

Konteksti **nevidljivosti**



Contexts of Invisibility

KONTEKSTI NEVIDLJIVOSTI
(umetničke rezidencije i marginalizovane grupe)

Nosilac projekta
KEC Art Box, Petrovaradin / Novi Sad

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U rezidencijalnom centru Cité internationale des arts boravila sam sa multimedijalnim umetnikom Draganom Vojvodićem u godini u kojoj ta pariska umetnička rezidencija obeležava šezdeset godina postojanja (2025).

Iako se očekuje da u umetničku rezidenciju dođu sa jasno definisanim projektom i razrađenom metodologijom rada, umetnici i umetnice gotovo je nikada ne opažaju isključivo kao neutralan prostor stvaranja; ona predstavlja složen kontekst u kojem se razotkrivaju mehanizmi funkcionisanja i sadejstva kulturne i društvene stvarnosti. Taj kontekst, pre ili kasnije, nameće novu temu – često relevantniju od prvobitno zamišljenog projekta.

Iskustvo društvenim okolnostima nametnutog suživota sa mladim beskućnicima iz Afrike ukazalo je na paradoks onoga što smatramo otvorenim kulturnim prostorom i pomerilo moj istraživački fokus ka socijalnom fenomenu beskućništva. Projekat proistekao iz ovog rezidencijalnog iskustva, usmeren je ka propitivanju liminalnih identiteta, socijalne (ne)vidljivosti i institucionalne segregacije, kao i na ispitivanje u kojoj meri diskurzivna inkluzivnost savremenih umetničkih praksi ostaje strukturno i sadržajno udaljena od stvarnih životnih uslova onih koji su sistemski konstruisani kao „drugi“.

Ključne reči: „drugi“; invisible homelessness; mineurs non accompagnés; unsheltered people; liminalnost identiteta; umetnička rezidencija; biopolitika; diskurzivna inkluzivnost; pasivna tolerancija; režimi vidljivosti

Cité internationale des arts/ Očekivanja i iskustva

Cité internationale des arts, osnovan 1965. godine, jedna je od najstarijih i najznačajnijih umetničkih rezidencija na svetu. U njoj svakog meseca boravi više od 300 umetnika i umetnica iz preko stotinu zemalja sveta. Tokom jula i avgusta 2025. godine, Dragan (Vojvodić) je u Parizu planirao da se bavi zvukom, dok sam ja nameravala da pišem o nevidljivosti u savremenoj umetnosti u kontekstu rodni politika.

Međutim, neposredno okruženje rezidencije u kojem je, tokom ovih meseci, boravila zajednica migranata, ponovo nas je povezalo sa zajedničkim projektom:

The Meaning of Home in Today's World / Farsickness, Homesickness, Homelessness iz 2021, u kojem smo propitivali pojmove kao što su identitet, dom, beskućništvo i migracije.

Iako su umetnici u Parizu često svedeni na „turiste“ koji lutaju između muzeja, galerija, kafea i *open-studija* (najčešće formalni gest „izlaganja u Parizu“), rezidencija u Cité-u omogućava sagledavanje društvenih nejednakosti, kao i ograničenja institucionalnih politika iz neposredne blizine.

Migracije se danas najčešće posmatraju u širem kontekstu klimatskih promena, identiteta, kolonijalne prošlosti i ljudskih prava. Fokus je pomeren sa dokumentarističkih i humanitarnih narativa na istraživanje strukturalnog nasilja nametnutih granica, državnih režima nadzora,



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mobility studies, planetary futures, ecopolitics i postcolonial repair...

migracije se propituju u kontekstu umetnosti koja reflektuje globalne krize i dinamiku pripadnosti, ali su savremene umetničke prakse, čini se, i distancirane od stvarnog života onih koji su sistemski označeni kao „drugi“. Inkluzivnost i empatija nisu samo umetnički *stejmenti* ili projekti – oni zahtevaju prisustvo, pažnju i svest o stvarnim razlikama u stepenu privilegovanosti i ranjivosti. Ta nepodudarnost deklarativnog i stvarnog postaje prostor kritičkog zapažanja i refleksije o sopstvenim ograničenjima, kako umetnika, tako i društva.

