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By Rachel Elder

The town of Lendava is located in Eastern Slovenia, just ten minutes' drive from the border of Hungary and 20 minutes from the border of Croatia. The area is characterized by Austro-Hungarian architecture, steep hills of vineyards, and cherry trees, and small remnants of Soviet border control. It is not a tourist destination, except for small wine tasting houses and hot spring baths mostly populated by elderly scantily clad visitors. The people speak Slovenian and Hungarian and several locals indicated that they identify with Hungary more than Slovenia. I was able to stay in this small town for a month in Summer 2014.

Previous investigations in my work have dealt with landscape and architecture from rural areas of my home in Georgia. My intention was to juxtapose my knowledge of familiar North Georgia vernacular architecture to a completely unfamiliar place. However, after a week of walking a mile to town everyday through pleasantly simple vineyard houses and distinctly Slovenian gardens, certain views along the walk began to peak my interest as I became more familiar with my surroundings. Every building was painted white, yellow, orange, or pink - sometimes loud in contrast with a more reserved people. The grapevines were not the only things in a grid formation. The Slovenian affinity for order is evident in mindset, recycling practices, and property decor.

It was important to be aware of my place as a visitor in this community. There are aspects of culture I cannot fully understand and judgments I cannot make because I have not lived the same history that Slovenians and Hungarians have. At the same time, my view as an outsider allows me to see things that are commonplace to locals as a new engaging encounter to critically consider. This is applicable to culture and history as well the construction of aesthetics that comes from that history. Each walk I took became of game of noticing particular moments of man made composition. Over time I collected samples of colors that were commonly seen in the area as well as previously collected colors common in a specific part of my home. With this palette, I made small handheld objects to interact with viewpoints I found to be visually significant. As props, these objects or paintings hold different roles: they mimic, mirror, flatten, and merge with their background to create a new image. The objects lose their significance when viewed anywhere other than the particular point of reference for which they were made. These photographs serve as documentation of an outsider imposing interpretation onto an unfamiliar, complex, rich culture.

