

Memory Material: A (Small Town) Gathering
Olivera Jokić

Residents of Sivac, a village in the north of Serbia, have started collecting artifacts from local households in a kind of communal archive. Their collection is located inside a local bar, which is located inside the back room of the town's publicly funded firehouse. The bar is illegal and very popular with the locals: drinks there are very cheap, but people go there because of the special collection. The objects come into the collection from the bar clientele and others who do not normally come through this kind of establishment, namely women. All contributors were inspired by the example of the local fire marshal, who was the first to display in this space the items he gathered during inspections of abandoned local houses.

In a village that suffered cataclysmic economic decline with the disintegration of Yugoslavia and globalization of agri-business, whose population has been steadily shrinking for decades, those who remain are gathering for a collection of objects that are of limited interest to professional and activist memory organizers. In the main room and about the house now live hand-written documents, paintings, and musical instruments; glassware, bicycles, and wood-burning stoves; deer antlers, firewood, and clocks. Put together by people left out of the groundbreaking academic discussions about the origins, architecture, and interpretation of archives, this collection may have something to say about what catches the eye of memory in former Yugoslavia that wasn't trained on metropolitan discourse or visions of the nation-state.



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