

THE IMAGE OF A SOUNDSCAPE

A superlative intermedia project, Supermono by Tanja Vujinović, was realised in September in the Kapelica Gallery. In the form of an ambiental installation, it addressed viewers in a broad and very direct manner through an unusual combination of various plush and clay objects, electronics, sound, and video. The environment which the author created especially for the space of the Kapelica Gallery offered viewers a unique tactile-audio-visual experience, which brought the phenomenon of sound closer and uncovered numerous possibilities of its transcription into visual images and the charm of the articulation of the unseen.

Tanja Vujinović is certainly one of the more prominent, if not the leading, and also internationally recognised, Slovene artists in the field of intermedia art. From the very beginning, her area of activity has been focused especially on the study of the audio-visual context of space and time in symbolic and formal senses. Originally educated as a painter, she is now a visual artist dealing primarily with sound art in the sense of seeking and creating complex connections between sounds of various sources and objects. Her objects, sound and video works, installations, and ambients are complex and conceptually based, just like the author sees her work and art, since everything that she creates, she combines into a heterogeneous, indivisible whole. She creatively uses the most modern technologies available. She creates rhythmical images created for touch and listening from signals, which one can understand as very integrated and interactive, and from the visual and audio perspectives, as also poetic art works.

Each of the author's works is a so-called “work in progress”; they are continuously changing art works conditioned by the specific current temporal and spatial situation, in which viewers also play an important role. The installation is divided into three parts, each exhibited object has built-in electronic and mechanical components which enable the translation of the existing and resulting signals into an audio/visual language that is perceptible to us. Visitors are received by a “table” full of globular, black objects, little organisms, which are actually speakers from which individual sounds are emitted. Under them, cables waterfall to the floor, and seem like some kind of network of blood vessels for the whole system. On one of the walls opposite the speakers, connected sound and visual signals are created from two soft, black figures. Objects recycle audio-visual fragments, one of which contains a video screen,

and in addition to the mentioned function, it also shows the video signal that is captured by the camera of another figure from the exhibition room itself, and thus through an image visualizes the audio happenings. In the gallery apse, viewers encounter the third part, a world of the functions and characteristics of contemporary toys which have inbuilt electronic or mechanical components. Shaped like toys, her objects have integrated sound systems, which, just like the other two parts of the installation, sense current actions. Some of the 'plushettes' move, while others emit sounds upon being touched, which we then can hear amplified in the space, like some kind of echo. As a consequence, sounds from the speakers also change and again attract viewers to the table and to the screen. There, they realise that the sounds from all three groups are actually in an interdependent relationship, within which an enclosed circle of all the happenings in the space is created. They become aware of their impact on the formation of this environment.

The Supermono installation is specific due to its special modular connection of elements into a non-linear system of audio and visual patterns which enables insight into this hidden and unusual structure of digital and analogue flows. And perhaps that is exactly why it at first seems like an illusion which does not have any connection to the real world. But when viewers finally discover the source of the sounds, a second question arises: at which stage are all the recorded signals translated and altered so many times that we can speak of an illusion. The artist actually attempts to recycle another, less known side of our perception of the environment, despite the fact that her starting point is reality, to such a degree that it makes it "useful" for a new purpose. She manages to create a new world – an art work which almost unnoticeably is transformed from reality into illusion. It could be said that in this manner the author also creates some kind of ecological art, since she builds her ambients also from the consciousness of how our space is actually saturated and polluted with numerous electromagnetic waves, frequencies, radiation, and unnoticeable sounds from the environment, which we usually no longer perceive individually, but only as continuous noise. She detects this "dust", creatively recycles and uncovers it there, where viewers normally would not expect it. In the "sacred" gallery space, from which many even today expect only hermeticism and silence. In Supermono the author upgrades all this also with a specific sense of her own (black) humour, especially through the use of dynamic toys. In her work she takes away the identity of the toys, and applies them in the project as anonymous bodies. By doing this she softens the serious and sophisticated world of technology, and also contrasts it with the hand-production of these soft "plushettes". In their blackness, these are far from friendly

toys, estranged and nameless. However, other technological toys, such as the “Teletubbies” and “Pikachus”, are often the same. One can understand the work also as the author's commentary on the impersonality of the contemporary consumer society which is polluting our lives.

The entire project is based on a complex concept and an even more complex technical implementation, which however are not perceived by the viewer, since the installation is clean and operates flawlessly. It is interesting for viewers because it opens up to them the unknown sphere of invisible signals and waves which literally permeates the atmosphere of our everyday environment. A wonderful chain of interdependent relations unfolds, which people determine in the gallery by simply entering it, and if they act in some other way, perhaps touch some object, a wonderful process of transformation occurs which results in the magical image of a soundscape.

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