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On (He)

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On (He), 30'' x 30''

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Artist's Statement

Since the early 1990s, my work has involved creating conceptually based paintings, sculptures, and installations. I grew up in Tito's pre-war Yugoslavia, and its controversial existence left a big scar on me. Some called Yugoslavia an experiment, others saw everything in it, from the healing of old ethnonationalist accounts in the previous two World Wars to the cradle of Tito's socialism, i.e., Titoism, where finally an ordinary worker could prosper.

Tito died, and peoples and nationalities began to settle old accounts.

I felt the need to address Tito, and I could only do that by taking away his strong presence. In the painting *On (He)* (2011), half of Tito's portrait is painted, depriving him of the opportunity to speak but not the opportunity to witness everything that happened in the former Yugoslavia. Did I subconsciously ask Comrade Tito to take responsibility for the thousands of lost youths, or did I beg for lost security and a lost identity?

Whether drawing, painting, or creating installations, the post-socialist subject is often present in my work as a subconscious self. At first, I was not aware of it; viewers would point it out to me. My laments for the loss of identity and post-socialist victimized subjectivity finally intersected while I was doing my Master of Fine Arts at the University of Windsor. I produced a substantial body of work throughout this period, and it became clear that producing art was an attempt to find my own lost identity. Between the mix of Croatian and Serbian heritage on one side and a simultaneous desire for and resentment of Tito's Yugoslavia on the other, I was the artist in the epicentre of gallery space, represented by all similarities and contradictions between the two. The revelation of such a complex identity has also meant its acceptance.