Tema odlaska iz doma i traganja za sigurnim ili povlašćenim mestom, odnosno prostorne, vremenske i duhovne dislokacije, prisutna je u književnosti još od „Epa o Gilgamešu“ i „Odiseje“ a za razliku od epskih junaka, odlazak mladih migranata iz Afrike nije metafora ili avantura, već egzistencijalna nužnost. Njihov „dom“ je liminalan, a traganje neizvesno, oblikovano strukturnim i institucionalnim preprekama. Poređenje sa epskom književnom tradicijom artikuliše univerzalnu potrebu za pripadanjem i preživljavanjem, ali danas toj temi pristupamo bez idealizacije, fokusirajući se na ranjivost, marginalizaciju i nejednakosti moći koje oblikuju savremena kretanja ljudi.



Mladi beskućnici noći provode ispred umetničke rezidencije







Mladići koji spavaju ispred zgrade Cité internationale des arts pripadaju različitim, često preklapajućim kategorijama:

„oni koji žive u pokretu“ ili „izvan doma“, unsheltered people, invisible homelessness, „tražioci azila“, „neregularni migranti“, mineurs non accompagnés, „maloletni migranti bez pratnje“ i „maloletnici bez dokumenata“.

U najvećem broju dolaze iz afričkih zemalja – Malija, Senegala, Obale Slonovače, Gvineje, Eritreje i Sudana, ali i iz Avganistana, Bangladeša i drugih kriznih regiona. U Francusku, najčešće upravo u Pariz, dolaze zbog jezika, kolonijalne istorije i francuskog sistema azila, koji je istovremeno preopterećen pa zato i neefikasan. Njihova integracija dodatno je otežana diskriminacijom i društvenim tenzijama. Mnogi se suočavaju sa siromaštvom i dugotrajnim čekanjem na administrativne odluke i završavaju na ulici zbog nedovoljnih kapaciteta prihvatnih centara.

Prostor ispred Cité-a predstavlja jedno od mesta koje im, uz prećutno dopuštenje gradskih vlasti, pruža privremeni zaklon i relativno sigurnije mesto za prenoćište. U tom kontekstu, umetnici u rezidenciji imaju mogućnost da neposredno svedoče o društvenoj nejednakosti i ekonomskoj nesigurnosti, ali narativima o „inkluziji“ i „kulturnoj razmeni“ ne mogu zameniti stvarno iskustvo i promišljanje života ljudi na margini.

Posvećenost inkluzivnosti u okviru Cité-a ostaje deklarativna. Razgovora i stvarne interakcije nema, što prostor zamišljene koegzistencije pretvara u polje nevidljivosti i jasno ucrtanih društvenih granica.

Time se otvara pitanje šta inkluzivnost zaista znači u savremenoj umetnosti.

Može li umetnik razumeti položaj onih koji su svakodnevno ugroženi ukoliko ga ne sagledava iz njihove perspektive?

Umetnici u rezidenciji nalaze se u ambivalentnoj poziciji – ne zbog ravnodušnosti, već zbog nejasno definisanog opsega sopstvene uloge. Svaki gest upućen „drugom“ može delovati nedovoljan ili pogrešan. Stvaralački prostor Cité-a se pritom ne pojavljuje kao mesto otvorenog konflikta, već kao urbani aparat u kojem se različiti režimi boravka odvijaju bez nužne razmene.

Između umetnika i „onih koji žive u pokretu“ postoji jasna, iako neizgovorena, barijera: njihovi životi odvijaju se paralelno, ponekad na udaljenosti od svega jednog metra, ali uz snažnu simboličku i društvenu distancu. I pozicija mladih beskućnika koji noću borave ispred rezidencije određena je ambivalencijom – fizički su prisutni, ali institucionalno „van“ društvenog okvira. Njihovo prisustvo postaje ogledalo ograničenja umetničkih i kulturnih politika koje nominalno teže inkluzivnosti.

Postavlja se pitanje: Šta znači stvarati u okruženju institucionalnog prećutkivanja i „nevidljivih“ mladih ljudi u umetničkoj rezidenciji u centru Pariza? U kojoj meri prisustvo „drugih i drugačijih“ utiče na umetnike, i da li se ta dva sveta uopšte međusobno opažaju – ili samo koegzistiraju, razdvojeni spratovima i nevidljivim, ali jasno postavljenim granicama?

