

7.

THE WORLD IN  
A SUPERMARKET AISLE

Tanja Lažetić  
& Sunoj D





It happens at regular intervals, daily, once a week, twice a week. Grocery shopping, in her home in Ljubljana, is a chore that has been part of Tanja Lažetić's daily routine, an act done mechanically, more often than not. But one day, at her local grocery shop, it struck the Slovenian artist that the shiny, polished apples on the shelves were from Chile. They were cheap too. Tanja thought there was something wrong there. Slovenia has large areas under apple production. Yet, these apples from Chile, which would have been flown into the country, were still cheaper than the local produce.

Someone was probably making a good profit. Something was very wrong with this kind of globalization, Tanja thought. And that was how and where the *Migrants* work began.

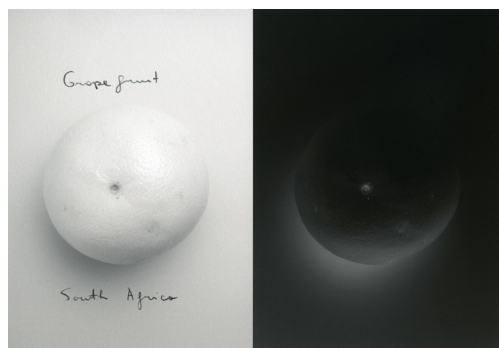
Tanja's 2010 work *Migrants* brings together passport portrait-like photographs of all the foreign fruits and vegetables found in Ljubljana, along with their names and their place of origin. The migrants come into a country quietly, and so do these fruits and vegetables. The migrants that come without a

whisper have a shadow, a ghostly past, a mystery that clouds what is behind them, who produced these fruits, vegetables, where they are all from. And hence the work has 200 photos of these alien food items placed alongside each of their negatives - their shadow, their lesser known origins.

With these 400 photographs, Tanja wants people to stop and think about where the food they eat is coming from. The salt is probably from India, the pepper from Sri Lanka; she reminds me of how we have the whole world on our plates and are really more connected than we realize.

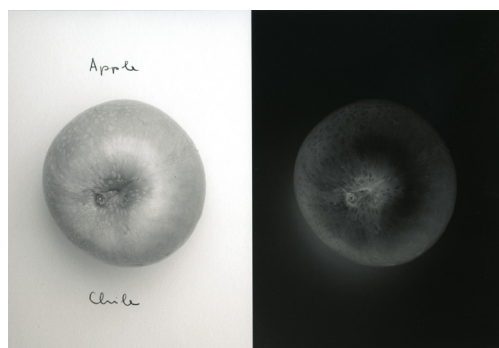
If apples from Chile are cheaper than the apples from around the corner, it must have led to some slump in local agriculture, I ask. It is a serious case the world over. Like the video killing the radio star, the world comes over to push the local man off the plate. Social anthropology calls it globalization.

We talk of how only rich people can afford to buy local food, those without money need these migrants. Tanja tells me that



It is ok, she says, if she buys pepper, for example, from Sri Lanka, because peppers are not .....  
grown in Slovenia. But apples are, garlic is, so buying those that come from elsewhere is a slap on the face of localism.

The farmers aren't as affected as in say, India. I explain to her what the situation in India is like, the farmer suicides due to various reasons, the problems that arise from farmers taking to growing cash crops - like cocoa, vanilla, cotton - things they cannot eat nor have any use for themselves. Tanja doesn't know of such a phenomenon there. It helps that Slovenia is still a socialist country, for the farmers continue to get support from the government. There is also a growing awareness that it is important to support people in the local environment, she says.



We talk about the migration issue in Europe, both into Slovenia and out of those parts into the rest of Europe or elsewhere. Tanja says that she used the word 'migrants' in the title of her work because people are not much different from fruits and vegetables, they decide to go somewhere where they can live better.

Likewise with animals. The idea of migration is normal, it has always happened and there is nothing wrong with it. Yet, she finds it a complex question, given

this is why gardening and growing your own food is so popular these days in Europe. Everything that is 'organic and natural' is expensive. It is really two different things, she points out.



the situation in parts of Europe,  
given the politics that envelope  
such movements.

Yet, food is spared such  
attempts to block their movement,  
their migration. Not always,  
but mostly. There are powerful  
economics at play here. It makes  
sense to some rich men somewhere  
to engineer these new foodways  
and change the map of the dinner  
plate. Migration is, almost  
always, a good business idea.

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This piece emerged from a conversation between  
the artists *Tanja Lažetić* and *Sunoj D* who live and  
practice in Ljubljana, Slovenia and Bangalore, India  
respectively. Their works are available at  
[www2.arnes.si/~tlazet/](http://www2.arnes.si/~tlazet/)  
and <http://sunojd.wordpress.com>

Sunoj is the Art Editor of *The Forager*.