

G E O R G K A R G L F I N E A R T S

Press Release

Curated by **ANA JANEVSKI**

In The Future Everyone Will Be Anonymous For Fifteen Minutes

Vlatka Horvat, Vlado Martek, Galerija Nova, Vladimir Petek, Slaven Tolj, Goran Trbuljak

Georg Kargl Fine Arts

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Gallery Nova has been founded in 1975 in Zagreb, as a part of the Center for Cultural Activity of the Socialist Youth of City of Zagreb. Even though it was an official state constituted cultural institution, it had a radical exhibition program in the 70s, showing avant-garde artists (Aleksandar Srnec, Jo Klek, Exat 51), together with the emerging scene of the time (Goran Trbuljak, Braco Dimitrijević, Group of Six Artists, Mladen Stilinović etc).

In The Future Everyone Will Be Anonymous For Fifteen Minutes is not a historical exhibition about Gallery Nova. The aim is not to offer an insight into the integral exhibition program of 36 years activity. Although the starting point is the reflection about the institutional (socialist) framework that has been allowing the production and presentation of radical artistic activities, we wanted to point the current auto-sustainability of the local artistic scene still confronted with the lack of discourse of national art history, lack of market and of any official institutional valorization. Thus Gallery Nova is treated as one of the exhibitor. The archive material and documentation from crucial moments of its activities, 70s and 2000, are presented together with the artists who worked with the gallery. From the experimental filmmaker Vladimir Petek, in the 70s, to Goran Trbuljak and Vlado Martek both in the 70s and in nowadays, until Vlatka Horvat and Slaven Tolj who have marked the Gallery Nova and the Croatian art scene in the last decades.

In the 70s Goran Trbuljak has been interested in the figure of Anonymous artist who is working outside the gallery context. His new prediction, which gives the title to the shows, points the new globalised concern, opposite to the one in the 70s. Nevertheless, the institutional mechanism of valorization and recognition still remain at stake.

Thus the archive material and documentation from the gallery's activities from the 70s is for the first time gathered and presented publicly. Posters, leaflets, postcards, catalogues and books (Malevitch, Exat 51) from that period, designed by the artist Mladen Galic, show a very dynamic program, oriented to the avant-garde past as well as the promptness to react to the most contemporary artistic expressions of the time.

One of the radical examples is the exhibition of the FAVIT group - Film, Audiovisual Investigations, Television – as well as the publication of an extensive catalogue. Favit - Film, Audiovisual Investigations, Television - was founded by the film operator and filmmaker Vladimir Petek (1940-2003) in 1972 in Zagreb. The explanation of the acronym describes the range of interests of the group members (among others Mladen Stilinovic, Aleksandar Srnec, Nusa and Sreco Dragan) who presented their audiovisual experiments based on the principles of multivision also at the Nova Gallery in 1975, with works made on film and video tape, audiovisual interventions, animated paintings, multiple projections...

Therefore in the exhibition we are showing one of the first film by Petek "Encounters" (1963) realized in the cinema club Zagreb. "Encounters" is an anthological portrait film, visually strengthened by a series of interventions on the film tape. During his film activity, in his entire film opus Petek tried to get rid of traditional restraints, scraping and coloring the tape, piercing it, experimenting with pixilation, negative images, etc.

Since 2003 Gallery Nova is run by the curatorial collective What, How & for Whom / WHW, as a non-profit and still city-owned gallery. 30 years later, WHW program is not only keeping alive both local contemporary and historical artistic practices, but the Gallery Nova has become a public space for social visibility and circulation of discourses that has been continuously ignored by the mainstream/dominant cultural production.

WHW (What, How & for Whom?) is a curatorial collective composed by Ivet Čurlin, Ana Dević, Nataša Ilić, Sabina Sabolović and graphic designer Dejan Kršić, gathered for the first time in Zagreb in 2000, around a projects dedicated to the 152nd anniversary of the Communist Manifesto. What, how and for whom are the three basic questions of every economic organization that also concern the planning, concept and realization of exhibitions, as well as the production and distribution of artworks or artists' position at the labour market.

