IVANA MEŠTROV AND MIHAELA RICHTER - CONVERSATIONS – STRATEGY FOR RAPPROCHEMENT WITH CURATORIAL PRACTICES -

The series of conversations presented here is based on the assumption that, although the role and activity of a present day curator have been explored and deconstructed from different perspectives through numerous publications[1], educational programmes and seminars organised in the international arena, in the Croatian cultural context, regardless of many well-established curatorial practices, such auto-referential discourse is precisely what is missing.

Contemporary curators are engaged in activities which develop at the intersection of different creative, administrative and theoretical practices, thus it is almost impossible to unequivocally define such a "hybrid" activity. Besides, each local context brings its specific preoccupations and fields of interest.

A need for an open dialogue about what makes a curator was clearly expressed in the final presentation of the Curatorial Platform's program[2] participants. As a response, this cycle of conversations was developed in collaboration with participants in order to support transmission and exchange of knowledge on contemporary art and curatorial practices.

A collective model of work filtered out the choice of interlocutors and a fixed set of questions[3], which were put to a certain number of curators, theoreticians, curatorial collectives, and artists of different generations who have been present in the Croatian cultural context for the past ten years. From eighteen of them we received answers that articulated their views on their own activities and practice. By repeating the same questions and suggestive sub-questions, interviewers employed a method for simulating comparative answers. We were not concerned with empirical findings or 'basic curatorial values', but rather with individual curatorial experiences and cultural practices at the crossroads of theory and practice and the part they play in a modern society. It is important to emphasize that we were not exclusively interested in defining ways to curate but also in seeing how singular experience and thought processes compose the pluralism of ideas creating the curatorial practice, within the art system and in understanding how visible and effective these experiences and thought processes are within a social field.

Additional motivation for this cycle of conversations was the aim to position local curators within the current international movements. Even though it might be argued that this approach attempts to map curatorial practices, by presenting a fragmentary selection and using a heterogeneous approach, we distance ourselves from historiography, i.e. from writing the "never written" history of curatorial and exhibition practices in Croatia.

Our intention was to reflect upon curatorial practices and upon prevention of oblivion, which need to be (up)held through active dialogue and presentation. Open discursive forms of conversation suit best our comprehension of variety, demands and responsibility, which are inseparable elements of curatorial profession.

We thank everyone who responded to our invitation. We would also like to thank the participants of the Curatorial Platform pilot project for taking part in this rapprochement process.

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[1] *Art and Design Magazine: On Curating – the Contemporary Art Museum and Beyond*, n. 52., Academy Editions, London,1997.; ed. Barnaby Drabble, Dorothee Richter, *Curating Degree Zero, An International Curating Symposium*, Verlag für Moderne Kunst, Nurnberg, 1999.; ed. Susan Hiller, Sarah Martin, *The Producers: Contemporary Curators in Conversations* (1-5), Baltic and University of Newcastle, Newcastle, 2000.-2002.; Carin Kuoni, *Words of Wisdom: A Curator's Vade Mecum*, Independent Curators International (ICI), New York, 2001.; ed. Christoph Tannert, Ute Tischler, Kunstlerhaus Bethanien, *MIB-Men in Black: Handbook of Curatorial Practice*, Revolver, Frankfurt am Main, 2004.; ed. Liam Gillick, Maria Lind, *Curating with Light Luggage*, Revolver, Frankfurt am Main, 2005., ed. Steven Rand and Heather Kouris, *Cautionary Tales: Critical Curating*, Apexart, New York, 2007.; ed. Dorothee Richter, Barnaby Drabble, Marianne Eigenheer (ICE), *Curating Critique*, Revolver, Frankfurt am Main, 2007.; ed. Paul O'Neill, *Curating Subjects, Occasional Table*, Open Editions, London, 2007.; ed. Florence Derieux, Ecole du Magasin, *Harald Szeemann, Individual Methodologies*, JRP|Ringier, Zurich, 2007.; Hans Ulrich Obrist, A Brief History of Curating, JRP|Ringier, Les Presses du réel, Zurich/Dijon, 2008.

[2] In period of 2008 – 2009, in cooperation with Kultura Promjene (Culture of Change) of the Student Centre in Zagreb, a pilot program Curatorial Platform was initiated with intention of providing additional theoretical and practical education in contemporary national and international art to students in their final years in art and social orientation. Pilot program Curatorial Platform was, above all, dedicated to the acquisition and exchange of knowledge in contemporary art practices and theories, which are the basics for further understanding of curatorial practices. Its aim was three-fold. First it aimed to direct those that were interested in applying theoretical knowledge to practice. Second it sought to re-examine existing exhibition "formats" and curatorial "models". Finally it emphasized networking and interdisciplinary collaborations. That is the reason why the emphasis lay on independent and group research. Also, work was done in actively connecting and including attendants into currents of local and international cultural scenes through guest lectures of curators and theoreticians who are active locally, regionally and internationally, of which some act within educational platforms. The concept and lecturing support to the program was provided by curators and art historians Ivana Bago, Antonia Majača and Klaudio Štefančić. It was devised and co-ordinated by Ivana Meštrov and Mihaela Richter. The program was actively attended by 15 people. //www.platformakustos.blogspot.com//

[3] Special contribution to the formulation of questions was given by Irena Gessner, Ana Kutleša, Marijana Rimanić and Vanja Žanko.

IVANA BAGO AND ANTONIA MAJAČA

INTERVIEWED BY NINA PISK AND SANJA HORVATINČIĆ

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1. What term would you use to define your profession and what was the course of your professional path?

A.M.: My work might be described as one involving roles of a reader, student, writer, observer, mediator, curator, bricoleur, art historian, activist, cultural worker, author… So, my work takes different shapes and I discover different focuses "on the way" but it always stems from the world of ideas, images and words, their relations and their potential to modify, activate, engage or transform their environments. My interests were always in the sphere of thoughts and ideas, their critical and artistic articulation and creating or empowering a context in which intellectual and artistic practices can emerge. During my studies and immediately after I was engaged on several projects connected with film and visual art, curated a number of exhibitions as an independent curator, was writing on art and film for Radio and Croatian TV, collaborated with associations on the independent cultural scene, and in 2004, took the post of the director at Galerija Miroslav Kraljević. I have started my term in G-MK by envisioning it as a space of potentialities, a space for the coexistence of diverse models of creative and critical engagement and as an open, explorative and process-oriented institutional experiment. I

started developing new program lines, initiated a program of new commissions, instigated a research-residency program for international artists and launched new international collaborative projects. Soon after, I started to work intensely with Ivana, both on projects related to G-MK and elsewhere… What we are mostly focused on lately are long-term, research and publishing oriented projects developed through the Institute for Duration, Location and Variables (DeLVe) that we recently established. The Institute represents for us a certain retreat from the immediate visibility of our work as curators and exhibition makers, and represents a step into indepth research, close-reading of art history, performative writing etc. Simultaneously we are interested in finding a mode for introducing a kind of self-restrictiveness in the hyper production in the field of art – with DeLVe we decide to radicalize the question – what should we really *bring into* the world, into the common; what kind of knowledge, what kind of images and thoughts and how does this that we decide to bring into the world relate to the dimensions of time and duration, a specific place and context and where do these categories intersect and finally, what kind of meaning they produce.

I.B.: My work, as well as my status, is best described by the term "independent curator", seeing that my connections with various cultural initiatives, organizations, curatorial collectives, etc. were always (more or less) informal. My engagement with G-MK could be denoted as a "more formal" one. I started working there at the end of 2004 as Antonia's assistant, and from the very start she approached me as an equal and it was exactly that kind of approach, one of inclusion and selfless sharing, that was extremely stimulating. In time our collaboration grew out of its initial hierarchical relationship, and I could also say that today the very term "collaboration" is insufficient to describe how intertwined our work really is. However, abandoning the need for total control over the process and content of the work is precisely that which I find interesting. The work related to G-MK, as well as the collaboration with Antonia on other projects, recently within our new organization DeLVe, in a way determines the dominant "identification" of my work. However, I do not want to actually specify any identification as fixed, because I feel that within each individually achieved project, and then within a collective, institution etc., I contribute in a specific way, a way that reflects my professional development but at the same time shapes it. The education at the Center for Contemporary Art in Ljubljana (SCCA) was significant for my professional development, first of all because of the rethinking of history and the meaning of curatorial practice; the education at the Center for Women's Studies was significant because it introduced me to a completely new theoretical and political framework in which to rethink society and art. In both cases I realized the importance of informal education and self-education, and also the limitation, and the stinginess, of the academic educational system. The work and way of thinking of most of my colleagues at the independent scene is actually based on self-education or "stolen knowledge", knowledge which is transferred principally through communication, mutual work and an unselfish sharing of knowledge and information. The work in the curatorial collective Kontejner, which I started in 2005, entails an even more complex group dynamics than working in a tandem, and content-wise it is interesting for me because of its focus on performance arts, requestioning of bioethics, social taboos connected with the body, social stigmatization of non-normative bodies, etc. I always emphasize that alongside the designation "curator" I am also an art historian. I think it is extremely important to insist upon this, seeing that actual criticism and intervention into the conventional models of writing art history have still not taken place in the local context (least of all in the discipline's academic realm).

2. What would you list as the decisive moments that contributed to the development of your thinking and practice, whether concerning certain concepts you have developed or references and collaborations?

There are no decisive moments. All moments are decisive if they are determined by curiosity, enthusiasm about discovering something that was forgotten, or discovering new practices. In such a course there are no decisive moments or they are purely accidental and often cannot be reconstructed afterwards. It has to do with a certain kind of openness towards being constantly surprised, and also towards the willingness for risk – we were never very interested in things with a certain outcome, or fixed positions. We see our work as an ongoing experiment, and to that effect we see our practice as an open, creative practice that can take on different forms. In the whole process, we are continually requestioning, but at the same time destabilizing our own position, and we are prone to thinking extensively about the roles we appropriate and which are given to us and of the ways in which we can view them critically. We believe it is important to constantly invent creative, critical and theoretical formats through which we can be as free as possible, but at the same time act responsibly towards the context we work in. This certainly includes departing from the position of radical uncertainty, the willingness for risk, to make mistakes and even fail, which is all part of a real and devoted being and acting in the world, through the exposure without cynicism.

3. What methodologies do you use in your work? What do you consider to be the field of your public activity?

Artistic and curatorial activity is, first of all, participation within the mechanisms that produce meaning and knowledge. For instance, artist Artur Zmijewski defines art as an open university of knowledge. Art is by no means a game, despite associations of freedom and playfulness which such a definition connotes; rather, as Mladen Stilinović puts it, art "always has consequences". To have the power to contextualize and give meaning to works of art that are not innocent in themselves, is even less innocent. Through our work we try to be aware of the position of power as the precondition of participation in the production of meaning and knowledge… Each act – writing a text, opening an exhibition, giving a lecture, organizing a student workshop, or even having an informal conversation – can be perceived as a public act, and the responsibility that it entails is always analyzed. We do not really ever do anything unless we have a good reason for doing it; this is also the basis of our methodology. We do not wish to contribute yet another exhibition, text, catalogue, work of art, etc. to the "junkyard" of the art world which is anyhow saturated by hyper-production. The "relevance" we aim for is certainly not universal but, again, derives from the context, so something which was relevant or interesting in one situation becomes completely useless in another. Therefore, the integral part of the work is always the requestioning of one's own starting points and motivations… We don't see G-MK as some sort of fixed institutionalized position – it is just one of the projects that we are working on. The strategy for G-MK is based on requestioning of what to do and how to do things inside a gallery space, in a city with a small art scene which

nonetheless abounds in art venues, most of which do not have a distinct identity. Because of this, it was necessary for G-MK to start with a reexamination of the reasons for its existence and with the implementation of completely new program units which made it recognizable: an intensive and, occasionally, long-lasting collaboration with artists on the realization of new projects, student workshops, lectures by local and international artists and theoreticians, etc. The concept for the 29th Youth Salon – *The Salon of Revolution* was likewise based on the requestioning of the very context of the exhibition itself, as well as the goals and strategies it followed up to that point. We used a similar concept in an issue of *Život umjetnosti*. We linked it thematically with the Salon and we tried to "de-localize" it by inviting contributors from different contexts to reflect on the ideas of revolution and its "salonization" and to step away from the often self-sufficient and self-centred context or Croatian institutional context. The need to step outside the framework which is used inside the context of the gallery, but also the need to step outside the exhibition format itself, has resulted in launching of a new initiative – *Institute for Duration, Location and Variables* (*DeLVe*). It is dedicated to long-term research projects, the results of which are primarily presented through lectures, seminars, reading sessions, writings and publications, and only marginally through exhibitions.

4. From your experience, how much does a curator participate in the concept, production, presentation and promotion of an artwork? How do you set the boundaries in those relations?

Considering that we quite often work very closely with artists, we are sometimes directly involved in all the stages of development of a certain art project – from the very conceptualization to its presentation and promotion. The process is sometimes exhausting, but is always rewarding. The boundaries of our involvement in the conceptualization of a project, which can often be long-lasting and include intensive work and communication with artists and colleagues, depend on everyone involved with the process. We are more inclined to collaborate with people who view their roles as flexibly and openly as we do, who are willing to risk and experiment and are interested in process-bound, research projects, which sometimes involve an uncertainty about the outcome.

5. To what extent and in which segment do you collaborate with other curators and/or experts from other fields?

Our work is based on openness for collaboration. We both have individual and joint experience in the realization and planning of programs in collaboration with other individuals, organizations or collectives. Besides, our own work is the result of a mutual, intense collaboration and its development and course is, ultimately, our greatest reward. A collaborative working method is characteristic of the more recent generations and independent initiatives on the non-profit art scene in general, and particularly in the region where we mostly work, and where it also involves a high degree of solidarity, and what we tend to call radical mutuality. A feeling certainly exists that we are all striving towards the same goal, maybe precisely because the general conditions are quite bad, considering the level of support, finances and visibility granted to contemporary art. Through G-MK's program we have so far collaborated with many curators and curatorial collectives on the local and international scene. In the *WEIYTH* project (*Where Everything is Yet to Happen*), which we are developing in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we are collaborating with six curators and it evolves through a continuous communication and collaboration with artists, philosophers, writers, sociologists, etc. As far as interdisciplinary collaborations go, they are often achieved through realizations of individual art projects, such as Andrea Kulunčić's recent *O stanju nacije* (On the state of the nation).