Pozicija mladih beskućnika nije samo političko pitanje, već stanje liminalnog identiteta – između doma i ne-doma, prava i ne-prava, prisutnosti i odsutnosti. Taj paradoks postaje naročito vidljiv u umetničkom kontekstu rezidencije, prostoru koji formalno insistira na otvorenosti i dijalogu.



Svakodnevica „onih koji žive u pokretu“

Mladi beskućnici koji borave ispred Cité-a nalaze se u stanju „kontrolisane nepokretnosti“ – formalno su prisutni u urbanom prostoru, ali bez mogućnosti pune društvene participacije.

Populacija ispred zgrade Cité-a u velikoj meri pripada kategoriji maloletnih migranata ili onih koji se predstavljaju kao pripadnici te, u okviru savremenih migracionih režima, najranjivije grupe. U tom kontekstu, značajan broj njih ne poseduje lična dokumenta. Iako formalno ne podležu deportaciji, istovremeno su lišeni prava na rad i pristupa stabilnom smeštaju, te egzistiraju u stanju produženog pravnog limba – između delimičnog priznanja i institucionalne suspenzije.

Materijalna imovina ovih mladih ljudi svedena je na lične stvari koje nose sa sobom: garderobu, mobilne telefone i rančeve. Na prvi pogled se ne razlikuju od svojih prosečnih zapadnoevropskih vršnjaka – obučeni su u savremenu sportsku odeću, sa kačketima, slušalicama i ruksacima. Uprkos tome što žive na ulici, vode računa o osnovnoj ličnoj higijeni; ujutru i uveče se umivaju, peru zube i noge na javnoj česmi ispred zgrade rezidencije.

Noćni boravak ispred Cité-a nije izraz poverenja u institucije, već strategija preživljavanja. Spavanje u neposrednoj blizini muzeja, univerziteta i kulturnih centara percipira se kao bezbednije zbog stalnog osvetljenja, video-nadzora i prisustva obezbeđenja. Svakodnevno se ponavlja gotovo identičan ritual: uveče se kartoni polažu na pločnik, improvizovani šatori se postavljaju, a tela se povlače u minimalni prostor privatnosti. Mladi





beskućnici stalno razgovaraju telefonom, smeju se, slušaju muziku, povremeno igraju fudbal, često se i posvađaju. Iako preterana buka izaziva frustraciju kod nekih umetnika koji rade u ateljeima iznad, jasno je da takav način života nije rezultat izbora, već strukturalnih ograničenja. Policija reaguje sporadično, ukoliko je ugrožen javni red i mir, humanitarne organizacije dolaze češće, obezbeđuju hranu, ćebad, vreće za spavanje, lekove i osnovne potrepštine.

Tokom dana, ovi mladi ljudi postaju gotovo nevidljivi u urbanom pejzažu. Ustaju rano, a sve što poseduju mora biti svedeno na sadržaj njihovog ranca. Šatore sklapaju i skrivaju u okolini rezidencijalne zgrade. Nakon jutarnje higijene, koju obavljaju na fontani ispred rezidencije i u obližnjem javnom toaletima, nestaju a dolaze gradske službe: ulice se peru, otpad uklanja, a prostor se vraća u stanje urbane reprezentativnosti. U tom istom prostoru, tridesetak minuta kasnije, otvara se luksuzna prodavnica i galerija, brišu tragove noćne prisutnosti.

Dnevna svakodnevnica mladih beskućnika odlikuje se odsustvom stabilne strukture i potpunim izostankom privatnosti. Pasivno zadržavanje u javnom prostoru (biblioteke, centri za pomoć, tržni centri) smenjuju se sa dugim periodima čekanja. Kontakti sa socijalnim službama uglavnom se svode na administrativne procese bez sigurnog ishoda. U večernjim satima vraćaju se ispred zgrade Cité-a, čime se zatvara ciklus koji se svakodnevno ponavlja – ciklus kretanja i zastoja, prisutnosti i brisanja, vidljivosti i sistematske nevidljivosti.