"When we started the Gallery Nova program, apart from working with both the youngest generation of the local artists and the most prominent artists who started in the seventies, international profiling, initiating discursive programs, the idea was to make the space available for collaborative activities of so called "independent" local scene that has been very active since 2000. Just as with every exhibition project, when thinking about the Gallery Nova program we try asking the "what, how and for whom" questions always again. Being opened and aware of changes of possible answers with time and changing circumstances is – we think – part of our responsibility. We can still see many institutions in Croatia not being aware of that, so there is not enough recognition not only of the experiences of the previous generation but also of current attempts of independent initiatives." (WHW)

Therefore in the last ten years WHW has been running a very rich program of exhibitions (*Broadcasting project*, dedicated to Nikola Tesla, *Normalization*, *Bakic*, *Collective creativity* and many others), lectures, discussions, screenings as well as a prolific publishing activities with the Nova Newspapers, catalogues and books designed by Dejan Krsic and presented at the exhibition.

In The Future Everyone Will Be Anonymous For Fifteen Minutes was a part of Goran Trbuljak exhibition at Gallery Nova in 2004.

A pioneer of conceptual art in the former Yugoslavia, Goran Trbuljak (1948, Varaždin) began his career in Zagreb in the late 1960s with works that examined issues of authorship, anonymity, and originality, as well as, most prominently, the status of the artwork and of the artist in a given cultural system. Thus, his art took unusual forms of calling cards left for gallery staff, opinion polls that demanded a response, and even a "referendum" of passers-by in Zagreb in 1972 on the question, "Is Goran Trbuljak an artist or not? 1. Yes 2. No."

In the mid-1970s, Trbuljak entered into a dialogue with painting: *The Sunday Painting* (1974), for instance, is in fact a photographic documentation of one of the artist's street actions: on several different Sundays, Trbuljak went to an art-supply store and painted on the display window in correlation with the blank canvas and easel behind the glass. And each Monday, the store's staff would remove the paint from the window.

In his latest works Trbuljak has still been questioning the mechanism of the art institutions with humor and self-deprecating irony, as in the statement “Old and Bald I Search for a Gallery” as well as in the counting object “Untitled”, 2004 (1970 until now) “The total number of persons who have attended the openings of all my individual exhibitions (those who have attended more than one opening have been counted once)” or trying to name a plant after his name adding one just letter.

Invited to have a solo exhibition in the Nova Gallery in 1975 and not having a working space, Trbuljak decided to break into an empty flat, predestined to become an artist atelier, and worked there for three days on the exhibition. The ambient of the apartment has been exhibited at Nova Gallery exhibition, while here we are showing the remaining poster and documentation.

Vlado Martek (1951, Zagreb) on the other hand, started out as a poet. He studied literature and philosophy but in 1974 he started to show interest in visual arts. Thus his poetry acquired special forms: he extracted poetry from the book and incorporated it into “poetic objects” made of mirrors, clay and books; he wrote poster poetry which he exhibited in exhibition-actions held by the neo conceptualists Group of Six Artists (1975–1979). Actually Group of Six Artists -Boris Demur, Željko Jerman, Vlado Martek, Mladen Stilinović, Sven Stilinović and Fedor Vučemilović- was a turning point for Martek’s “poetic” activity. The group was connected by friendship and it did not appear with a joint program, rather they were an informal collective organized around group exhibition-actions mainly in public space. Yet it is important to point out that the members of the group had their first solo exhibitions in the Gallery Nova, as well as the first collective show under the title “Oral History.” Martek himself was supposed to have his solo show in the gallery, but it has never been realized.

From the vast body of work made by Vlado Martek since the 1970s until today, we selected for the exhibitions those works that more directly refer to the figure of poet and poetry, the writer and the book. The exhibition features poem-objects, artist’s books, poetic agitations.

“Martek himself divides his poetry into Pre-Poetry, Poetry and Post-Poetry, and this in jumbled order: *poetry*, written from his earliest youth, *pre-poetry*, from the end of the 1970s and *post-poetry* from the mid 1980s where he surrendered himself to writing poetry without any self-censorship. Today he engages with all three. (...) Martek the *pre-poet* did not want to write classical poetry, but that is why it has overflowed into the various forms of his art. His “poetic revolution” first denied poetry, and then transcended it. He dismissed the poem to make room for the “elementary processes in poetry” – the synergy of the concrete material elements used to write poetry and the ideas of tautology at that time characteristic for Conceptual art and primary painting. He used these processes to render “violence onto poetry”, but also to put it into action, breaking up its immanent static form and opening it up to new possibilities.”

Therefore Martek calls himself a “pre-poet”, investing great effort into the “purification” of poetry to such an extent that it was reduced to no more than an emphasis on the reality of the constitutive elements of the poem’s materiality.