6. In what way is the mediation between a work of art and the audience enacted and conceptualized in your projects?

Audience, when perceived merely as the counting of bodies entering a certain space, does not interest us much. We think that information and knowledge can be generated in a number of different ways… From the beginning, our main questions in G-MK were: what exactly does an institution of contemporary art need to be, in what ways can it act, what are its responsibilities, its range, with who does it "communicate". Since the moment Antonia took over the gallery, we devoted the whole yearly program precisely to mediation and new ways of communicating with the context – a process that included "neighborhood" workshops, series of conversations, new productions critically observing all the positions within the "chain" of contemporary art. In G-MK we are continually trying to encourage communication between the "public" and the "audience", in all their different aspects, to promote intergenerational links on the art scene and to encourage the student population into direct involvement. The gallery thus becomes a catalyst and mediator itself, operating on both sides of its physical boundaries.

Regarding "the audience" in general – the avant-garde tendencies in the history of art, that is, those which today represent the vital elements in rereading contemporary art, have never actually had a large audience at the time they were produced. Lately we have been thinking about a concept that we call "postponed public" – the fact that later generations are ones who become the "mass" audience for some of the most interesting artistic and cultural phenomena. For instance, the audience of the Gorgona group was not made of their contemporaries and colleagues. Their first "fans" were the Grupa šestorice autora (the Group of Six Artists) and today Gorgona is one of the crucial points within the local art history. It is important to keep in mind that mediation takes place between "us", that a geographically, spatially and temporally unrestricted community of people is created and that they want to take part in an exchange of certain thought processes, ideas, languages, attitudes, etc. Such a position may seem elitist. However, the "us" refers to a completely fluctuating community – fully open and interchangeable.

7. In your opinion, what is the difference between institutional and independent (curatorial) positions?

An institution always denotes a fixed identification and representation. An independent curator is also never fully independent. However, her or his ˝dependencies˝ become more dynamic; they change, and so do her/his positions and strategies. Curators develop their own strategies and objectives within an institution, but they also have the responsibility of keeping those objectives in line with those of the institution itself. G-MK could be viewed as an institution. We perceive our own position in this institution as one of independent curators who have been given some sort of a term within a specific time period. Whether they are in large or small institutions, we think that these "terms" should be dynamic, and that the field inside which action is possible within an institution simply gets exhausted after a while. The main problem with Croatian institutions is that in most cases their employees have practically life-long terms. Individuals within institutions

that have the enthusiasm to change something often find it hard to work in such an atmosphere and such a complex infrastructural and politicized situation. It is symptomatic that most of the young and ambitious participants of the today's art scene do not see institutions as places where their ideas can be realized – many prefer to remain in an existentially precarious position as freelancers but keep a certain autonomy.

8. How are your programs financed?

We gladly take money from anyone who is willing to give it. All money is dirty and all money is ours, as Mladen Stilinović once put it.

9. What is your view on the relation between cultural production and the private sector in Croatia – corporate competitions / awards (T-com, Erste…), and private collections (Filip Trade, Essl Collection…)?

In principal, private capital is very much welcome on the Croatian cultural scene. It also offers a certain layer of independence. It is no less problematic to receive money form Milan Bandić[1] than i.e. Ivica Todorić.[2] However, an opinion still prevails in the local context that corporate money is dirty money, while taxpayers' money – the distribution of which is likewise controlled by a certain ideology or politics – is considered neutral. Private capital can be a catalyst and support those initiatives and programs which public sponsors often ignore. Nevertheless, private sponsors also form part of the public that demands mediation and should be constantly "educated". Unfortunately, most of us do not have the time or human resources to deal with such matters, so private sponsorship remains an untapped potential.

Do you collaborate internationally on your projects, and why is that important to you?

The idea of national representation of art was never interesting to us and we do not have some special interest in the contemporary Croatian art scene that would surpass the interest in contemporary artistic, intellectual and critical practices in general. Artistic practices that occur in Croatia, as well as those in Turkey, Sweden or Argentina are equally important and interesting to us. In other words, in no way do we see ourselves as promoters of "contemporary Croatian art", but quite the contrary. It does not matter if we do something in Zagreb, Buenos Aires, Sarajevo or New York. At the same time it is paradoxical that specific context is sometimes or most often precisely one of the most important factors in developing the concept for a project. For instance, the fact that our exhibition *Stalking With Stories*, the first in the trilogy of exhibitions on Agamben's notion of the immemorable, took place in New York (apexart) was not so relevant, as the idea behind the project was not firmly attached to a specific cultural and political context, but was based rather on a long-term process of reading and thinking about a potentially empowering relationship towards history and nostalgia. The project *And Then Nothing Turned Itself Inside Out* as the second part of this trilogy at the Viennese Kunsthalle Exnergasse shares a similar characteristic. On the other hand, self-educational projects like *Kustoska platforma* (Curatorial platform), in which we cooperate with colleagues from the Student Center, is very locally situated and focused on the artistic, curatorial and exhibition practices from the late '60s through the '70s in Zagreb and the region. This project is also the starting point of our research for the project *Removed From the Crowd* and its two exhibitions – one in the framework of the project *Political Practices of Yugoslav Art* curated by Prelom kolektiv in Belgrade and the other at Škuc Gallery in Ljubljana. *The Salon of Revolution* was, strategically, the internationalization of the Youth Salon, or in other words, a message that such an "internationalization" is necessary. This strategy of internationalization stemmed not from feeling of provinciality or remoteness of our "local" and the grandeur or relevance of the "international" scene, or some kind of self colonizing equation but was recognized as a necessity in order to step outside the frame of a closed, self-sufficient environment that uses a continuing succession of exhibitions to *represent* a national or regional "scene", and thus showing it is interested in nothing more than mere self-reflection. Without the placement of local culture into an international context, its range and possibilities of interpretation remain limited.

11. In your opinion, what should the transfer of curatorial knowledge be like? Do you support "the institutionalization of curatorial models" through various types of curatorial programs?

The phrase "curatorial knowledge" reminds of a postgraduate program at Goldsmiths' College called *Curatorial/Knowledge*. Here it does not function as a phrase, but as two separate words brought into relation, where the adjective ˝curatorial˝ is used instead of the noun/verb "curating", and thus represents a distancing from that term. Monumentalization of the curatorial profession or, in other words, specialized curatorial education is, in fact, being avoided. There is no "curating", but only that which can be referred to it. We are not citing this program as an example of the ideal program for the education of curators, but more as an attempt at creating a distance from other curatorial educational programs that have already multiplied all over the world and have also been academically established. "Curating" is actually a compiling process that produces new meanings. The ways in which one can carry out this process are individual and are extremely dependent on individual or group creativity, enthusiasm, curiosity, etc. However, the content which is to be compiled is, in fact, crucial, and that content is: artistic practice and the history of contemporary art, political theory, critical thinking, rethinking of the socio-political context, and reading of the languages and discourses of art, capital, ideology, media, popular culture and everyday life. In our view, the ideal program for the education of curators would be one that would offer a close-reading, or a deconstruction of the history of exhibition practices until today, with the most important questions being: who financed exhibitions, which meanings did they generate and in what socio-political context, what are their ties to other exhibitions or trends in the art world, whom did it communicate with, etc. We are trying to establish such an approach through a seminar program within the project *Kustoska platforma* that deals with the history of exhibition practices in Croatia and places the roles of individual curators, institutions and self-organized artistic initiatives into a mutual relationship. It is important to deconstruct the very past and present of "curating" and also the specific power and roles that it appropriates. This is how one learns to "think" her/his own projects. Local and regional contexts are very interesting precisely because the curators active within those contexts are not "trained" curators. The necessity of self-education and non-institutional education often results in extremely creative individuals that find very different and specific ways of acquiring their working strategies. When observed in such a manner, the lack of academic education becomes an advantage. However, regardless of the quality of academic education, informal education and the deconstruction of the process of knowledge transfer is necessary and it is a process

that must have continuity.

12. How visible are the curators, and in what way are their roles and responsibilities manifested within the actual cultural politics in Croatia?

Viewed within the local context, the role of the curator is mainly reduced from the position of cultural politics to the role of a cultural/artistic event organizer, with most of the curators tied to an institution. Most of the institutional curators occupy their positions until pension. The feeling of responsibility towards the context they work in is usually no longer expected of them, and especially the production of knowledge, or even the critical reflection on our "here and now". That way the position of the institutional curator is often manifest only as a sinecure which lacks motivation and personal involvement. Nevertheless, there are several curatorial teams on the scene (our colleagues from the associations BLOK, WHW and Kontejner first come to mind) that contribute actively and critically to the process of asking questions, encouraging public debates or disseminating culture, that is, everything which is presently implied by the term. Institutions should in no way be the ones promoting regressive politics of national representation or places that present out-of-date/belated reactions to the developments of the international scene, since they are precisely the ones that legitimate contemporary art with the wider public as a symbolic social value. However, the over-saturation of the scene with institutional, but actually passive curators is exactly that which has reduced the role of the curator from the perspective of cultural politics to the one of an indifferent functionary carrying out a certain "duty". Fortunately, the independent artistic, cultural and activist scene has used new models, formats and innovative strategies to articulate a different curatorial profile, a profile which shows the curator as a critically enlightened intellectual that reacts to the context he works in, and articulates his possible roles and responsibilities through active participation in the public sphere.

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IVANA BAGO AND ANTONIA MAJAČA ARE ART HISTORIANS AND CURATORS BASED IN ZAGREB WHERE THEY RUN THE NON-PROFIT CONTEMPORARY ART SPACE GALERIJA MIROSLAV KRALJEVIĆ (G-MK), AS WELL AS THE INSTITUTE FOR DURATION, LOCATION AND VARIABLES (DELVE). ALONGSIDE NUMEROUS PROJECTS IN G-MK, TOGETHER THEY HAVE CURATED: *STALKING WITH STORIES – THE PIONEERS OF THE IMMEMORABLE* (APEXART, NEW YORK, 2007), *BE A HAPPY WORKER: WORK-TO-RULE!* (G-MK, ZAGREB, 2008), 29TH YOUTH SALON – *THE SALON OF REVOLUTION* (CROATIAN ASSOCIATION OF ARTISTS, ZAGREB, 2008), *WHERE EVERYTHING IS YET TO HAPPEN / SPAPORT BIENNIAL 2009/10* (BANJA LUKA, 2009), *AND THEN NOTHING TURNED ITSELF INSIDE OUT* (KUNSTHALLE EXNERGASSE, VIENNA, 2009), *REMOVED FROM THE CROWD* (*1ST FRAGMENT* IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE PROJECT *POLITICAL PRACTICES OF YUGOSLAV ART* CURATED BY PRELOM KOLEKTIV IN BELGRADE AND THE *2ND FRAGMENT* AT ŠKUC GALLERY IN LJUBLJANA, BOTH IN 2009). THEY WERE EDITORS OF THE 83RD ISSUE OF THE MAGAZINE ŽIVOT UMJETNOSTI (MAGAZINE FOR CONTEMPORARY VISUAL ARTS) TITLED *ISSUE-ING THE REVOLUTION* (INSTITUTE OF ART HISTORY, ZAGREB, 2009). THEY ARE THE AUTHORS OF SEVERAL EDUCATIONAL PROJECTS, INCLUDING A ONE-YEAR SEMINAR WITHIN THE PROJECT *KUSTOSKA PLATFORMA* (CURATORIAL PLATFORM) REALISED IN COLLABORATION WITH *CULTURE OF CHANGE* OF THE STUDENT CENTER IN ZAGREB (2008/2009).

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D.P.

[BLOK] – Local base for cultural refreshment

INTERVIEWED BY ANA KUTLEŠA

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1. What term would you use to define your profession and what was the course of your professional path?

How to name our occupation has been problematic for us from the very start, first of all because the term "curator" does not correspond etymologically to our activity. At the same time, altered relations within the institution of art, very different contexts (i.e. the curator of a contemporary art museum or other larger institutions for contemporary art, curators in smaller non-profit galleries, independent curators, curatorial collectives, artists as curators…), as well as a change of the social context dictate a questioning and redefining of this function. We are trying to shake things up and bring them into question, to redefine or at the very least "pollute" the term.

About our professional path? We are trying to avoid professionalization and remain true to self-organization… We come with an activist's motivation and a humanist's education. In the beginning our interest lay in performance art (study of theatrology). In its beginnings *UrbanFestival* nurtured this practice almost exclusively, but in time our interest first focused on interventionist practices and then on more long-term research work.

One thing is certain today: the possibilities for one to display a work of art are certainly not lacking. Many artists have countless exhibitions per year and at the same time they cannot pay the rent or finance their own research. We are trying to turn this situation around. Our mission, as curators, is enabling long-term processes and a horizontal dialogue between different professions.

2. What would you list as the decisive moments that contributed to the development of your thinking and practice, whether concerning certain concepts you have developed or references and collaborations?

The decisive moment in our practice was the engagement and collaboration at the local independent cultural scene, with organizations assembled in the platform *Zagreb Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000*. It was collaboration between organizations that cover a whole spectre of disciplines, from architecture and applied arts to new media and visual art, and it questioned social and artistic implications of the contrast between independent culture and dominant representative culture in Croatia.

We also have a predisposition towards the avangarde tradition, as towards the practice of the Situationist International. We gladly hark back to some deafened avangarde claims, and try to re-question them in a new socio-political context and a new reconfigured artistic field.

