**

##### **Curatorial Overview:**

Aleksandra Domanović was born in 1981 in Novi Sad, former Yugoslavia (now Serbia) and currently lives and works in Berlin. *Mother of This Domain* is her first solo exhibition in North America and will include her serial projects *Paper Stacks* and *The Belgrade Hand* as well the video *From Yu to Me* and two installation-based works *SOHO (Substances of Human Origin)* and *Things to Come*.

Often utilizing the web as a tool, medium, and organizing principle, Domanović investigates how existing images and information circulate in an era of constantly developing digital media. She embraces the use of digital technology in the creation of her work while remaining cautious of technological advances, often exploring speculative narratives driven by the relationships between people and technology.

Domanović has received critical acclaim for her highly researched works on the history of media and technology specifically relating to women. She explores narratives that investigate diverse cultures from pioneering female computer programmers to cyber-feminism. Allowing personal

narratives and inclinations to enter her work she challenges notions of authoritative truth and objective histories.

**Works to be included in the exhibition:**

*The Belgrade Hand* series is an ongoing project started in 2013. Inspired by the Belgrade Hand— a responsive prosthetic hand developed by Serbian scientist Rajko Tomovića in 1963— Domanović created a series of sculptural works utilizing its likeness. These hands are digitally rendered and 3D printed then used to create arrangements with objects such as birds, fruit, and batons. This body of work incorporates cyborg-like technology with loosely related, often personally significant moments of history.

*SOHO (Substances of Human Origin)* incorporates the sculptural works of the *Belgrade Hand* series into a spatial installation using hanging transparent curtains printed with images of blood cells, krill, and krill capsules. This work investigates biological processes but the gestural nature of the hands undermines a purely clinical reading of the work.

The *Paper Stack* series (2009-ongoing) are sculptures constructed with reams of A3 and A4 office paper. By printing images on a standard printer using the full bleed function, Domanović creates meter high stacks with images appearing along the edges. The paper stacks exist in two forms, as a monolithic looking gallery based object and as ephemeral, downloadable, and distributable PDFs.

Domanović's 2014 video *From Yu to Me* is a documentary consisting of interviews and found footage, revolving around a personal narrative exploring the rise of the internet with the concurrent collapse of the former Yugoslavia.

The installation *Things to Come* was commissioned as part of the 2014 Glasgow International. This monumentally scaled work is comprised of prints on transparent sheets hanging from the ceiling—inviting viewers to physically enter a collection of familiar sci-fi images that Domanović has mined and collaged to probe the subject of women in popular science fiction.

**Curator's statement:**

Aleksandra Domanović: Mother of This Domain

"One could say I am the mother of the Internet in Yugoslavia, the mother of this domain." - Borka Jerman Blažič

Borka Jerman Blažič, a professor at the University of Ljubljana, was one of two women computer scientists who were integral to the inception and growth of the internet in Yugoslavia in 1991. The domain Blažič claims as her offspring is .yu — the internet suffix for a country that was breaking apart. This previously untold story is the subject of the film *From Yu to Me* by artist Aleksandra Domanović. She uses the conventions of the documentary form— interviews, archival footage and evocative music, but deliberately chooses to undermine any definitive conclusions. Her omission of concrete dates and place markers obscures claims to documentary truth. Instead it unearths a narrative about how technological infrastructures quietly influence and contradict geo-political realities, while refusing to present these ideas as an authoritative account.

*From Yu to Me* is one of a number of recent works by Domanović that create speculative narratives in order to reveal deeply personal interconnections between people and

technology—specifically women and technology. The video, sculpture and installations included in *Mother of This Domain* weave together the work of these pioneering female programmers, the marginalized position of women in sci-fi and cyber-feminism, with her own personal narrative — a narrative that corresponds directly to the rise of the internet and the collapse of her home in the former Yugoslavia.

Caitlin Jones (Guest Curator)

This timeline was presented with Domanović's 2013 exhibition *The Future was at Her Fingertips*. There are multiple events and themes that reoccur throughout Domanović's projects. Though many of these events are seemingly unrelated, they explore a historical narrative created by embracing personal inclinations and pursuing diverse information to develop a complex and highly detailed subjective history.

