

This is. (Dom Mladih Documents)

This is. (Dom Mladih Documents) is a multimedia documentary project initiated by a group of people from Denmark, Germany, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and the USA, focusing on Sarajevo's youth house Dom Mladih and the young people of the city. The material (film, photos, texts) recorded and produced over the course of the past two years initially started as documentation of the "Revival" festival in May 2005, when approx. 8.000 people from Sarajevo and the whole world celebrated the first but temporary reopening of the city's youth house. By continuing to document the attempts to reopen the youth house and reclaim it for the youth, the **Dom Mladih Documents** manage to convey an insight into every-day life in Sarajevo, the situation of its youth, and its increasingly vibrant cultural scene.

Dom Mladih was destroyed in a bombing in 1992 during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Before the war it had been the heart of the city's youth culture, a place for concerts, parties and projects. 13 years after closing down the house due to the war destruction an international team of organisers ("Ask Sarajevo"), the young people themselves and many volunteers made it possible to reanimate Dom Mladih, reopening it for a three-day festival and increasing the pressure on the government to initiate the renovation of the building.

During the "Revival" festival in 2005 many international bands, artists and press representatives came to Sarajevo. The photos, films and interviews produced on this occasion speak vividly of Sarajevo's youth, the traumatic past, but above all of their resolute confidence in their own future and the future of the city. One year later, in May 2006, the team of **This is.** returned to Sarajevo to revisit Dom Mladih – now under construction – and to once again interview the protagonists.

While Dom Mladih still remained a building site in September 2006, and the youth involved in the events of the reopening felt more and more excluded from any decision-making concerning the future of the youth house, the **Dom Mladih Documents** were shown publicly for the first time: *five sets of large-format photographs* by Berlin-based photographer Gerrit Hahn, showing portraits of Revival-visitors, were bill-posted at central places in Sarajevo; approximately *15.000 stickers* with quotes from interviews were distributed throughout the city; and the 30-minute documentary *Revival*, produced by Kirsten Lindholm Astrup, Danica Curcic and Benjamin Swatez, premiered at "Kino Bosna", with further screenings in Sarajevo and Mostar. During the *photo safari* 100 disposable cameras were handed out to local children who were asked to photograph whatever seemed important to them during the next 24 hours. A selection of the results can be seen on the project's website (<http://www.this-is.org>) and will be included in the planned publication.

In February 2007, the completely renovated and redesigned Dom Mladih finally opened. Financed by the city, the state and the commercial centre "Skenderija", the administration of the youth house now aims at establishing a lively young music scene, while the programme and the slick new design of the youth house clearly caters to the more well-to-do Sarajevans. Whether this concept will allow an independent young scene to develop unaffected by commercial or profit-based interests remains to be seen. It is now also up to the city's youth to claim Dom Mladih as their own space.

The team of **This is. (Dom Mladih Documents)** is now working on compiling a publication, bringing together all recorded material and our experiences and impressions of life in a city that for a long time only featured in Western European media with news of atrocities. The youth of Sarajevo will have the opportunity to state their opinions about progress, regression, disillusionment and optimism. The publication will not only document the story of Dom Mladih, but also offer an insight into the unknown and at times underestimated cultural scene of the city, allowing the book to be read also as a guide through the city of Sarajevo.

This is *This is*:

Documentary:

Revival (2006, Kirsten Lindholm Astrup, Danica Curcic, Benjamin Swatez) is a 30-minute documentary focusing on Sarajevo and the story of Dom Mladih, the city's bombed youth house, its revival in 2005 and the youth's struggle for space and a voice of its own.

The documentary premiered at Kino Bosna in Sarajevo in September 2006, has been shown in Sarajevo and in Mostar, was broadcast on the nationwide Bosnian TV channel FTV in February 2007, and has been selected to participate in various international film festivals.

Danica Curcic (1985, Serbia) lives in Copenhagen, studying film and media studies at the Copenhagen University. **Kirsten Lindholm Astrup** (1983, Denmark) also lives in Copenhagen, studying film, media and cultural studies at the Copenhagen University. **Benjamin Swatez** (1981, USA) has studied fine art and is working as artist, children's book illustrator and filmmaker and currently lives in California. All three have worked on several documentary film projects, among them "*Freedom*" (Swatez, 2005), about youth in New Orleans after the hurricane Katrina, "*Food Not Bombs*" (Astrup, 2006), a political video art / VJ-project and "*Hvad vil du være, når du bli 'r stor?*" (Astrup/ Curcic, 2005), a documentary about growing up in Denmark.

Photography and Interviews:

Gerrit Hahn's work **Dom Mladih Portraits (2005-2007)** consists of a series of portraits and interviews recorded over the course of nearly two years, beginning in May 2005 during the Revival festival and ending with the official reopening of the youth house in February 2007. A selection of the photographs was bill-posted in large format as sets of six portraits at five different central places in Sarajevo in September 2006, and quotes from the interviews were distributed in form of 15.000 stickers in Sarajevo, Mostar, and several other European cities. Gerrit Hahn was also responsible for the photo safari, during which 100 disposable cameras were handed out to local children who then documented one day of their lives. A selection of these photos is presented on the project website.

Gerrit Hahn (1979, Germany) lives in Berlin, where, since 2004, he works as a freelance photographer for several editorial departments and publishers (Zeit Leben, Süddeutsche Zeitung Magazin, Kiepenheuer & Witsch, Bauer, amongst others). He presented his work in an exhibition at the Berlin Film Academy in 2002. His work includes many features, among them the portrait of a former forced labourer in the Ukraine (*Nicolai*, 2005), portraits of tourists in Mallorca (*Lovers*, 2005), a feature on *Romani settlements* in Sarajevo (2004) and *Cityscapes*, Sarajevo 2004.

Organisation:

Eva Wilson (1982, UK) lives in Berlin, where she is studying art history and cultural studies and working in the contemporary art field as organisational assistant. Eva Wilson is responsible for the project conception, communication and organisation within **This is**.

Michael Schultheiß (1977, Germany) currently lives in Hannover, working as a freelance journalist and author. Since summer 2006 he has been taking care of the website and blog of **This is**. and is also co-responsible for the conception and realisation of the project.