Ograničenje sistema

Mada Pariz ima razvijenu mrežu javnih, nevladinih volonterskih organizacija koje pružaju pomoć mladim migrantima i beskućnicima, broj ljudi koji traže zaštitu često premašuje raspoložive resurse, što jeste problem koji je prisutan u mnogim evropskim metropolama.

Humanitarne organizacije, kao što je Utopia 56, intervenišu kada beskućnici spavaju na pariskim ulicama, ispred javnih zgrada ili na javnim površinama.

Pomažu beskućnicima i maloletnim migrantima bez pratnje tako što dele hranu, ćebad, vreće za spavanje, osnovne potrepštine, pa i u nalaženju skloništa kada je to moguće. Ipak, zbog ogromnog pritiska, mnogi ostaju izvan mreže pomoći.



Boravak u rezidenciji Cité internationale des arts razotkriva složen odnos između umetnika i marginalizovanih grupa u kojem je fizička blizina praćena izraženom društvenom i institucionalnom distancom. Takav kontekst otvara pitanje značenja pozicije „drugog“ i razloga zbog kojih perspektive sistemski marginalizovanih subjekata ostaju teško dostupne akterima koji deluju unutar dominantnog ili relativno privilegovanog kulturnog okvira.

Rezidencijalni okvir razotkriva ograničenja savremenih umetničkih praksi: iako postoji iskrena namera da se inkluzivnost ostvari, umetničko delovanje ostaje u velikoj meri uslovljeno ličnim, normativnim, profesionalnim i institucionalnim okvirima koji otežavaju neposredno razumevanje iskustava društvene ranjivosti.

Time se umetnička rezidencija ne pojavljuje kao prostor stvarne razmene, već kao mesto latentne napetosti između deklarativne otvorenosti i izostanka direktne interakcije.

U tom smislu, Cité funkcioniše kao analitičko polje u kojem se istovremeno proizvode i razotkrivaju odnosi privilegije i nevidljivosti. Ostaje otvoreno pitanje u kojoj meri umetnost i umetnici mogu i žele da prevaziđu poziciju posmatrača, kao i u kojoj meri, učestvuju u reprodukciji onih struktura isključivanja koje njihovi radovi često nastoje da problematizuju.





CONTEXTS OF INVISIBILITY

Artist Residencies and Marginalised Groups

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Contexts of Invisibility

Artist Residencies and Marginalised Groups

Novi Sad, 2025

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Artist Residencies and Marginalised Groups

In 2025, the year marking the 60th anniversary of the Cité internationale des arts, I undertook an artist residency there together with multimedia artist Dragan Vojvodić.

Although artists are generally expected to arrive at a residency with a clearly defined project and a developed working methodology, residencies are rarely perceived solely as neutral spaces of production. Rather, they function as complex contexts in which the mechanisms of cultural and social realities are revealed through everyday coexistence. Such contexts, sooner or later, impose new themes – often more relevant than the originally conceived project.

An experience of enforced coexistence with young homeless people from Africa, shaped by broader social circumstances, exposed the paradox of what is commonly understood as an open cultural space and shifted my research focus towards homelessness as a social phenomenon. The project that emerged from this residency experience is oriented towards examining liminal identities, social (in)visibility and institutional segregation, as well as questioning the extent to which the discursive inclusivity of contemporary art practices remains structurally and substantively distant from the actual living conditions of those who are systemically constructed as “the Other”.

Keywords: “the Other”; invisible homelessness; mineurs non accompagnés; unsheltered people; liminality of identity; artist in residency; biopolitics; discursive inclusivity; passive tolerance; regimes of visibility



Cité internationale des arts *Expectations and Experience*



Founded in 1965, the Cité internationale des arts is one of the oldest and most significant artist residency programmes in the world. Each month, more than 300 artists from over one hundred countries reside there. During July and August 2025, Dragan Vojvodić planned to work with sound, while I intended to write about invisibility in contemporary art within the context of gender politics.

However, the immediate surroundings of the residency – inhabited during these months by a community of migrants – reconnected us to our earlier joint project “The Meaning of Home

in Today's World /Farsickness, Homesickness, Homelessness" (2021), in which we explored concepts such as identity, home, homelessness and migration.