3. What methodologies do you use in your work? What do you consider to be the field of your public activity?

We do a lot of research (reading, archival work, conversations with experts…), and lately we are also seeing the necessity of looking back, not to reestablish history, but to compare, to connect contextual and conceptual practices from the 1960's to today in various geo-political areas. In the production of works we insist on establishing relations, collaborations and exchanges between different subjects. In conversations with artists we are lately realizing it is extremely important to create opportunities for research projects, especially considering the growing interest and the accompanying misuse and instrumentalization of research within the artistic context. It is necessary to change the rules and move borders always anew.

As regards to the area of public activity, we are trying to do several things at once: space, the generation of theoretical discourse (knowledge) and a social relations network. Considering we have chosen to work mostly outside institutional walls which are intended for the generation and mediation of art – *UrbanFestival* started with the idea that institutions like theatres, museums and galleries have stopped being the appropriate places for the presentation of contemporary art and that today art should be presented outside its generic spaces – the area of our public activity is the space of the city. This dislocation is at the same time an indication of the reflexivity of one's own private space and the public space. We are trying always anew to conquer and expand the space intended for art, to make the space of the city a communal one, to create spaces for the public out of locales.
Alongside this production–exhibition–performative work we are also organizing a series of lectures (*Micropolitics*) with which we are showing, reflecting on or discussing art works in a wider social context, critical curatorial positions and art institutions that experiment with new models of artistic productions.
We have established an excellent social relations network on a local level, ranging form prolific collaborations with local organizations in the independent scene to connecting international artists with local participants (activists, initiatives, individuals…), on the one hand the intention being that the works cut deeper into the local context, and on the other that the activity becomes internationalized.

4. From your experience, how much does a curator participate in the concept, production, presentation and promotion of an artwork? How do you set the boundaries in those relations?

From our experience – entirely. Our practice implies involvement with each segment, from "canvassing" ideas, to various methods of realization or promotion. This showed itself as a necessity, seeing that we collaborate internationally and produce locally. In the beginning it also seemed as the only logical approach considering our starting point, and after five years we were very pleased when we came maximally close to a point where all the works presented at the *UrbanFestival* are new productions made after the artists had spent some time with us in Zagreb. Naturally, through the course of time some methods showed themselves as being better than others and some rules, regarding the artist's investment in the building of social networks which are considered necessary for the creation and success of their work, imposed themselves upon us, but we are still far from establishing procedures and boundaries. We did not standardize the practice and we do not have fixed boundaries. It has to do with the fact that boundaries are always renegotiated, reestablished and constantly shifted, and relations get blurred and more complex. Still, we do not believe that the curator erases the boundaries of production and reception, at some point the curator has "to disappear". As long as the curator exists as an institution, boundaries also exist.

5. To what extent and in which segment do you collaborate with other curators and/or experts from other fields?

Until now we have only occasionally collaborated with other curators, mostly on conceptualization and the selection of artists (i.e. *If you encounter them on the streets, join in… as a part of Operation: City*), while we collaborate regularly and intensively with experts from other areas, most frequently with architects and urbanists, philosophers, sociologists. The collaboration takes place during the stages of research, conceptualization and preparation for production, and when a specific work demands it, it sometimes happens during the production and realization itself.

6. In what way is the mediation between a work of art and the audience enacted and conceptualized in your projects?

We care about trying to create and build an audience. Usually the consumers of art are already predetermined "by genre". Cinemas, theatres or galleries have their subscribers, so to speak. We partly create them *ad hoc*, on the street, by offering the artists a chance to act in public spaces or spaces that are not meant for the production and consummation of art, spaces that bring a different kind of audience with them, unexpected audience, surprised and provoked viewers. However, we are interested in a more intensive collaboration, inclusion in the production, and that means collaborators and participants, than in an art audience used to a certain type of "provocations" that reacts in a foreseeable and expected manner.
We do not have a marketing plan and the mediation of works is always rethought anew, depending on the work and its format and intention. Rethinking and discussion about mediation is an integral part of the work's production.

7. In your opinion, what is the difference between institutional and independent (curatorial) positions?

While on one side the possibilities to display a work of art are multiplying, on the other the possibilities for long-term research and productions become smaller by the minute. On the one hand, institutions succumb to market logic and independent curatorial positions also very often approach the problems of presentation and biennalization uncritically and thus support the governing production relations in art. The differences are not clear.
The enabling of conditions for long-term processes and research is our vision of the task of the independent curator. Yet through our experience the following has presented itself several times: we did a long and arduous work on research and production, we experimented and took risks, and then curators with "institutional positions" took those works and just put them in one of their exhibitions. Naturally, we did all that without the conditions given by institutions be it stable financing, working conditions, spatial resources or the legitimation afforded by institutions.

8. How are your programs financed?

Our programmes are mostly financed through budget funding, by the Ministry of Culture and the Municipal Office for Culture. We also work well with some foreign cultural institutes, such as the Goethe Institut Kroatien or the French Institute in Zagreb. We are turning lately to European funds. Collaborations that we mentioned earlier contribute greatly to the fact that some demanding projects can even be done.

9. What is your view on the relation between cultural production and the private sector in Croatia – corporate competitions / awards (T-com, Erste…), and private collections (Filip Trade, Essl Collection…)?

Understandably, the private sector encourages the "festivalization" trend and supports exclusively large manifestations. Besides, we are completely outside of those processes. We do not know much about private collections, but we have a feeling that the opening of the Filip Trade Museum would be a far more interesting event than the opening of MSU. The T-com Award is a good chance for the works of young authors to be bought out at a decent price.

10. Do you collaborate internationally on your projects,

and why is that important to you?
Up to now we have been mostly oriented towards local production, albeit with international participation and support. We certainly care about the internationalization of activity, but with a goal towards the generalization of ideas and intentions, and not towards building an international brand.

11. In your opinion, what should the transfer of curatorial knowledge be like? Do you support "the institutionalization of curatorial models" through various types of curatorial programs?
Expectedly and understandably, the appearance, and the proliferation of curatorial programs as well, is in tune with the prevalent type of artistic production and economic relations. A growing number of biennales and big international exhibitions, as well as the curatorial status in the contemporary artistic field, demand the production of curatorial personnel. We care about the critical rethinking of this practice, insomuch as neoliberalization of education is not close to us. On the other hand, we are witnessing a growing number of alternative institutes and programs.

12. How visible are the curators, and in what way are their roles and responsibilities manifested within the actual cultural politics in Croatia?
Curatorial interest and influence on the cultural politics in Croatia is virtually non-existent. Interests of several major institutions do exist and they are repeating the governing logic and conducting the neoliberalization of the artistic field at an increasing pace. On the other hand, independent curatorial collectives are a part of the local independent cultural scene that is exerting pressure and a certain influence upon the cultural politics.

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[BLOK] LOCAL BASE FOR CULTURAL REFRESHMENT IS A NON-PROFIT NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION WHICH PRODUCES AND ORGANIZES INNOVATIVE ARTISTIC EVENTS, WORKS ON EXPANDING AND CHANGING THE PUBLIC SPACE BY STIMULATING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION, HYBRID ARTISTIC-RESEARCH PROJECTS FOCUSED ON RETHINKING SOCIAL PHENOMENA AND URBAN STRUCTURE. [BLOK] IS ACTIVE IN CREATING AND MAINTAINING A CONTINUITY OF ARTISTIC ACTIVITY IN THE PUBLIC SPACE. CHOSEN PROJECTS INCLUDE: *URBANFESTIVAL* (FROM 2001), *MLIJEKO* (MILK) 2003 (IN COLLABORATION WITH KRISTINA LEKO), *OPERATION:CITY 2005, IF YOU ENCOUNTER THEM ON THE STREETS, JOIN IN…* (AS PART OF OPERATION:CITY 2008), *RE-COLLECTING CITY/ RE-COLLECTING TIME* (2006–2008, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE BACAČI SIJENKI (SHADOWCASTERS)).

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D.P.

BRANKO FRANCESCHI

INTERVIEWED BY KARLA PUDAR AND MIHAELA RICHTER

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1. What term would you use to define your profession and what was the course of your professional path?
I am a curator and my curatorial activity is significantly determined by entwined roles of a curator and a manager. First I worked as a gallery manager, afterwards as a museum director and I am currently working as a head of an association. I quickly became aware of the necessity of an adjustment within a framework in which one works while simultaneously working as a curator – manager. Curator should be open, flexible, listen to what is going on, what are the needs and what segment of the art scene in certain moment is insufficiently recognized and thus present it. For instance, in the early 90s due to the circumstances there were no possibilities for wider presentation of younger artists, so in the Miroslav Kraljević Gallery (GMK) we started producing exhibitions of ALU (Academy of fine arts) graduates. Later on, we started presenting art based on technology, which earned GMK's reputation. And since then, I have been seen as an expert with preference to that type of art. Nevertheless, GMK program has always been of wide variety and I have always insisted on that.
When I started working for MMSU Rijeka (Museum of Modern and Contemporary Arts, Rijeka) my curatorial practice was similar, but different enough, not only because of the museum work, but also because of my understanding of the public institution's responsibility financed from the budget. Opposing the general understanding, institution does not exist in order to take care of artists or curators, but its responsibility is, as well as curator's responsibility who acts in it, towards the audience. Needless to say, that is the way to best contribute artists and art.

2. What would you list as the decisive moments that contributed to the development of your thinking and practice, whether concerning certain concepts you have developed or references and collaborations?
Key moments can be little things; these can be a meeting, a conversation with a certain artist or a colleague. There have been many of those in my work. When I started managing the Miroslav Kraljević Gallery, I did not know what I was getting myself into. After a year's work it gradually crystallized itself what that gallery should be. Since the owner of the gallery space was a corporation based on exact technological process (INA), I contemplated about presenting art based on or dealing with technology. The gallery also bears a name of a great artist who died very young, so it seemed that we have an obligation to present young artists in that space. In those guidelines I found logical reasons for what should act as the strategy of the gallery. I acted in all my workplaces and projects according to that principle and because of the mental openness and devising what should be specifically done in the format within which I work, I gained local, national and international recognition.

3. What methodologies do you use in your work? What do you consider to be the field of your public activity?
I do not use any specific methodology, and I find complex area of mediating visual arts to audience as an area of my public activity. Certainly, in my case that does not include generating theoretical discourse. For me personally, changes of work surroundings were stimulating, even though they were caused by many personal and professional frustrations.
I believe that frequent changes of workplace, especially by mode of public action, should be quite intriguing for younger colleagues. However, while acting as a director when I suggested a position in a museum to young and agile curators none of them wanted to accept a challenge of applying to the competition. I believe that the fear of institutions smothering creativity is unjust. They offer a valuable insight into how things work. It is necessary to dare, to fight for your point of view and respect the fact that one can contribute art the most by working in an institution since the public by its habits, tradition and cultural surrounding is primary turning to them.

4. From your experience, how much does a curator participate in the concept, production, presentation and promotion of an artwork? How do you set the boundaries

in those relations?
It always varies. Actually the focus is incessantly pointed towards the relation of an artist and a curator, which is important, but also equally important relation of a curator and audience is neglected. Considering the relation of a curator and an artist, sometimes the collaboration is purely of technical – organizational nature, while sometimes curator from the position of theory primarily through suggestions, then interpretations shows bounds within which art work has been created and within which it should or could be observed or understood.
It is hard to set a limit in collaboration of an artist with a curator in moments when through mutual dialogue initial idea develops in a completely unexpected direction. A certain synergy is created in which creative potentials of a curator and an artist elevate to a whole different level through a dialogue. Of course, this does not constitute co-authorship, but through this exchange project evolves and a whole new framework is being created. It is an ideal option, but also the most hazardous one since it can lead to a rupture of collaboration. Actually, this would be a good question for the artists, since they are more sensitive in the matter. The role of a curator is especially sensitive with a transfer of such art works into exhibition context since certain transformations of original meaning take place because of which artists often feel threatened and exploited.
5. To what extent and in which segment do you collaborate with other curators and/or experts from other fields?
I consider collaboration to be important since phenomena of contemporary civilization expressed through art could only be completely presented and explained through synergistic interpretation. I collaborated whenever there was a chance for it and I expect to continue doing so. Openness is my conscious choice, in spite of constant external pressure of closing within interest groups, not because of profit, but because of influence, prestige and arrogation of work area. It often bears tragicomic consequences.
6. In what way is the mediation between a work of art and the audience enacted and conceptualized in your projects?
Considering the fact that I see a curator as a mediator between art and public sphere, it is important for the curator to do all he can in order to make the mediation as successful and as intense and he can. In that respect, curators are the greatest "art service", because even though they create according to inner imperative, they do not work for themselves, but for the public. While working at GMK and constantly spending time in a showroom, I was often in opportunity to see that audience does not only understand art work, but also does not understand what is written about it in the catalogue.
We are raised not to ask questions and that is the reason why audience leaves galleries not to return anymore.
Mediation is essential and I am constantly dissatisfied with its level. Unavoidable part of curatorial activity is designing, implementing and facilitating communication, on which uninterrupted education should be based. Means for education are regularly not approved because it is presumed that exhibitions themselves will generate such opportunities. However, without financial support to those who are professionally specialized there is no room for progress.
7. In your opinion, what is the difference between institutional and independent (curatorial) positions?
Of course, institution has its own rules and jurisdiction of activity so if a person commits to work in a certain institution he should within it find an area of activity that will suit both parties. Institutions have so rich funds and databases which can satisfy any type of interest. Here curators often abuse general dissatisfaction with institutions, get paid, but do not work on projects that would mediate to audience collections and other art contents within jurisdiction of an individual institution. Institution should actually be understood as a medium.
Unlike curators in institutions, independent curators seemingly have freedom to do what they want. Since they are dependent on specialized market, this is not true in practice. They have to realize their existence and since they have no other incomes they will have to do what surroundings offer, need or suggest. Independent curatorial position is a mystification which stretches to so-called independent sector, which is not as independent since it is being financed from public demands. Of course, independent scene has an opportunity to react faster on upcoming phenomena and greater program flexibility since it is, in relation to institutional sector, less regulated. However, if independent scene keeps its programs for itself and does not open towards public institutions as a medium which can present its programs to a wider audience, then everything stays within independent scene and its audience, which is in the end very limited number of people. Assumption is that public institutions are mature enough to accept the need of collaboration with a goal of a more successful actualization, in essence, of related missions and social obligations.
8. How are your programs financed?
Through a usual method of successful applications to city, regional and national competitions for public needs in culture, various international competitions, sponsorships and donor fund-raisings etc.
9. What is your view on the relation between cultural production and the private sector in Croatia – corporate competitions / awards (T-com, Erste...), and private collections (Filip Trade, Essl Collection...)?
How much of that could there be in a country with a population of 4, 5 million? We always compare ourselves with (social) environments ten times our size and hundred times our economic power. In that respect, what we have is a phenomenon. The problem is that there are a lot of collectors of which we know nothing and that is a direct consequence of an unregulated art market. The sale takes place outside of financial system and artists know more on the subject than curators. One could say that is historically conditioned. In socialism, collecting was a manifestation of a bourgeois worldview and directly in opposition to a principal political doctrine. State should take care about everything including provision of culture to all which enabled, at the same time, an effective control of creation. Eventually, truly personal and subjective need for creation and possession of art continued to exist illegally, in economy's gray zone. Today, when things have changed, new collections emerge with an ambition of public action, like the Filip Trade Collection or Marinko Sudac Collection. Those people are in a position to show themselves as more effective as opposed to existing institutions, which merely points to the functioning of the same institutions. Collectors' activities are far less complicated considering the fact that their acquisitions are a subject to their personal preference and means, unlike complex regulations of acquiring art works with public means. The problem with awards is that their value in a situation of non-existing market proposes itself as a market value with which it has absolutely no connection.