1843 Ada Lovelace writes what is considered the first computer program  
1867 The typewriter is introduced  
1908 Kikunae Ikeda proposes the existence of umami  
1950 A cybernetic tortoise is designed by William Grey Walter  
1963 Rajko Tomović develops one of the earliest artificial limbs with a sense of touch known as the 'Belgrade Hand'  
1968 Marvin Minsky creates the tentacle arm  
1968 Marvin Minsky is an adviser on the movie '2001: A Space Odyssey'  
1973 The Internet consists of 25 computers  
1977 In 'Demon Seed' by Donald Cammell, Susan Harris is impregnated by an artificial intelligence called Protheus; the AI uses the 'Belgrade hand' as it's robotic prop  
1980 Tito dies  
1984 Hewlett Packard introduces the first inkjet printer available to consumers  
1984 Jivamukti Yoga is founded in New York  
1987 The second to last 'Relay of Youth' takes place in Yugoslavia; the baton is made out of plexiglass with 8 drops of blood  
1988 Worm plagues the Internet  
1989 Borka Jerman Blažić registers the .yu domain  
1989 Corbis is founded by Bill Gates  
1996 Olia Lialina makes 'My Boyfriend Came Back From the War'  
1997 'Zeroes + Ones: Digital Women and the New Technoculture' by Sadie Plant is published  
1998 The first Lululemon store opens in Vancouver  
2000 Saint Isidore of Seville is declared the patron saint of the Internet by the Vatican; he is also the patron saint of computers, computer users, and computer technicians  
2006 Spam intensifies to 96% of all emails  
2008 Bhutan acknowledges women's full right to vote  
2008 Shapeways launches a service allowing customers to design and produce their own 3 dimensional products  
2010 .yu is the most heavily used top-level domain ever to be deleted  
2012 Bayer MaterialScience LLC updates their soft-touch coating technology  
2012 In 'Prometheus' by Ridley Scott, Dr. Elizabeth Shaw performs an abortion on herself, removing the alien fetus  
2013 Zaha Hadid becomes the Veuve Clicquot businesswoman of the year  
2025 New Zealand is completely smoke-free  
2099 Most conscious beings lack a permanent physical form

Ada Lovelace:

In 1843 Ada Lovelace translated and wrote the notes for a paper on Charles Babbage's Analytical Engine. The Analytical Engine was conceptualized as a machine that was able to switch between tasks. This machine was based on his Difference Engine, a machine designed as a mechanical method to tabulate logarithms, sines, cosines, and tangents. Lovelace's note explored concepts and examples that lead many to suggest that Lovelace was the first computer programmer.

Lovelace's notes explored four concepts:

First, that the general-purpose machine could be programmed and reprogrammed to a limitless array of tasks. This concept was inspired by the Jacquard Loom designed by Joseph-Marie Jacquard in 1801 that utilized cards with holes punched in them to control the process of weaving, allowing a limitless variety of patterns.

Second, that the machine could store, manipulate, and act upon anything that could be expressed in symbols: words, music, logic, and text. She made the conceptual leap that the digits on the cogs of the machine could represent things other than numbers.

Her third note detailed workings of a computer program or algorithm. In this note she developed a sequence of operations and described how each would be coded into a machine. Lovelace outlined several concepts used today—such as subroutines (used to preform specific tasks in multiple programs), recursive loop (a sequence of instructions that repeats itself), and conditional branching (changing to a different set of instructions if certain conditions are met). Finally, Lovelace created a table and diagram showing exactly how the algorithm for a specific set of numbers would be fed into the computer. Babbage's Analytical Engine was never built but these coding instructions were the first published, and suggest Ada Lovelace to have designed to first computer program.

#### **Post Internet Art:**

Post Internet Art is a recent art movement that encompasses the work of artists who the tools and resources of the web to inform their practice. Unlike Net Art, which used the novelty of the Internet to create largely digital works, Post Internet Art uses the Internet as a tool in the making of a wide variety of work, which may materialize as digital or physical artwork. Other artists involved in this movement include Petra Cortright, Jon Rafman, Seth Price, and Cory Arcangel.