Hence, the poem consists of various backgrounds used for writing, such as pencils, erasers, letters, poetic forms... In the work from the *Sonnets series* (1978–79), poetic form becomes visible in its characteristic arrangement of fourteen lines divided into two quatrains and two tercets.

Slaven Tolj (1964, Dubrovnik) has been intensively active since the 80s on the Croatia art scene, moreover since 1988 he is head of the Art Workshop Lazareti from Dubrovnik. Although he has participated in many international exhibitions he has rarely exhibited in Croatia. The exhibition *Patriot* in 2007 at Gallery Nova, was one of his first local solo shows.

Tolj's hometown Dubrovnik is at the center of his works. His personal involvements and obsessive dealing with local social problems is often confronted with personal dilemmas and concerns. Thus the artist body is mainly at the center of his performance as a tentative of expressing and naming the trauma.

In his works he is dealing mainly with the experiences of the nineties that have dramatically transformed the city and its residents, but also with the economical and political transition that are rapidly and abruptly devastating the (public) space.

This period of Tolj's art is represented at the exhibition by the works "Interrupted Game" (1993) and "Bubo-Bubo Maximus" (1994). The first work consists of a diptych of black-and-white photographs depicting a seemingly banal situation of a small town square adjacent to the back of the Dubrovnik cathedral. The introductory photo features boys who are playing tennis against the wall of the cathedral. In the following photo there is a close-up of a volute with a trapped tennis ball. This space in the middle of the town's historical center always served as a place for children's games. However, during the war it was the target of snipers, and so the games were interrupted for months.

The installation "Bubo-Bubo Maximus" can be viewed as a significant quotation of the principle of the Duchampian "readymade". Its minimalist composition, consisting of a regular fan hopelessly imprisoned in a glass showcase, evokes the petty bourgeois milieu of Dubrovnik interlaced by numerous relationships and established taboos, while pointing to the escalation of social tension heralding the upcoming culmination of war events in Croatia in the 90s.

The installation "Untitled" (2005) can be characterized as a social, visual haiku reflecting the disillusionment of the 90s generation with the situation of post-totalitarian transformation. The parched ball is connected as an icon with the discotheque subculture, but here deprived of its glass surface and suggestively reflected rays of light. The imitation of joy and endless entertainment (as well as expectations connected with the fall of the communist system) are lost forever, and what is left the tedious reality of life under conditions of a "new social arrangement" incomprehensible for many.

Since 2003 Vlatka Horvat has been continuously collaborating with the curatorial collective WHW.

Vlatka Horvat's (1974, Čakovec) wide formal spectrum of artistic practice ranges from photography, performance and video to works on paper, sculpture and installation. Her method often combines the minimalism of a conceptually rooted practice with the volatile performance based on gestures distinguished by improvisation, repetition, testing, continuous attempts and failures, versions and variations, searches and (non)findings.

Regardless of the choice of medium her different projects employ, Horvat's artistic output is frequently centered around some aspect of interaction between a person (a human body, a figure) on the one side, and a range of diverse objects, tasks and systems on the other.

In the collage "Parts Work" a different combination of a female fragmented body design the body appears as a site of possibility and change, not as a fixed system, but something that can be reimagined, reinvented. Still it can also be read as a site of failure as the attempt to reassemble the fragmented body result in something that seems to still be broken and unfinished even when it's 'whole' and 'put together'.

The other works presented in the exhibition are dealing with the idea of time, of looking forward and backward, of a fragmented memory and uncertain future.

In "Horizon" the infinite loop of a landscape line creates an impossible kind of a horizon line. This idyllic nature-reflected-in-a-lake (an image suitable for a touristic picture postcard) gets thus transformed into something evoking a mechanical printout.

In "Everything" (2011) the phrase FORGET EVERYTHING is written in a lower layer by mechanical print, while the upper layer is a watercolor hand made technique trying to copy the lower one, but juxtaposing the two media: "forget everything" is transformed into "forget everything." Thus the artist reminds us of the mechanism of remembering, of the transformations that occur in the process, subject to failures and distortions.

The same reflection could be applied to the sculptural works in the exhibition, *Vortex* (2011) and *Stick Together* (2009) made by everyday materials and objects, by the remains of other sculptural works or even "To Put a Stop", (2011) composed by used doorstops. This personal and fragile economy of means, reinvent and reuse what was discarded and associate on ups and downs, on auto sustainability and anonymity.

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