We are dealing with an award, not a realistic market value.

Do you collaborate internationally on your projects, and why is that important to you?

I believe that we cannot be dealing with our own, because we are too small (social) environment and we must haste to become a part of the international community because it is of the essence for the quality of our life. I believe that the system that we currently have should be pointed towards connection with the international scene. Projects on which I have been working on from the beginnings of my professional career are pointed in that direction. In my experience, our international colleagues stay stunned with the versatility and general quality of our production. It is completely incomprehensible to them that such a small country finances both the existing institutional and non-institutional curatorial system towards which we, due to its inefficiency, very often bear extreme negativity and criticism.

11. In your opinion, what should the transfer of curatorial knowledge be like? Do you support "the institutionalization of curatorial models" through various types of curatorial programs?

Considering the fact that the current high education program does not include study of contemporary curatorial methods, non-institutional curatorial programs have no alternative, their numbers are increasing and they will profit through "natural" competition. Fact remains that existing programs are focused on narrow curatorial interest or model and pragmatically directed at networking and successful curatorial career, but all the while supporting mental openness and attendants' criticism they serve the need of acquiring specific knowledge of more thoughtful and more successful mediation of art production towards the audience.

12. How visible are the curators, and in what way are their roles and responsibilities manifested within the actual cultural politics in Croatia?

Today's administration has realized that it is not only is the most correct, but also the most opportunistic to include all the participants in policy forming. However, visibility depends upon PR which is here a non-existing skill. Responsibility is then manifested according to specific sector. Independent curators act more responsible and are more agile, but the fact remains that the projects taking place outside of institutions, no matter if they are of high quality and value, they remain noticed only by a small, isolated and most often self-sufficient circle of audience and creative ones. Due to mental inertia in curatorial activities in public institutions which generates apathetic, non-critical, non-interested audience of low visual culture and level of civilization, what takes place is profound social loss. Art scene is the way it is. Curators may nurture it and direct it through their work towards certain personalities or phenomena, but they have no place in influencing creativity itself and they should have no more influence as such.
Art evolves by inner need, and not because of curatorial projections, and if it does than it is pointless.

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BRANKO FRANCESCHI IS AN ART HISTORIAN AND A CURATOR BORN IN ZADAR IN 1959. HE LIVES AND WORKS IN ZAGREB. HE IS A HEAD OF HDLU ZAGREB (CROATIAN ASSOCIATION OF ARTISTS) SINCE 2008. HE WAS A HEAD OF THE MUSEUM OF MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART IN RIJEKA (2004–2008), AND HE MANAGED AND CURATED THE MIROSLAV KRALJEVIĆ GALLERY (GMK) IN ZAGREB. HE ORGANIZED NUMEROUS INDEPENDENT AND GROUP EXHIBITIONS BY LOCAL AND FOREIGN ARTISTS IN THE COUNTRY AND ABROAD, AS WELL AS ACTING AS A NATIONAL SELECTOR FOR THE *26TH BIENNIAL* IN SAO PAULO (2004), THE *2ND INTERNATIONAL BIENNIAL* IN PRAGUE (2005). HE INITIATED THE *BIENNIAL QUADRILATERAL* IN RIJEKA AND WAS A MEMBER OF CURATORIAL TEAM FOR THE *2ND INTERNATIONAL YOUNG ARTISTS' BIENNIAL* IN BUCHAREST (2006). HE CURATED CROATIAN PAVILIONS FOR THE *52ND VENICE BIENNIAL* (2007) AND FOR THE *11TH INTERNATIONAL BIENNIAL OF ARCHITECTURE* IN VENICE (2008). AS AN INDEPENDENT CRITIC HE HAS DEVISED AND REALIZED NUMEROUS EXHIBITIONS AND HAS WRITTEN NUMEROUS APPENDIXES FOR DAILY PRESS, ART MAGAZINES AND REVIEWS, TELEVISION AND RADIO SHOWS, AS WELL AS INITIATED AND COORDINATED MANY RESIDENCES AND PROJECTS OF INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL EXCHANGE.

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D.N.

IVA RADMILA JANKOVIĆ

INTERWIEVED BY IRENA GESSNER

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1. What term would you use to define your profession and what was the course of your professional path?

Without hesitation I can say that I am a curator. At least considering its original meaning and origin of the word (the one who cares, takes care of). At the moment I am doing exactly that – taking care of Kožarić Atelje holdings and making sure that it is presented in the best possible way. I am also familiar with everything else the term implies – I come up with the concept of a work within certain problematics, do organizational and managerial work and so on.
Considering mu professional path, decisions and solutions did not come right away. After graduation I thought that I would be involved with literature, since my greatest interest on my final year laid in literature. In art I "was stuck" in the Middle Ages, that is I Graduated from something I was interested in at the time – illuminations in monastery scriptoriums.
After finishing my studies I spent four months at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection where for the first time I have seen the way an art institution functions "behind the scenes".
That is how the awakening began, my active learning emerging from the real interest in the subject. In their library, among other things, I came across a catalogue of the American conceptual artist Jennifer Holzer, which in a way became a key for my future choices.
I read it in one breath and somehow realized that the art that arises in, i.e. lives within the moment is exactly what I am interested in.
The same year I visited the Venice Biennale and started writing about contemporary art. In time I wanted to organize something myself. I have especially become attached to the Gallery of Extended Media in Zagreb (Galerija PM). Certain acquaintances with artists and curators have turned into friendships. I collaborated with Dante Gallery in Umag, which today bears the name of the late gallerists Marino Cettina. Dante Gallery was a slightly paradoxical phenomenon – it was the first private gallery that tried to function the Western way within our socialistic conditions.
It was the place where I have encountered some of our well-known artists such as Trbuljak, Tolj, Cvjetanović, Kožarić, as well as some foreign artist whose names I could see only in foreign magazines: Robert Gober, Jack Pierrson, Andres Serrano. For example, I had the opportunity to meet Zoe Lenard, Nedko Solakov, Irwin and talk to them. Soon after Marino"s death, his wife Dezi wanted to continue the collaboration we had; she invited me to be one of the curators on Croatian-Slovenian-Austrian-Italian exhibition Blody_

Body_Value_Nobody, conceived by Marina Gržinić. This was also my first international experience, and here I have met a young theoretician and philosopher Joanne Richardson. Our friendship continued in Zagreb, and it also played a big role in my further thinking and attitudes about art.

2. What would you list as the decisive moments that contributed to the development of your thinking and practice, whether concerning certain concepts you have developed or references and collaborations?

I talked a lot with Joanne about trends in today's art phenomena. We made a big interview about the engaged art, about how it is not good when art becomes a sort of substitute for politics, since it should always transcendent, be a step forward and surpass the concept. We talked about how political art is a bad concept because it is the art in the service of the politics. She considered that it is sometimes dangerous to be too confident about the political idea that governs everything you do, because then it becomes a kind of dogmatism. At the time I started thinking about the project in Zadar, which I named – *Zadar uživo* (Zadar Live). It was the time when I have, literally and in very bad conditions, "learnt my trade well". A lot younger people were of great help to me, especially the students from Z.V.U.K. Association (Zadar vision of urban culture) who offered me a platform for the creation of the project. At the time, still full of war traumas and all the sickness transition brings along, all attention in culture was, logically, pointed to tradition. Youth culture was neglected. What artists in Zadar talked about was connected with the current situation of the city. Despite the poor production conditions, certain interventions that took place were later presented on big and important world exhibitions. That was the first time I realized that something good can be created if you believe strong enough in what you do. I realized that it is not important how you define the work you do – be it a curator, organizer, impresario… because curator's job comprises a very wide spectrum of thing – from tourist guide, interpreter of the past and present of the city, to manager looking for sponsors, a coordinator between artists and people who helped with all the work.

3. What methodologies do you use in your work? What do you consider to be the field of your public activity?

I approach each project intuitively in a way, not questioning beforehand or targeting the field of action. What is important is that the concept of the work and the created artwork make sense in the wider context, that they are realized as best as possible and the thing exhibited is communicative. That also goes for a work in the public space, where wider social network is in the focus, but for a work in the gallery as well, where I have dealt with privacy, intimacy, first person speech, and indirectly with collision of the private and the public. In public space the projects had the function to make people think, people who do not necessarily have the prerequisite knowledge about contemporary art practices, about certain phenomena happening here and now.

Within the exhibition program that deals with artist's presentation, i.e. with different views on observation, the necessary foreknowledge came from literature. I was interested in the possibilities of applying that knowledge on the field of art, since contemporary visual language includes traces of narration, i.e. takes over the elements of other genre, especially film and literary ones.

At my last exhibition *Looking at Others* (Gledati druge), dedicated to the third persona, it was especially demonstrated how this theoretical discourse was an indirect way to bring us to the field of social relations, since the problematic of the gaze necessarily raised up some ethical questions.

4. From your experience, how much does a curator participate in the concept, production, presentation and promotion of an artwork? How do you set the boundaries in those relations?

I think that the curator engages him/herself in all segments, but one has to be aware of the limits. Curators sometimes take on a bigger role that they actually should and create concepts in which works are merely in the function of legitimating a certain idea. I think it is ideal when things work out in a synchronicity, meaning that there is a parallel work between a curator and an artist, which then results in something new, even if it was not planned beforehand.

Considering production, models differ from case to case. Today, with their solo projects, artists are expected to work independently on production. Considering the promotion/ presentation of the work, I think a curator plays an important role there. But since artists themselves are being educated at the academies on the topic, curator's role is not always the most important one. Curator's role is to place the work within a wider context or to find an adequate way which will intrigue visitors to come and see the show. That is something both artists and audience expect from us.

5. To what extent and in which segment do you collaborate with other curators and/or experts from other fields?

Cooperation is necessary, sometimes even essential. Examples from practice confirm that. Thinking about the adequate theme for the *Zadar Live Project*, one of the ideas was to relocate urban interventions from the historical city centre to the so-called "dead zones" – abandoned places that for some reason have decayed and became non-places. In conversation with the architect Pero Marušić who intensely reflects on the theme of urbanism in Zadar, a shift in thought happened. He was aware that the reanimation of derelict urban areas is fashionable today, but he proposed something completely opposite – contextualization of locations in the city that bear an important archeological and historical meaning, but are completely undefined in an urban way, and therefore exist as a kind of dead zones. The idea seemed very brave so I accepted it, and artists themselves loved it as well and demonstrated that in lively actualization of problems, such as parking lots in absurd places, successful and unsuccessful architectural interpolations, meaningful and/or meaningless archaeological reconstructions, as well as the lack of content in frequent places… In every project certain collaboration happens, although it does not have to be visible. So far, for example, I have collaborated with experts dealing with literature and anthropological subjects, people who have helped me a lot in the selection of relevant literature and gave me some directions. In general I find an interdisciplinary network always welcomed. This is becoming more usual in curatorial practices, becoming more and more explicit in the sense that the experts from certain areas are not only someone who can help you from behind the scenes, but they also can have an active role in the creation of the project.

6. In what way is the mediation between a work of art and the audience enacted and conceptualized in your projects?

It is one of the more important curatorial tasks, precisely the one why this occupation even makes sense. As a curator in PM Gallery I devoted a lot of time to artist's promotion in the

media, to interpretation and contextualization of their work. Outside the institution mediation does not have an important purpose. A work has to be able to communicate on its own – to provoke an interaction, because it is the only way the public space comes into existence. It is the moment when journalists join in, people comment, start to actively think about something. Actually, the role of a curator should not be crucial in the perception of a work, but be something as the helping ladders. It is exciting, however, when the position of a curator becomes the one of an advocate, especially if you are defending works that were not understood by those who were supposed to understand them, while the majority of passers-by gets them intuitively, right away. One of those works was made by Kožarić. It was his haystack in the middle of Dubrovnik, as a part of an unforgettable exhibition named *Island* organized by Slaven Tolj. Those are the examples you can learn from…

7. In your opinion, what is the difference between institutional and independent (curatorial) positions?

I think a lot is going on in the field of independent curatorial positions, but I also think that some institutions do not fall behind in following those trends. Looking at practices of some contemporary art institutions (for example Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, Tate Modern in London, New Museum in New York), it looks like they are also trying to find formulae for getting out of the scheme of immobility, distance and falling behind in actual events. Certain institutions also host independent practice representatives, and therefore today it is difficult to draw a line. More bright examples that negate the assumption about the dullness of the institutions can be found even in our area, and very early as well – in the '70s. For example Gallery of Contemporary Art, among first ones, has, thanks to its curator Radoslav Putar, presented blurry photographs and interventions on the negatives by Željko Jerman, which immediately became a part of the institution, i.e. recognized as something progressive for the time of their existence. Museum did not wait for the verification in the galleries, but it reacted promptly.