#### **The former Yugoslavia:**

Three federations have borne the name Yugoslavia. The first was the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, which existed from 1929 until the Second World War. This country came into existence after the Balkan Wars and was comprised of more than 20 cultural groups. In 1946 a Socialist Yugoslavia was formed, covering much of the territory of the former Kingdom, this country was known as the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and was made up of six republics—Serbia, Montenegro, Slovenia, Macedonia, Croatia, as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia had a population of 24 million by 1991 when four of the republics (Slovenia, Macedonia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina) declared their independence. Eventually all of the republics became autonomous and Yugoslavia ceased to exist in 2003.

#### **.yu domain:**

An internet suffix— such as .com, .org, or .gov— created by Borka Jerman Blažič for use in Yugoslavia, before its dissolution into separate countries. Created in 1991 and abolished in

2010, seven years after Yugoslavia ceased to exist, the domain was eventually acquired by the Museum of Yugoslav History in Belgrade.

#### **vi. Worksheet:**

Respond to each of the following questions with at least three sentences:

1. Discuss how Domanović's art challenges the traditional understanding of art as stable, obtainable, and valuable object.
2. Domanović often collects imagery from the internet and receives assistance in producing the making of her artwork. How does this way of working challenge the traditional understanding of artist as creator?
3. In works like the *Belgrade Hand* series Domanović investigates prosthetics. How can technology be used to improve the body? Can you think of examples you have seen within your life?
4. Like many science fiction narratives Domanović's work both celebrates and remains cautious of developing technology. What are some of the ways technology has positively and or negatively affected your life?
5. Domanović allows history to be presented as non-linear and multi-faceted. Provide and discuss an example of a historical subject or event that has multiple viewpoints surrounding its retelling. 94 chestnut street

#### **vii. Sources**

##### **Link to Plug In ICA:**

<http://plugin.org/>

##### **Links to Aleksandra Domanović's work:**

Aleksandra Domanović's work on Tanya Leighton Gallery's website:

<http://www.tanyaleighton.com/index.php?pageId=445&l=en>

A short video of Domanović's process while making her exhibition for Sensory Spaces 7 at Willem van der Vorm Gallery in the Netherlands:

<http://www.boijmans.nl/en/7/calendar-exhibitions/calendaritem/1725/sensory-spaces-7>

Aleksandra Domanović's From Yu to Me (34 min 30 sec video):

<https://vimeo.com/95833310>

Interview between Aleksandra Domanović and Borka Jerman Blažič:

<http://rhizome.org/editorial/2014/may/23/interview-Borka-Jerman-Blazic/>

##### **Articles and texts about women and technology:**

The Forgotten Female Programmers:

<http://www.npr.org/sections/alltechconsidered/2014/10/06/345799830/the-forgotten-female-programmers-who-created-modern-tech>

Ada Lovelace:



Isaacson, Walter, "Ada, Countess of Lovelace, " in *The Innovators: How a Group of Hackers, Geniuses and Geeks Created the Digital Revolution*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014), 7-34.

Plant, Sadie, *Zeros + Ones: Digital Women + the New Technoculture*, (New York: Doubleday, 1997).

### **Post-Internet Art:**

What is Post-Internet Art? Understanding the Revolutionary New Art Movement  
[http://www.artspace.com/magazine/interviews\\_features/post\\_internet\\_art-52138](http://www.artspace.com/magazine/interviews_features/post_internet_art-52138)

Petra Cortright:  
<http://www.petracortright.com/>

Jon Rafman:  
<http://jonrafman.com/>  
<http://9-eyes.com/> (A curated collection of images sourced from Google's Street View)

Seth Price:  
<http://sethpriceimages.com/>

Cory Arcangel  
<http://www.coryarcangel.com/>

### **Yugoslavia:**

Allcock, John B., *Yugoslavia: Former Federated Nation 1929-2003*, Encyclopedia Britannica.  
<http://www.britannica.com/place/Yugoslavia-former-federated-nation-1929-2003>