Although artists in Paris are often reduced to the role of "tourists" moving between museums, galleries, cafés and open studios – frequently within the formalised gesture of "exhibiting in Paris" – the residency at the Cité also enables close observation of social inequalities and the limitations of institutional policies.

Today, migration is most often addressed within broader frameworks of climate change, identity, colonial histories and human rights.

The focus has shifted from documentary and humanitarian narratives towards investigations of structural violence produced by imposed borders, state surveillance regimes, climate migration and hybrid identities. Through theoretical frameworks such as mobility studies, planetary futures, ecopolitics and postcolonial repair, migration is examined in relation to art that reflects global crises and dynamics of belonging. Yet contemporary artistic practices appear to remain distanced from the everyday realities of those systemically marked as "the Other". Inclusivity and empathy cannot remain merely artistic statements or project concepts – they require presence, attention and an awareness of concrete differences in privilege and vulnerability. This discrepancy between the declarative and

the lived becomes a space for critical observation and reflection on the limitations of both artistic practice and society.

The theme of leaving home and searching for a safe or privileged place – of spatial, temporal and spiritual displacement – has been present in literature since the Epic of Gilgamesh and The Odyssey. Unlike epic heroes, however, the departure of young migrants from Africa is not a metaphor or an adventure, but an existential necessity. Their “home” is liminal and their search uncertain, shaped by structural and institutional barriers. The comparison with epic literary traditions articulates a universal need for belonging and survival, yet today this theme is approached without idealisation, focusing instead on vulnerability, marginalisation and power inequalities that shape contemporary human mobility.

Young Homeless Migrants in Front of the Artist Residency

The young men sleeping in front of the Cité internationale des arts belong to various, often overlapping categories – people “living in movement” or “outside the home”, unsheltered people, invisible homelessness, “asylum seekers”, “irregular migrants”, mineurs non accompagnés, “unaccompanied minors” and “undocumented minors”. Most come from African countries – Mali, Senegal, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, Eritrea and Sudan – as well as from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and other crisis regions. They arrive in France, most often Paris, due to language, colonial history and the French asylum system, which is simultaneously overburdened and inefficient. Their integration is further hindered by discrimination and social tensions.

Many face poverty and prolonged waiting periods for administrative decisions and end up on the streets due to insufficient accommodation capacities.

The space in front of the Cité represents one of the locations that, with the tacit tolerance of municipal authorities, offers temporary shelter and a relatively safer place to sleep. Within this context, artists in residence have the opportunity to directly witness social inequality and economic precarity, yet narratives of “inclusion” and “cultural exchange” cannot substitute for lived experience or sustained reflection on the lives of those at the margins.

The commitment to inclusivity within the Cité remains largely declarative. Conversations and meaningful interactions are almost entirely



absent, transforming a space of imagined coexistence into a field of invisibility and clearly delineated social boundaries.

This raises the question of what inclusivity truly means in contemporary art. Can an artist understand the position of those who are daily exposed to precarity without considering their perspective?

Artists in residence occupy an ambivalent position – not due to indifference, but due to the undefined scope of their own role. Any gesture directed towards “the Other” may appear insufficient or misguided.

The creative space of the Cité does not emerge as a site of open conflict, but rather as an urban apparatus in which different regimes of presence unfold without necessary exchange.

Between artists and homeless youth there exists a clear, though unspoken, barrier – their lives unfold in parallel, sometimes at a distance of only one metre, yet marked by strong symbolic and social separation. The position of the young homeless people who spend nights in front of the residency is itself ambivalent – physically present, yet institutionally outside the social framework. Their presence becomes a mirror reflecting the limitations of artistic and cultural policies that nominally strive for inclusivity.

This leads to the question: what does it mean to create within an environment of institutional silence and invisible young people in an artist residency located in the centre of Paris? To what extent does the presence of “others and the different” affect artists, and do these two worlds perceive one another at all – or do they merely coexist, separated by floors and invisible yet firmly established boundaries?

The position of young homeless people is not only a political issue, but a condition of liminal identity – between home and non-home, rights and non-rights, presence and absence. This paradox becomes particularly visible within the context of an artist residency, a space that formally insists on openness and dialogue.