8. How are your programs financed?

They are financed by the city and the Ministry, sometimes by cultural institutes and embassies of the countries the artist are coming from. Sometimes, but rarely, we have sponsors. We still do not have sponsors with such a high awareness that would love to put their money into culture, especially the culture that is more than the promotion of something already established. In *Zadar Project* there was an agency involved in looking for sponsors, and they did their job very professionally. Although the results were mostly defeating, I was extremely happy to receive anything in kind. I had similar experience when I was the manager of PM in Zagreb.

9. What is your view on the relation between cultural production and the private sector in Croatia – corporate competitions / awards (T-com, Erste…), and private collections (Filip Trade, Essl Collection…)?

All the best. Every such initiative, and in our country you can literally count them on the fingers of one hand, is welcomed for the artists.

10. Do you collaborate internationally on your projects, and why is that important to you?

I do. I am the most happy when I can make a link and when it works out… divisions between the West and the East that existed before are rapidly disappearing, together with the impossibility of tearing that barrier down. International cooperation is becoming a natural and everyday part of the job, done ever more easy. With more or less success, depending on how much the idea for the project is good itself.

11. In your opinion, what should the transfer of curatorial knowledge be like? Do you support "the institutionalization of curatorial models" through various types of curatorial programs?

Why not systematize and share experiences? Considering my own practice, I have usually gained experience on the principle of attempts and failures and I think it would have been much easier if I had the chance to learn something systematically.

12. How visible are the curators, and in what way are their roles and responsibilities manifested within the actual cultural politics in Croatia?

Curator's role and responsibility can in theory be very important, regarding the development of the profession alone, or when dealing with a topic which counts with a wider social reception. A curator can be a visionary, recognize some new values or take a critical look at certain sociology phenomena, act in an educational way, etc. But in reality things look differently to me.

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IVA RADMILA JANKOVIĆ WAS BORN IN ZADAR IN 1996, BUT SHE LIVES AND WORKS IN ZAGREB. SHE GRADUATED ART HISTORY AND COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES IN ZAGREB (IN 1991). SHE WAS AN INTERN AT THE PEGGY GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM IN VENICE (1993), GOT A SCHOLARSHIP FOR VISUAL ARTS THEORY AND CRITIQUE IN POZNAN (POLAND) IN THE ORGANIZATION OF SCCA (1999), AND A RESIDENTIAL CURATORIAL PROGRAM ISCP (INTERNATIONAL STUDIO AND CURATORIAL PROGRAM) IN NEW YORK (2006).

FROM 2001 TO 2007 SHE WAS THE CURATOR OF THE GALLERY OF EXTENDED MEDIA (HDLU), AND SINCE 2007 SHE HAS BEEN THE CURATOR OF THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART IN ZAGREB AND MANAGED THE COLLECTION AND ATELIER OF IVAN KOŽARIĆ.

HER SOLO PROJECT-EXHIBITION CONCEPTS ARE ALWAYS INTERDISCIPLINARY, HAVE A VERY POSITIVE RECEPTION, AND GET TO THE HEART OF THE MATTER.

IN THE VARIETY OF CONCEPTS *ZADAR LIVE* (*CLOSED CIRCUIT CITY*, 2001; *INTER MUROS*, 2002; *ARTISTEXTURE*, 2003; *REFRESH!*, 2004), THE MANIFESTATION DEDICATED TO ARTISTIC INTERVENTIONS IN PUBLIC SPACE, TAKES A SPECIAL PLACE. ORIGINAL AND INTRIGUING EXHIBITION CONCEPT IS ALSO A TRILOGY OF EXHIBITIONS OF A KIND, WHERE EACH OF THEM QUESTIONED ON OF THE ACTORS' POSITION WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF CONTEMPORARY ART: *U PRVOM LICU* (IN THE FIRST PERSON, CROATIAN ASSOCIATION OF ARTISTS, 2004, ART GALLERY DUBROVNIK, 2005), *1:1, MEĐU(O)SOBNO U SUVREMENOJ UMJETNOSTI* (ON CONTEMPORARY ART BETWEEN THEMSELVES, CROATIAN ASSOCIATION OF ARTISTS, 2006, COLLABORATION WITH EVELINA TURKOVIĆ), *GLEDATI DRUGE* (LOOKING AT OTHERS, ART PAVILION, 2009). SHE ALSO CURATED INTROSPECTIONS (2006) POSTHUMOUSLY DEDICATED TO THE ARTIST ŽELJKO JERMAN, AND IN JUNE 2007 EXHIBITION OF CONTEMPORARY CROATIAN ART *WELCOME* WITHIN *REYKJAVIK ART FESTIVAL* (100° GALLERY, REYKJAVIK, ISLAND). SHE IS THE MEMBER OF INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ARTISTS AICA. FROM 1998 TO 2001 SHE COLLABORATED ON THE NATIONAL TELEVISION SHOW DEALING WITH ART EVENTS *TRANSFER* (HRT, 1ST CHANNEL). CONTINUOUSLY PUBLISHES CRITIQUES AND REVIEWS IN MAGAZINES (*ŽIVOT UMJETNOSTI, KONTURA, ZAREZ, ČIP, QUORUM, KVARTAL*), AND WORKS ON THE SHOW *TRIPTIH* ON THE 3RD CHANNEL OF CROATIAN RADIO PROGRAM.

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KONTEJNER

INTERVIEWED BY ANA KOVAČIĆ AND ZANA ŠAŠKIN

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1. What term would you use to define your profession and what was the course of your professional path?

Our identities are multiple and slightly schizophrenic, so we define our occupation differently, depending on the situation. If we are filling-in some kind of administration form we are art historians, if we are talking about the things we do in the media, in that case we are critics, and if it concerns our curatorial practice – we are curators. Since the question concerns the Kontejner Organization, then we will say that the collective deals with contemporary art curatorial practice.

We do every kind of work within the collective – from concepts themselves to sweeping floors, from theoretical reflection and contextualization of art works to acquisition of various things needed for the production and realization of the project. From research and keeping up with the scene, to administration, secretary, technical work, from participation in works themselves, and sometimes to exposing ourselves to the danger of breaking the law. (In an independent organization a curator has a different and therefore definitely more extensive job description than his/her colleagues in museum institutions.)

Considering our professional path, three out of four of the oldest group members graduated art history, and we have all worked, or still work, in Zagreb galleries. We also worked on the television and on the radio, as well as in printed media critically reflecting upon the local and international art scene. We have organized various solo and group exhibitions, festivals in the country and abroad, within the activity of Kontejner Organization, but also aside from that. Recently joined members have also graduated from or are about to graduate in art history.

Although within the structure of our members humanistic studies are prevalent, as an educational basis, our activity is actually depicted by an interdisciplinary approach. We are very proud to have as one of our members Tomislav Pokrajčić, who graduated from FER (Faculty of Electrical Engineering) and who works as a programmer. That gives us a completely different perspective, broadening our views towards potential collaborators and audience that cannot be considered strictly a part of art circles.

2. What would you list as the decisive moments that contributed to the development of your thinking and practice, whether concerning certain concepts you have developed or references and collaborations?

Kontejner deals with very specific artistic approaches. We usually define them as media-like, because it is the easiest way to explain what they deal with. However, if we are to explain our criteria more precisely we could say that it is a very emotionally charged art, art of risk that has the ability to provoke people, fill them with disgust, hurt or make them worried, make them reconsider their strong and radical attitudes and question stereotypes. Public media and critical reception of our work often confirm our postulates. Architecture and design critic Maroje Mrduljaš has come up with a very interesting and concise definition of our work in the quote that we could almost use as a statement of our work: "According to a non-theoretical interpretation a thing common to all of Kontejner's projects is precisely that very direct, open directionality towards 'human, too human': towards the transgression of social norms, towards passions and fears, machines and cybernetic mechanisms, towards the obsession with sensuous pleasures and limitations preventing us from reaching the same." According to our opinion the art able to reach that is, in one way or the other, connected with the body and/or technology – including performances and actions, or technologically and scientifically based works, which engage visitors into an interaction or bring alarming "news from the present and the future" as it is the case with biotechnological art.

Decisive moments in the course of our activity path, i.e. the decision about what kind of art we want to engage into, were the encounters with curators and like-minded artists all around the world. We learnt from them and we were able to share our excitement with them. It should be emphasized that those were international encounters, because in terms of formal education in our country there is no distribution of that specific knowledge, and there is no other individual or collective on our domestic scene that is systematically and continuously dealing with the related artistic practices.

Decisive exhibition for our activity was the 26th Salon of the Youth in 2001, where we were a part of the Organizational Committee (until then we were not really into exhibition organization, and we ended up working at the Salon by a "nadrealistic method" – because of a dream!). We invited Slaven Tolj from Dubrovnik as a curator, and then he proposed Jurij Krpan from Kapelica Gallery in Ljubljana, a young artist Vuk Ćosić who was at the time engaged with net-art - practically and organizationally, and Michal Koleček from Czech Republic. All these encounters had a major effect on our work, and we have continued to collaborate with these experts who taught us how to seriously approach an exciting art project, but taught us of the importance of contemporary art as well.

The *26th Salon of the Youth* was organized at the Zagreb Fair, referring with its position – it was relocated from the centre of the city – to the fact that the Museum of Contemporary Art is being built on the other side of Sava River. It comprised the area of 10 000 m2 in 52 containers (that is where the name Kontejner came from) creating thus a small city. For the first time it incorporated Zagreb independent scene within its structure, and it is today therefore considered to be the forerunner of initiatives such as *Operation: City.*

Within the Salon we has also skaters, street hack masters, Močvara Club, mama, Attack, and together they contributed to the lively atmosphere of the exhibition. The Salon was conceived as an international exhibition and it presented the then propulsive new wave scene such as 0101010.org, RTMark etc, equally incorporating practice and theory. That way our first exhibition was also our biggest one.

Soon after the Salon we were invited as curators to several other exhibitions and one international festival, and thereafter we decided to found our own curatorial association (in 2002) in which we would be able to promote and develop our new interests. We still nurture the vision of our occupation we had back then.

3. What methodologies do you use in your work? What do you consider to be the field of your public activity?

We use the common methodology such as planning, research, selection, financial resources acquisition, promotion and implementation of the activity, evaluation, etc. We approach our projects in an interdisciplinary manner. That includes the production of new works that require collaboration of artists and experts from the field of social and natural sciences, or positioning the certain problematic within a wider context by collaborating with philosophers, sociologists.

We deal with art primarily directed towards establishing a connection between one's own and a collectively determined reality. We generate risky realities you cannot identify yourself with, nor fit them into the existing situation. The field of our public activity is producing extremes as agents of a mental and emotional shift.

Together with its activity on the field of art, Kontejner also engages on the field of local cultural policies and civil society through initiatives connected with policy issues important for the independent cultural scene or as the member of *Pravo na grad* (Right to the City), initiative aimed at proactive critique of city government policy.

4. From your experience, how much does a curator participate in the concept, production, presentation and promotion of an artwork? How do you set the boundaries in those relations?

Participation on the concept varies from project to project. The boundaries are sometimes blurred so the curator takes part in the creative process, and sometimes he/she collaborates with the author/s as an equal. Curator's role in presentation and promotion of the work is important, while participation in production depends solely upon financial possibilities.

Curator is the one who gives the work its credibility and contextualizes it. Curator is also often the link with the audience, mediator and interpreter of the work, so his relationship with the artist is almost a symbiotic one.

If we are asked whether an artist can function without the curator, our answer is (and we also find this to be the general opinion) – he/she cannot. That does not imply that an artwork does not exist without a curator, but it means that nowadays curators are the ones who dictate trends or create new ones, and form opinions and public taste. They decide which work of art will become relevant. In that sense they have the great power, if they are not afraid to use it.

5. To what extent and in which segment do you collaborate with other curators and/or experts from other fields?

We constantly cooperate with other curators and experts. When we organize festivals, we usually invite collaborators from abroad, and in collaboration with them we realize our projects. The whole concept of Extravagant Bodies, a festival dedicated to the art of physical disability, was realized in collaboration with Live Art Development Agency from London, an extremely respectable institution that leads the archive of performers from Great Britain.

This year we are working on an exhibition called *Device_art* that will present artworks dealing with inventions and robotics coming from Croatia and Japan, and on that project we cooperate with the artist Satoshi Morita, and theoretician and curator Machiko Kusahara. Next year in Zagreb we will organize a "sound art" project in collaboration with a festival from Stuttgart, on invitation by the Goethe Institute.

We cooperate with curators from all over Croatia, exchange programs or realize joint projects such as the latest *Operation: City. Uradisam_ARTLAB* is also a production-based platform for local artists conceived precisely to enable the cooperation with experts from other areas. The fact that the association is interdisciplinary oriented helps and opens the doors for cooperation with other experts. Our projects are mostly impossible to realize without such cooperations because they are too complex.

6. In what way is the mediation between a work of art and the audience enacted and conceptualized in your projects?

We are lucky enough to engage ourselves with art that, even hard to understand, has an output which the audience and the media can automatically hang on to, so the mediation somehow happens automatically.

Most of the art we present has a direct impact on the audience and is not hermetic. Moreover, it often requires interaction. If it is about some interactive new media art like, for example, the one done by *Time's up* from Linz, which we presented within the *Operation: City* – even the kids were able to understand the way in which, by seesawing, swinging and riding on interactive machines, they can intensely and physically experience the basic form of the works, if they cannot do so on the level of the content.

