Looking Awry

the quote:
"for sorrow's eye, glazed with blinding tears, divides one thing entire to many objects: like perspectives, which rightly gaz'd upon show nothing but confusion; o'y awry distinguish form so your sweet majesty, looking awry upon your lord's departure, finds shapes of grief more than himself to wall; which, look'd on as it is, is nought but shadows of what it is not."
[Shakespeare, Richard II, II.7]

the text:
The works of Igor Grubić, Aydan Murtezaoglu, Maja Bajević and Adrian Paci have many points in common: they deal with personal topics and private perspectives revealing suppressed and invisible identities within the specific turbulent social context of countries in transition. They demonstrate both their embodiment in social reality and a shift away from it. Through minimal intervention into everyday reality they open the depths of deepest collective and individual frustrations, fears and desires, and indirectly touch upon problems of sex and gender, authenticity and fiction, center and margin, and issues of cultural transmutations.

the footnote:
- The title has been taken from the book by Steve Ziss in which he analyzes cinema from the perspective of Lacanian psychoanalysis, Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture (October, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1992)
earthquake and of the regime used to cope with the
terrors of the devastation process. The angles in the
titled image evoke typical political kentships of left
and right. Again, the artist himself is the protagonist,
but while Grubić hides behind a mask, Murtezaoglu
turns her back on us. The viewer's gaze is possible only
over her shoulder. We cannot assume her perspective,
but only decode a slanted view. Her back guards the
city; and the artist is like a sphinx, not only an outside
viewer but also a participant in the social situation. In
a way similar to Grubić, who speaks about his own
status, assuming the power as the location and another
person's childhood as his starting point; Murtezaoglu
also speaks about the status of artists in Turkish
society, in which she intervenes by her modest gesture
of manipulation performed in Photoshop®.

Adrian PACI, an Albanian artist who has been
living in Milan for years, deals with the circumstances
of our limited perception in his work, and with the
shortages and impossibilities of experiencing important
events of everyday reality. In his video Viaggio, the
artist stages his own death. The video depicts the
ritual of ensuring a deceased person, customarily
performed by professional workers in Albania. The
numbing singing of a wailer is highly suggestive,
and there are moments when it seems that the singing
creates an experience of the other side, but in fact since
the workers are hired professionals, the performance
is not authentic. The enchanting quality of the voices
delay the realization that the corpse on the altar is
breathing, and when he stands up, we feel relieved for a
moment, although we are aware of the fact that the
death is staged. The living corpse — the artist himself
—is a metaphor of several identities: of artist,
dissident and father. It is a minimal intervention into
reality that fulfills its efforts to make known the
ultimate secret of death, and opens itself to the
dynamic of social interaction and the traumatic
permissiveness of multiple identities.

The work of Majda BAJEVIĆ is related to her
personal biography and the political and social
circumstances in Yugoslavia during the 1990s. The
dissident position of Bajevic, who has been living in
Paris since the early 1990s, exists as a result of her
connections to Sarajevo and her critical distance to the
All the words function in a socially determined context: the dissident position of Paci and the symbolic
death of the artist, the war from the inside and outside,
the social tissue of urbanity and the position of
Murtezaoglu who does not show her face as woman
and artist, and in the work of Grubic the prison as an
impossible and dreaded place for providing justice. The
slanted gaze also refers to the situation in countries in
transition, which is always ambiguous and equally
oriented to renewing the golden history [nostalgia for
the security of the socialist age] as to the projections of a
golden future [of real socialism] in which everybody
will have equal opportunities — in these countries
normalization should guarantee the security of the
future, as well as it guarantees the expression of the
status quo. The past and the future are a burden for the
present, the present in which it is possible only to re-
state what was before, hoping that minimal shifts in this
process will open a new perspective, pregnant with
changes.