Everyday Life of Homeless Youth





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Young people staying in front of the Cité exist in a state of “controlled immobility” – formally present in urban space, yet without the possibility of full social participation.

The population in front of the Cité largely belongs to the category of minor migrants, or those who present themselves as such – within contemporary migration regimes, one of the most vulnerable groups. In this context, a significant number lack personal identification documents. Although formally protected from deportation, they are simultaneously deprived of the right to work and access to stable accommodation, existing in a prolonged state of legal limbo – between partial recognition and institutional suspension.

Their material possessions are reduced to the personal items they carry with them – clothing, mobile phones and backpacks. At first glance, they do not differ from their Western European peers – dressed in contemporary sportswear, wearing caps, headphones and backpacks. Despite living on the street, they maintain basic personal hygiene – washing their faces, brushing their teeth and washing their feet at a public fountain in front of the residency building.

Spending the night in front of the Cité is not an expression of trust in institutions, but a survival strategy. Sleeping near museums, universities and cultural centres is perceived as safer due to constant lighting, video surveillance and the presence of security. Each evening follows an almost identical ritual – cardboard is laid on the pavement, improvised tents are set up and bodies withdraw into minimal spaces of privacy.

The young homeless constantly talk on their phones, laugh, listen to music, occasionally play football and sometimes argue. While excessive noise frustrates some artists working in studios above, it is evident that this way of life is not a matter of choice, but the result of structural constraints. Police intervene sporadically, primarily when public order is disrupted, while humanitarian organisations visit more frequently, providing food, blankets, sleeping bags, medication and basic necessities.

During the day, these young people become almost invisible within the urban landscape. They wake up early, and everything they own must fit into a single backpack. Tents are dismantled and hidden in the vicinity of the residency building. After performing basic morning hygiene — washing at the fountain in front of the residency and using nearby public toilets — they disappear, while municipal services arrive: streets are washed, waste is removed, and the space is restored to a state of urban representability. In that very same location, barely 30 minutes later, a luxury furniture store and gallery open, erasing the traces of nocturnal presence.

The daily lives of young homeless migrants are characterized by the absence of stable structure and the complete lack of privacy. Periods of passive presence in public spaces — libraries, aid centers, shopping malls — alternate with prolonged waiting. Interactions with social services are largely reduced to administrative procedures with uncertain outcomes. In the evening hours, they return to the area in front of the Cité building, thus closing a cycle that repeats daily — a cycle of movement and stasis, presence and erasure, visibility and systematic invisibility.





DIE
IN
KRAZEL
DE WIE

Stedelijk
Park





Structural limitations

Although Paris has a well-developed network of public, non-governmental, and volunteer organizations providing assistance to young migrants and homeless populations, the number of individuals seeking protection frequently exceeds available resources — a challenge common to many European metropolises.

Humanitarian organizations such as Utopia 56 intervene when homeless individuals sleep on Parisian streets, in front of public buildings, or in open public spaces.

They provide food, blankets, sleeping bags, basic necessities, and, when possible, assistance in securing temporary shelter for homeless individuals and unaccompanied minors. Nevertheless, due to overwhelming demand, many remain outside established support networks.

Inclusivity and Empathy in Practice







A residency at the Cité internationale des arts reveals a complex relationship between artists and marginalized groups, in which physical proximity is accompanied by pronounced social and institutional distance. Such a context raises fundamental questions about the meaning of the position of the “other” and the reasons why the perspectives of systemically marginalized subjects remain largely inaccessible to actors operating within dominant or relatively privileged cultural frameworks.





The residency framework exposes the limitations of contemporary artistic practices: even when there is a genuine intention to enact inclusivity, artistic engagement remains largely conditioned by personal, normative, professional, and institutional parameters that hinder direct understanding of lived experiences of social vulnerability. As a result, the residency does not function as a site of genuine exchange, but rather as a space of latent tension between declarative openness and the absence of direct interaction.

In this sense, the Cité operates as an analytical field in which relations of privilege and invisibility are simultaneously produced and rendered visible. An open question remains as to the extent to which art and artists can — and are willing to — move beyond the position of observers, and to what degree they participate, consciously or unconsciously, in reproducing the very structures

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