Some other, less benign projects cause an extreme media attention. For example, there are the works by the controversial Serbian artists Zoran Todorović, who is constantly being promoted by Kontejner, and whose performance on this year's Venice Biennale – with his hair sculptures – was phenomenal. If someone in the gallery offers a cannibalistic meal made of refuge from an aesthetic surgery that does not require some special mediation strategy because that event made its own PR and everyone understood it very well.

Besides that basic level immanent to all of the works, more general understanding and experience of the works we mediate through the texts in the catalogues, which we also publish on our website, and through conversations with the visitors. Our experience says that the audience is often very intrigued and wants to talk. A guided tour through the exhibition is for example an excellent way for the audience to familiarize with the works and get interested in a more profound approach to art.

Regardless the fact that Kontejner has no problem with audience attendance and interest of the public, we still think that the audience requires more engagement through educational lectures or workshops. In general, the dialogue on contemporary art is rather "thin" in our country and merely conducted within the expert circles. There are numerous reasons for that – for example we have not developed a general habit of attending contemporary art exhibitions and other art events. This requires a systematic and serious engagement. The audience that is nurturing conventional stereotypes about art – the result of sustained disregard for contemporary art in school curriculum, but it is also the consequence of its often banalisation in the media – always raise the same questions about the significance and meaning of contemporary art, which require some answers. Contemporary art we represent is easy to disregard with phrases like: "those freaks" or "those nutjobs"… But if you start a conversation with a person who lapidary grades that civilisation treasure, there is a great chance that you will find out some familiar interests. That affirms the fact that dialogue can result in new fans.

7. In your opinion, what is the difference between institutional and independent (curatorial) positions?

We have partially answered that question when talking about the range of the work we do.

Independent curatorial positions are well-defined, propulsive, often more motivated because people are actually working within the scope of their interest and do that with more passion and enthusiasm, following and creating trends. Those are usually young people who travel a lot and are constantly in touch with changes, and therefore independent curatorial projects are generally more interesting and actually make up for the things that inert institutional system has no courage

to do. We could also say that this independent sector often represents progressive tendencies, what is yet to become mainstream, while the institutional one falls behind promoting some past times.
Independent scene is more dynamic, flexible and prone to experiment. A curator often deals with various legal and ethical consequences, so this scene is more prepared to take responsibility imposed by the projects, risk involved in the process of realization of a work and its contextual effect on organizers, audience and social norms, and it can surpass the boundaries what is not permitted in the institutions. Laziness of the institutions, outdated infrastructure, lack of connections with other professions, especially in dealing with art requiring interdisciplinary collaboration, make it more difficult for curators to realize such projects, because in those conditions they require much more engagement. Today a curator has a civilisation mission, he/she represents a certain attitude and principles which he/she needs to work by. A curator is not just an employee, promoter or educator.

8. How are your programs financed?

They are financed from government and city budget, and standard foundations and embassies. Self-financing is not worth mentioning.

9. What is your view on the relation between cultural production and the private sector in Croatia – corporate competitions / awards (T-com, Erste...), and private collections (Filip Trade, Essl Collection...)?

The more money involved in art the bigger the possibility of making an interesting and quality project, as well as the possibility of increasing the standards of art production. Such investments also motivate the artists, making them to adopt a more professional attitude towards their work and its production. Unfortunately, we would need at least twenty more connections with private sector, together with these mentioned ones, to feel a change on the art scene.

10. Do you collaborate internationally on your projects, and why is that important to you?

International cooperation and presentation links us with international art and curatorial practices, and we are in a constant dialogue with them. In that way we are familiar with what is happening on the art scene and we can find projects we want to present to the local public more easily. It enables us to perceive our ambitions on a much wider level, as well as to present our artist abroad. It gives us credibility and enforces the reputation of our association.
Since the beginning we have made numerous international contacts and realized collaborations with artists, curators, galleries, organizations and institutions, therefore our international collaboration is outspread and takes place on several levels. That also includes a successful presentation on the international scene (National Review of Life Art, Glasgow; Art Space, Sidney; The Last East European Show at MCA, which was named a show of the year by the choice of the profession; O3one Gallery, Belgrade; Rx Gallery, San Francisco; NAMOC, Beijing...). Besides Europe, America and Australia our contacts have spread to China, where we were the only Croatian representatives with Magdalena Pederin on the international exhibition of new media art *Synthetic Times: Media Art China 2008*. The exhibition was a part of Beijing Olympics cultural project at the National Art Museum of China. That was one of the most important cultural events before Beijing Olympic Games, and we have also made numerous contacts there with our fellow colleagues from all over the world. Participation on that exhibition is extremely important to us because Kontejner was recognized as a relevant and competent subject that can provide adequate information on local new media art.
Professional collaborators work on our programs and contribute to its creation. We also collaborate with Live Art Development Agency from London, which was our partner in the realization of *Extravagant Bodies Festival* in 2007. We also realize partnership with galleries and institutions considering programs exchange. Here it is important to mention the cult Kapelica Gallery from Ljubljana, which is our permanent partner. We have been collaborating with them since 2002, and through the exchange of programs and ideas we are trying to establish a more permanent operative platform for presentation of works made by the local and international artists, researchers and theoreticians. So far we have collaborated on several exhibition (Thomas Kvam and Frode Oldereid, Stahl Stenslie, Kal Spelletich...), performances (Kira O'Reilly, Mat Fraser...) and lectures (SymbioticA, Stephen Wilson, Joe Davis...) and together with collaborators realized festivals (*26th Salon of the Youth*, Zagreb; *Break 2.2,* Ljubljana; *Device_art* 2003 and 2006). We have also collaborated with *blasthaus* organization from San Francisco, which deals with art connected with technologies. That collaboration was based on the exchange of programs between Croatian and American artists, who were guest artists, first in Zagreb, and then in San Francisco in Rx Gallery. Maybe the most interesting thing is that we have, with seven other partners from Europe (Ectopia, Instituto Gulbenkian de Ciência, Lisabon; Arts Catalyst, London; School of art and design, Huddersfield; TAGC – The Art & Genomics Centre, Leiden; MEIAC – Museu Extremenho e Ibero-Americano de Arte Contemporânea, Badajoz; CAAC – Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporânea, Sevilha; Kapelica Gallery, Ljubljana) founded the European Network for Arts and Sciences in 2007. In the last year the network received new members with whom we collaborate on *BIOMAP Project: Culture Facing Biotechnology.*

11. In your opinion, what should the transfer of curatorial knowledge be like? Do you support "the institutionalization of curatorial models" through various types of curatorial programs?

We have not thought about that as a part of our own practice, because we have less people than we need, even for the most basic projects organized by Kontejner, but in any case we support every kind of curatorial knowledge transfer. In Kontejner we pass that knowledge on "spontaneously" and through work, engaging and involving ever new, young people within the organization, and in that way some of them also become our full members. Education for curators is extremely weak in our country – it does not exist really. Any kind of initiative in that field is worth supporting.

12. How visible are the curators, and in what way are their roles and responsibilities manifested within the actual cultural politics in Croatia?

In this country no one wants to take on any responsibility, at least curators. If they wanted to have some responsibility, maybe then someone would have asked about their opinion, but it is clear that is not what they want. They want to remain as insignificant as possible, because if they made something worthwhile then they would have been exposed to criticism. The mere existence of cultural policies in Croatia is questionable, there is no cultural policy strategy whatsoever, and cultural policies curb as the wind of politics and elections

blows. Therefore the whole curatorial practice in Croatia is semi-public, and there are rare individuals do something for the benefit of the community and who are immune to various blackmails.
Because of the blackmailing we often face difficulties in realization of our projects, because partners and fellow curators who want to help us, by lending us the needed space or in some other way, often find themselves in a situation where, because of the provocativeness of the project, they decide not to get involved, fearing they might face the possible consequences and reaction of the financiers, place owners, etc. However, it is important to emphasize that in Croatia and the region it is still possible to realize provocative projects, sometimes on the verge of the law, in opposition to the countries of the West where often brutal, bureaucratic regulations govern the execution of the project, and it sometimes prevents even the most banal steps in realization of the project, which are considered by the law to be unethical, dangerous, illegal, etc. Of course, some kind of regulation has to exist but it sometimes can become oppressive and degrade art to exercise within the well known formulas and rejection of the risk. Luckily, in Croatia, there is still some space reserved for "the freedom" of artistic activity, and Kontejner deals exactly with empowerment of re-questioning the set borders. Cultural policies can be influenced by this acceptance of non-conformist and risky approach to one's own activity, but it requires stepping out of the "occupation's" limits and taking the role of, not only the expert, but a public intellectual as well, who is ready to pose and defend his/her critical attitudes towards the ruling ideology, politics and its everyday manifestations.
Unfortunately, the majority of curators in Croatia remain within the boundaries of their own "occupation", without questioning the wider context of their own activity and responsibilities.
By participating in the before-mentioned platform – *Pravo na grad* (Right to the City) Kontejner tries to raise the consciousness about and promote the relevance and necessity of holding such position.

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KONTEJNER IS THE BUREAU OF CONTEMPORARY ART PRACTICE FROM ZAGREB, FOUNDED IN 2002. THAT INDEPENDENT, NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION IS ORIENTED TOWARDS CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE ROLE AND MEANING OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND THE BODY IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY THROUGH PRODUCTION OF ART PROJECTS, EXHIBITION ORGANIZATION AND THEORETICAL CONTEXTUALIZATION. THESE ARE THE PROJECTS THAT REFER TO THE RELEVANT PHENOMENON OF CONTEMPORARY ART AND CULTURE, DEAL WITH SOCIETAL TABOOS AND ETHICAL SYSTEMS THAT LEGITIMIZE THEM. *TOUCH ME PROJECT* STARTED IN 2003, AND IT REPRESENTS ART PROJECTS AT THE JUNCTION OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, AND EVERY THREE YEARS IT IS PRESENTED IN THE FORM OF AN INTERNATIONAL THEME FESTIVAL.
DEVICE_ART IS A TRIENNIAL MEDIA-ORIENTED INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION OF DEVICE ART AND ROBOTICS, WHILE *URADISAM_ARTLAB* (DIY_ARTLAB) IS A PRODUCTION PLATFORM THAT CONNECTS LOCAL ARTISTS WITH EXPERTS FROM SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, WHO THEN CREATE NEW WORKS OF ART.
BOLNICA (HOSPITAL PROJECT) DEALS WITH THE TOPIC OF BODILY DEFICIENCY, RELATIONSHIP OF SOCIETY TOWARDS SICKNESS AND SICK PEOPLE. THE TRIENNIAL EXTRAVAGANT BODIES FESTIVAL DEVELOPED FROM IT, AND FIRST TOOK PLACE IN 2007.
THROUGH THE ENUMERATED PROJECTS, THE COLLECTIVE CURATED AND ORGANIZED MORE THAN FORTY GROUP AND SOLO EXHIBITIONS, FESTIVALS, LECTURES AND PRESENTATIONS OF RESPECTABLE INTERNATIONAL AND LOCAL ARTISTS AND THEORETICIANS (MARCEL.LÍ ANTÚNEZ ROCA, STAHL STENSLIE, PAUL GRANJON, ZORAN TODOROVIĆ, KIRA O'REILLY, GIOVANNA MARIA CASETTA, STEPHEN WILSON, JOE DAVIS, OREET ASHERRY, HARUKI NISHIJIMA, *TISSUE ART&CULTURE PROJECT*, PAUL DEMARINIS, RAY LEE, *BREAK21 FESTIVAL*, LJUBLJANA...). IT IS ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF THE EUROPEAN NETWORK FOR ARTS AND SCIENCES.

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LEONIDA KOVAČ

INTERWIEVED BY JELENA GRAOVAC AND TANJA ŠPOLJAR

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1. What term would you use to define your profession and what was the course of your professional path?
I am not prone to definitions, moreover I find them problematic, i.e. is restrictive in a way, so your question causes a sort of uneasiness, since I cannot familiarize myself with any term which would "define" my occupation. I could answer you that I am a theorist, curator, university professor, but there is always a segment of the occupation, which is not to be neglected, not defined by any common term. A propos my "professional way", chronologically; as a student I have been engaged in a couple of science-research projects carried out by the Institute of Art History, and I also took part in archaeological excavations.
My first "workplace" (1987–1993) was as a conservator of the Regional Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments in Zagreb. For fifteen years after that I have been the curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb. I resigned from that job (I held the position of the Chief Curator) in December 2008 and got a job at the Academy of Fine Arts as an Assistant Professor at the Department of Art Theory. I have published five books, the sixth one is being edited for publishing. I have devised and realized about thirty exhibitions.
2. What would you list as the decisive moments that contributed to the development of your thinking and practice, whether concerning certain concepts you have developed or references and collaborations?
As the most important turning point in my reflection about what is called art I would single out my encounter with the thinking of the theorists whose activity often falls into the field of critical theories, more generally post-structuralism, feminism and psychoanalytical theories. I started to read that kind of literature during the middle of 1980s, after I finished my studies. Standard theoretical apparatus of art history and art critique disciplines in the approach of my topic of interest, i.e. a specific cultural production, was not enough for me, and actually quite useless as well. It was the apparatus of modernist art history based on the postulates of self-sufficiency of the visual art and autonomy of particular arts, what was unacceptable for me. Critical theories with immanent interdisciplinary principles have allowed me to achieve different insights and, accordingly, ever new and different knowledge. So I have replaced the question of meaning and value of a specific artwork or art practice with questions about modalities of construction of the meaning that always exist in their historicity and specific socio-cultural contexts, and the basic topic of my interest became, and remained until the present day, the performative character of cultural production. So, not what a work is, but what it does with the way of its own articulation.
3. What methodologies do you use in your work? What do

you consider to be the field of your public activity?
I employ different methods in my work, convinced that every single phenomenon requires a specific approach. We cannot read everything "by the same key". I would say that approaching a specific phenomenon, or if we want to call it that way – an artwork or an performance, I try to create a sort of a dialogue with it, make a connection to it, find out what, from which position, how and why is it talking to me. I try to reply to that. As the answer to your question about what I consider to be the sphere of my public activity, I would say that space does not exist in the sense of some pre-existing category. Space is constantly being created by activity, it is something that exists in the continuing process of becoming. My every activity is public, I do not believe in the division of spheres, for example the division between private and public sphere, as well as I do not find the subjective-objective binary opposition at least reliable. I can speak and act only from my own position that is, as such, determined by numerous factors – from the level of my education, social status, geographical position, gender identifications, political views and so on. However, that position is not once and for all fixed, it is also transformable, depending on the knowledge I gain through my activity.

4. From your experience, how much does a curator participate in the concept, production, presentation and promotion of an artwork? How do you set the boundaries in those relations?
I would like to start answering by quoting the American theorist Carol Duncan, who in her text „Who Rules the Art World?" claims that the controlling market force of the high art is not a specific critic, curator or dealer, but the critique itself, which is omnipresent – in dealers', curators' and critics' judgments, in artists' art strategies, in art history professors' lectures, in decisions made by art magazines editors. Critique is an omnipresent force that enables and unifies the market system. Its influence can be felt from the moment of production, in artists' thoughts and constantly after that, until the moment the audience sees the work. Critique is a form of quality control in the art world. Duncan made this conclusion about twenty years ago, and nowadays, at the age of globalization, it has been proven more than true, although the division between the so-called high art and production that does not consider itself that way, has seemingly disappeared. From the present perspective, with a historical stance, it is possible to clearly see the stages of how the term "art" changed from the end of the Second World War onwards, and it also includes modification of curatorial functions. It is obvious that art cannot be perceived outside the context of global economy, or market itself. Of course, under assumption that we deal with publicly presented production; if a certain production does not have a public presentation, it exists outside the sphere of public perception and as such is practically invisible, which means non-existent in our culture. Within the context of neoliberal capitalism art production is the commodity on the market. And therein lies the main threat. It is enough to take into consideration the astronomical prices of conceptual artworks of the '60s and the '70s of the last century on the so-called high art market during the last decade (that is the documentation of art performed not to be lasting, but precisely to oppose the commercialization of art). Works articulated as critical thought on the function of institutional framework defining the meaning of the notion of art have become "musealised" and therefore mortificated, stripped of their performative effect. Maybe the most paradoxical example of the condition confirming Baudrillard's thesis on the impossibility to sabotage the system (because every system contains calculated within itself the attempts of its own obstruction) would be the exhibiting of Guerrilla Girls on Venice Biennale in 2005 or inclusion of their "working materials" into Tate Modern's permanent exhibition. I will go back to your question now and say that the curator definitely participates in conception, production and promotion of the artwork, precisely because of the dimension Duncan talks about. Moreover, to set up an exhibition or present a certain work means to resignify. Rearranging the order of language to articulate performance of a certain statement in the sense of making a different context. In my opinion, curatorial intervention means the consciousness of responsibility for one's own act of resignification, and according to that I raise or do not raise the limits.

5. To what extent and in which segment do you collaborate with other curators and/or experts from other fields?
A dialogue with my fellow colleagues is very important for me, whether it be in the context of cooperation on some project or only a conversation about certain, theirs or mine, concept. That way my own attitudes are challenged, and good argumentations heighten my threshold of perception. In realization of exhibition projects, cooperation with experts from other areas is necessary on various levels – from technical realization of the project, to attempts to comprehend phenomena I deal with from an aspect I have not consider before.

6. In what way is the mediation between a work of art and the audience enacted and conceptualized in your projects?
In general, I try to make the public read an artwork differently than it did before. I say in general because the same question should be raised to the public as well; sometimes that "mediation" is successful, sometimes is not.

7. In your opinion, what is the difference between institutional and independent (curatorial) positions?
I am not prone to generalizations, especially here where it would be difficult to draw a line between what you call institutional and independent curatorial positions that you place in a binary opposition. I assume that by the term institutional you understand employees in a certain museum–gallery institution financed from the state or the city budget. And also I assume that by the term independent positions you mean freelance curators who conceive and realize certain projects and do their own fundraising. Precisely the question of the source of finances makes the term of independent curatorial position problematic for me because every financier, whether it be the office dealing with public money, a certain foundation, corporation or a private person, determines his/her own conditions under which a certain project will be financed. The more important question, as far as I am concerned is the one about bureaucratic and non-bureaucratic minds of individual curators. Mere fact that someone is not a part of a certain institution does not amnesty that person from sticking to routine and acting questionably. And vice versa, a workplace in the museum or gallery does not automatically make a curator a bureaucrat.

8. How are your programs financed?
Almost all exhibition programs I have realized in Croatia (as well as the international exhibitions that presented Croatian art production) were financed from the public budget. Sponsored part was minimal or non-existent.

9. What is your view on the relation between cultural

production and the private sector in Croatia – corporate competitions / awards (T-com, Erste...), and private collections (Filip Trade, Essl Collection...)?
Prerequisite condition for every production is investment. First of all the investment of knowledge, and then of financial resources that enable the process which begins with creative thinking and research, continues in shaping of a specific cultural product and in the processes of its public reception. Late capitalism in developed countries has created a system of investments of the private money into public goods without which there would be no civilized life. And cultural production is public goods par excellence. In wild capitalism, resembling to a kind of mutated feudalism that has been practiced in Croatia during the last two decades, the idea of public goods has almost disappeared. We are talking about the "country of knowledge" and the so-called cultural politics, if we can even talk about it at all, does everything in its power to exterminate every possibility of critical and creative thought. I am not talking just about what is colloquially marked in terms of politics and politicians as the agents of certain policies. First of all I am referring to reality as created by the media and cultural norms, in our country often below every level of civilized behavior, so that often pathetic, sometimes even primitive spectacles are being presented as top quality cultural goods. A lot has been written about the relationship between the media and the global capital interests. The analysis of the functioning of that inducer of quasi-cultural policy in Croatia would require a much more space than this interview allows. Corporative investments into Croatian cultural production are insufficient, and I think that the reason for that is the fact they are based on marketing elements instead on a systematic cultural policy.
You have mentioned Filip Trade Collection. That, within the Croatian context outstanding collection, contains numerous anthological works of Croatian art of the second half of the 20th century, as well as the works of emerging artists. The collection was created thanks to the enthusiasm of its owner, the collector Tomislav Kličko.
And precisely that individual enthusiasm and respect for the knowledge and skill of artists, as well as of critical experts, is what sets Filip Trade Collection apart from the blandness of corporation marketing. Filip Trade Collection is open to public, and as far as I know Filip Trade co-finances the production of certain artworks, employs curators dealing with the research and presentation of the collection, and also organizes exhibitions of young artists abroad.

10. Do you collaborate internationally on your projects, and why is that important to you?
I do. Cultural production should not slow-down before the borders, and especially the state ones. Production in autarchic, or better to say, autistic context is not possible.

11. In your opinion, what should the transfer of curatorial knowledge be like? Do you support ˝the institutionalization of curatorial models˝ through various types of curatorial programs?
I cannot say that I completely understand what you imply by the "institutionalization of curatorial models." In any case, curatorial practices should not be taken down to models, because curatorial work should be creative, and model implies something static, lifeless, I would also say bureaucratic. If by curatorial program you mean a specific educational process, I think that is necessary because without education there is no professional competence, and practicing something without competence is dangerous.

12. How visible are the curators, and in what way are their roles and responsibilities manifested within the actual cultural politics in Croatia?
It is visible and it manifests in the effects of cultural production that manages to reach the level of public presentation, and therefore gain social legitimacy. We are often prone to transpose responsibility for our own incapacity to some institutional instances, to understand responsibility as some abstract category that exists everywhere and nowhere at the same time. However, responsibility is individual, every person is responsible for his/her own actions, as well as the lack of the same. And precisely us, curators, together with the artists, share responsibility for the fact the local public still perceives art production as a kind of amputated area where is not possible, and not even necessary, to take over the responsibility for one's own actions. But art is not an autonomous and self-sufficient area, it is one of the numerous interfering social practices that all together create what we call our reality.
It is not insignificant in which way or from which position a certain statement addresses us, and I will mention once again that I find an artwork, an exhibition or a certain media project, to be the statement. And statements achieve their perfomatives in specific social contexts. The same way, those statements are able to change the given contexts. I recognize this possibility of art act to create a new context as a basic responsibility, not only of curators, but of all those citizens who identify themselves as cultural workers.

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SHE PUBLISHED THE FOLLOWING BOOKS: *KONTEKSTI*, MEANDAR, ZAGREB, 1997, *EDITA SCHUBERT*, HORETZKY, ZAGREB, 2001, *KODOVI IDENTITETA*, MEANDAR, ZAGREB, 2001, *RELACIONIRANE STVARNOSTI*, MEANDAR, ZAGREB, 2007, *GORKI ŽUVELA: IZMISLITE SEBE*, GLIPTOTEKA HAZU, ZAGREB, 2008.

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Z.Š.

SANDRA KRIŽIĆ ROBAN

INTERVIEWED BY IVANA MEŠTROV
AND MIHAELA RICHTER

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1. What term would you use to define your profession and what was the course of your professional path?
Maybe the most accurate definition would be that I am primary an art historian and then an art critic. Art history comes first, because it defines methodologically the way in which I do research and work; the area of activity within which I value continuity, relation towards heritage and existing modes which – I hope – I complement with my engagement. I have never fully committed myself to (only) one media, time period, an artist. I am interested in a lot of things, in which art history is a great help, in a sense of discipline, or better yet disciplining. Art criticism came later on, even though I formed myself through it. Employment at the Institute of Art History happened by chance; I think I never really planned anything. The Institute happens to be the place where I studied how to research and to devote myself to one subject, phenomenon or an artist for a longer period of time, all of which happen to be the skills that greatly mark my current professional habit. At the Institute I have also learnt everything that comes along with editorial work to which I dedicate a lot of my professional effort and

time. Ultimately, thanks to the Institute I currently teach at the Department of Art History in Split, something I honestly never thought I would be doing.

2. What would you list as the decisive moments that contributed to the development of your thinking and practice, whether concerning certain concepts you have developed or references and collaborations?

For writing, I would say certain critics from the circle around the Museum of Contemporary Art (MSU) from whom I learned a lot and whose exhibitions and texts helped in my formation. I looked up to curators Davor Matičević, Marijan Susovski, Branka Stipančić, events at CEFFT, than the old PM, willingness of artists such as Mladen Stilinović to accept anyone who at one point showed interest in their work; Maračić's engagement in Zvonimir and PM. For years I was an avid reader of Robert Hughes' texts in *Time* magazine, I liked the subtle balance between critical, scientific and theoretical discourse along with anecdotal "spices" and comments through which he managed to simplify the most complex subjects to the readers. *Documenta X* and the way Catherine David presented the art scene, along with some of her later exhibitions, opened up new art worlds to me, which, out of certain geopolitical arrogance, we carelessly bypass. More recently, my collaboration with Christine Fricinghelli, which brought me into photography.

3. What methodologies do you use in your work? What do you consider to be the field of your public activity?

It seems to me that the question of methodology is highly individual for each of us, and a lot of the things we incorporate in our professional activities, including the way we do things, can probably be regarded as methodology. Participation, filtration, networking...

Our profession is generally linked to the public, not too many things can be created in isolation, especially if we are interested in contemporary art practice. A public area is also a university, as is a workroom, a meeting, an exhibition hall, a catalog, a chapter in a book, a blog. All above mentioned is but a part of a wider network in which we participate, where I am mostly attracted to the area we conquer through writing, probably because of its secrecy.

4. From your experience, how much does a curator participate in the concept, production, presentation and promotion of an artwork? How do you set the boundaries in those relations?

I worked on several exhibition concepts in which I did not influence production, because that issue in Croatian circumstances is not easily solvable (artists, together with organizers, mostly arrange the conditions concerning productions, for which they are ultimately responsible). Concepts were created with a wish to put my current preoccupations in temporary common context in order to check the assumptions I was pondering at the time. I actually like when the activity of the curator is not so visible, when it stays "subdued" to art; I like to leave certain things unsaid in order to lead the observer to think of the exhibition concept not as a *fait accompli*, but as an open process which can be complemented.

An eight-year experience in managing a gallery with my husband in our house was interesting. I always tried to keep myself on the side, helping only several young artists who, without past experiences, came seeking for an advice. This type of relation–border was consciously set in the beginning, simply because we wanted things to occur in the space as such, according to its given conditions (or better yet limitations). I believe that my greatest complement to those exhibitions was in a segment of promotion; selection of artists and their exhibitions were the result of our interests and experience of art, which is a subjective category. Setting boundaries is necessary, my work or engagement in some exhibition is completely different in character from that of the artist, and that difference should be awaken and upheld.

5. What were the reasons for opening a private exhibition space and how would you describe your eight-year experience as its manager?

The place was turned into an exhibition space by pure chance, after Nenad show a series of his jewelry we did not know where to exhibit. He dealt with subversive decoration, not with jewelry understood in a traditional sense. A lot of people came and everybody loved the place. Ante Jerković immediately "booked" the next term, following him were Cvjetanović, Maračić (just to name a few), and then finally Edita Schubert who set up her last exhibition in our gallery. The list is long and it holds relevant names of our contemporary art practice, finishing with a series of young artists with whom we closed a certain cycle, did a few publications, tried out possibilities and limitations. The gallery is known to a lot of people, even some of them have never been in it and a lot of them do not know that we are no longer opened. It is a funny thing with galleries and I am really sorry that I no longer have the time to preoccupy myself with it. Even though we decided we would occasionally exhibit photography in the newly furnished exhibition space – Nenad's Open atelier.

6. To what extent and in which segment do you collaborate with other curators and/or experts from other fields?

Collaboration went on several group exhibitions; the most intensive was when I worked with Christine Frisinghelli on the exhibition *Ostati ili otići* (Staying or Leaving), which was a one of a kind experience. Primarily because she is a person who marked Austrian photography scene and wider, along with Manfred Willmann and Seiichi Furuya, whose knowledge on photography is fascinating and who enabled to make the exhibition as result of our discussions. Positions of some of our curators with whom I worked are different, sometimes it seemed that the area of discussion was greatly narrowed. Collaboration is far more intense in the sphere of magazine *Život umjetnosti*, and I personally find that guest editors present the scene in a lot of segments; types and manner of their engagements are various, as are their methods.

7. In what way is the mediation between a work of art and the audience enacted and conceptualized in your projects?

Let's just say that in realizing the exhibition *Seeking for a Place of Oblivion* I highly considered the bond with the audience; I insisted on a dialogue of artists, audience and me as a curator, in order to display eight authors, whose interests and standpoints of artistic reflections and actions are completely opposite; in order to make the audience aware that my way of seeing and interpreting is not final. It seems to me that among us there is not enough communication, many exhibitions are laid out, they last and close as on an assembly line, without contact. While we were managing a gallery, among other things I worked as a "guard" what allowed me to comment the works with the visitors. However, it seems that there is an aversion of changing opinion, criticism and generally expressing attitude. Mediation of works is accomplished through lectures, guided tours through exhibition, media coverage, writing; everything

is necessary to make certain content reach approval. Worst part is a work off, arrogant attitude that all is said through the exhibition (or a text in a catalogue). Many things can be learned from the comment that the audience is willing to share if asked.

8. In your opinion, what is the difference between institutional and independent (curatorial) positions?

I never worked as a curator, so it is hard for me to compare. I would say that independent curatorial positions have more freedom, because they are not a part of an established museological program necessary to be realized (according to program, for paycheck, annual report, or something else). In order not to work on other parts of a program which traditionally goes on in the institutions.

9. How are your programs financed?

I worked on several larger projects in collaboration with institutions, which in a usual way applied a project for competition for a financing program, looked for sponsorships and arranged a whole series of technical and other details that one person (curator) can hardly do. The activity of our gallery was, after the first year, supported by the Ministry of Culture and Zagreb City Department of Culture. Projects that are being realized through the Institute are in one segment supported by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports.

10. What is your view on the relation between cultural production and the private sector in Croatia – corporate competitions / awards (T-com, Erste ...), and private collections (Filip Trade, Essl collection ...)?

A lot of things depend on juries, but also on preferences of some companies towards certain art media, or authors (according to generation for instance). If we compare Erste bank in Croatia and Austria the differences are enormous. The collection that Erste bank has been creating for years is relevant indeed, it has its own curator, works are being borrowed for important exhibitions, as are those from the Generali Foundation collection. Here it is not the case. Filip Trade mostly buys out interesting works, but the final judgment must be put on hold until they are permanently displayed somewhere. The way T-com entered their collaboration with MSU is a good model and it would be nice to see other successful companies invest in culture in the same way, so that the purchased works would not hang in inadequate places, but be a part of museum or gallery collection.

11. Do you collaborate internationally on your projects, and why is that important to you?

I collaborate, or I try to. It would be great if all the larger exhibition projects could be arranged and displayed at more places in a region. Such international collaboration is quintessential. The area of our activity is small and it should be broadened by enabling others to see and understand what we want to say. Thirty years ago the West was interested in us as in a certain curiosity – in events different from those behind the Iron curtain, because the level of our freedom was much larger. Today many people want to observe things from previously established and confirmed geopolitical positions, which are often agreed on because it seems that different models do not exist.

12. In your opinion, what should the transfer of curatorial knowledge be like? Do you support "the institutionalization of curatorial models" through various types of curatorial programs?

Certainly, I believe that it is important for such programs to exist, because those are the skills and knowledge that need to be passed down to others. A shift that certain curator platforms, to call them like that, made in our scene is a significant one and it should be continued. Transfer should be in a way that each platform sees fit; I believe that there should be no insisting on an ideal pattern, but that differences should be maintained, because it contributes to a pluralism of approaches and multiple methods of activities.

13. How visible are the curators, and in what way are their roles and responsibilities manifested within the actual cultural politics in Croatia?

It is significant and it is visible. Shifts – if we observe them in a time span of the previous twenty or thirty years –are large. Independent curator projects were very rare, everything went on within several existing institutions. Knowledge that is being mediated today in a series of actions and self-organizing platforms has been in certain segments previously accumulated individually in various manners. Curatorial collectives are responsible for many good changes that took place; their number and variety of their interests have put a series of authors in the limelight for whom there seemed to have been no interest, or place. Historically, it seems to me that the first such open, independent platform was PM (*Extended Media Gallery*), even though it is hard to compare it with what is today understood as curatorial practice. However, without activity of PM a lot of things now would not be possible.

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SANDRA KRIŽIĆ ROBAN IS AN ART HISTORIAN AND AN ART CRITIC. SHE WAS BORN IN 1962 IN ZAGREB. SINCE 1992 SHE HAS BEEN WORKING AT THE INSTITUTE OF ART HISTORY. SHE IS A RESEARCH ASSOCIATE ON PROJECTS ENTITLED *CROATIA IN THE EUROPEAN SPACE OF THE 20TH CENTURY* AND *MODERNITY, MODERNISM, AND POSTMODERNISM IN 20TH-CENTURY CROATIAN ART*. HER FIELDS OF INTEREST ARE CONTEMPORARY ART IN CROATIA AND EUROPE, CROATIAN PHOTOGRAPHY FROM 1980 TO THE PRESENT DAY, AS WELL AS MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE. SHE IS SENIOR LECTURER AT THE DEPARTMENT OF ART HISTORY, FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES IN SPLIT, WHERE SHE HOLDS A SPECIALIZED ELECTIVE COURSE ON *ARTISTIC THEMES AND MEDIA OF THE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURIES*.

SHE HAS BEEN EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF THE ART JOURNAL *ŽIVOT UMJETNOSTI* SINCE 2000. FROM 1999–2007, TOGETHER WITH NENAD ROBAN, SHE MANAGED THE PROGRAM OF THE KRIŽIĆ ROBAN GALLERY.

SHE CURATED INTERNATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITIONS ORGANIZED BY THE CROATIAN PHOTOGRAPHIC ASSOCIATION (*STAYING OR LEAVING* WITH CHRISTINE FRISINGHELLI, 2004); *SEEKING FOR A PLACE OF OBLIVION*, 2008); SHE IS CURRENTLY PARTICIPATING IN THE ORGANIZATION OF THE EXHIBITION ON SOCIALISM AND *MODERNISM – ART AND CULTURE IN CROATIA 1945–1974* (WITH LJILJANA KOLEŠNIK, TVRTKO JAKOVINA, AND DEAN DUDA), AND FINALIZING A BOOK ON CONTEMPORARY CROATIAN PHOTOGRAPHY WITH THE TENTATIVE ENGLISH TITLE *AT THE SECOND GLANCE*.

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D.N.

ZVONKO MAKOVIĆ

INTERVIEWED BY IVANA MEŠTROV AND MIHAELA RICHTER

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1. What term would you use to define your occupation and what was the course of your professional path?

I consider myself an art historian. It is a profession which is sufficiently broadly understood that it can include other professions, ranging from teaching and scientific work, to

critical and curatorial ones. Besides, as far as curatorial job is concerned, a nice German word exists for it – Ausstellungsmacher, an organizer of exhibitions, if we were to make a somewhat arbitrary Croatian translation. I started to work in the profession when I was very young. When I was 22 years old I was already a newspaper editor and a standing art critic, and that opened the doors for me to other zones, be it galleries, museums or a university. It was namely my friendship with artists and gallery owners that helped me to plan exhibition early on, to choose works for exhibitions, write forewords, edit catalogues, set up those exhibitions… In 1970 I was invited to arrange the exhibition program of a gallery in Novi Sad. It was the Art Salon at the Youth Forum, a highly active and dynamic cultural center, as we would call it nowadays, and it was run by Želimir Žilnik, and Judita Šalgo, who invited me there in the first place. I organized my first exhibitions there, and they were the exhibitions of my generational friends Boris Bućan, Braco Dimitrijević, Goran Trbuljak… that is, those Zagreb artists with whom I had socialized intensively. We all gathered at the Student Center Gallery, which was run by Želimir Koščević who also created the concept for several such programmatic exhibitions at the end of the sixties and the beginning of the seventies, and he was, ultimately, the one who made the formation of our generation of artists and critics possible. A step further in my acquisition of experience was the Contemporary Art Gallery, the future Museum of Contemporary Art, where I would often come, meet artists, talk to older colleagues, that were all very experienced and influential curators. At the beginning of the seventies, my somewhat older colleagues Davor Matičević and Marijan Susovski, with whom I socialized at the university, got a job there. Božo Bek, who literally had control over the entire Gallery, invited me to come there after I graduate. However, I was attracted more to working at the faculty, where I was invited by Vera Horvat Pintarić to work as her assistant.

2. What would you list as the decisive moments that contributed to the development of your thinking and practice, whether it concerns certain concepts you have developed or references and collaboration?

My formation began at the end of the sixties and that fact is extremely important. I see that more clearly today, than I did earlier. I was not formed in some sort of isolation, in a library, but in galleries, through intensive socialization and friendship with artists and older and more experienced colleagues. My familiarization with art was not from a distance and that experience might have formed me the most. However, I have always viewed art, i.e. that which we call visual art, in a very broad context. Literature, film, music… were equally important to me and I tried not only to keep track of it, but to acquaint myself really well with everything that was being created in those areas. I likewise believed early on that nothing is created on its own and that to understand an event, a work of art, an oeuvre… one needs to know that which belongs to history as well.

I was a student when I met some extremely important artists that were at the time, around 1970, at their creative peak and I started to follow their work very closely. For instance, those were Miroslav Šutej, Julije Knifer and a couple of others, for whom I did exhibitions, wrote forewords, later on monographs as well, and from whom I also learned a lot. At the end of the seventies I met a generation of artists that was just finishing the academy and they intrigued me. I worked with them, wrote about them, set up exhibitions, all of them in the Nova Gallery. So again I was interested in some form of team work: I saw the artist and the curator, the critic that is, as partners.

3. From your experience, how much does a curator participate in the concept, production, presentation and promotion of an artwork? How do you set the boundaries in those relations?

That is exactly what I started telling you; that I have always tried to observe the work up close, to understand the artist as a partner, and the best work I did grew precisely out of such a relation. Naturally, that kind of practice was not always possible, but I have never dealt with an artist whose work I would treat indifferently. The role of the curator is very important and it will be better for the artist if he can understand that. One can know an artist's work really well only by having a thorough insight into it, and when working with contemporary artists, dialogue and mutual trust are necessary. I will cite an example, the one of Julije Knifer. I met him when I was 23. I wrote about an exhibition he had at the Contemporary Art Gallery and he invited me to visit him. After that we became friends and he would trustingly show me everything he had created. I acquainted myself with his works, studied them, wrote about them and over the following thirty or so years organized numerous exhibitions locally and abroad, and ultimately wrote a monograph as well. I was especially interested in his drawings in which I saw the genesis of the meander, and also in a series of self-portraits created in a period from 1949 to 1952, when he would, in a virtually ritual manner, draw a single self-portrait each day with a graphite pencil. The experience of my time helped me, meaning the experience of Fluxus, conceptual art, but also the Gorgona group which Knifer was a part of, so I do not see those self-portraits as drawings of the artist's face, as those rare individuals before me to whom he had shown his works saw them and who interpreted those works as drawing exercises. My interpretation was accepted several years later by others who wrote about this artist more seriously, like the French Serge Lemoine, Arnauld Pierre and others.

4. To what extent and in which segment do you collaborate with other curators and/or experts from other fields?

Collaboration with others was always important to me. From that type of conversation and work I would, if nothing else, check my own assumptions and the ideas I formulated more simply. For the past several years I have been organizing complex exhibitions such as *Pedesete godine u Hrvatskoj* (The Fifties in Croatia), *Avangardne tendencije u hrvatskoj umjetnosti* (Avant-garde Tendencies in Croatian Art), the segment for visual arts of the 19th and 20th century at the great exhibition *Slavonija, Baranja and Srijem*, and I am currently working on *Ekspresionizam u Hrvatskoj* (Expressionism in Croatia). I worked on all those projects with numerous associates that I, having faith in their work, invited myself. The experience of musicologists, literary historians, theatrologists… was useful to me, because through their research I could view the material that I chose and valued on my own more completely. Context is important and without knowing it one cannot understand art, anything at all. On the other hand, I did several exhibitions with Leonida Kovač, an art historian and curator belonging to a different generation than my own, and her observations and standpoints enriched me. I gladly accept the standpoints of younger people when I see their arguments are solid, and especially when I see that their ideas are wide-ranging enough, when they start from the fact that the world did not begin with them and from their body of knowledge.

5. In what way is the mediation between a work of art and the audience enacted and conceptualized in your projects?

I always start with the fact that art is meant for the public, that a work of art should not function in an ivory tower. Even then when one tries to provoke the audience, one should do it precisely and clearly. I cannot stand meticulousness, boring explications, wise explanations simply for the sake of it, exhibitionism which usually confirms that that which is being shown is actually very modest. How many stupid and pretentious curators there have been, various *Ausstellungsmachers* that ruined artists and artworks, butchered and castrated them because they wanted to submit them to their own limitations. The consequences of such pretentious desires are felt by the audience, and also the art, that is the artists and their works. I was always impressed by a curator, or more correctly *Ausstellungsmacher*, like Harald Szeemann who knew perfectly how to articulate a problem and to make it provocative, no matter how complex it was; and the audience could sense that perfectly. Naturally, when talking about certain concrete cases connected with our own local circumstances, numerous restraining factors exist. Before all else it is the money, but it is often also the understanding that the exhibition space is more important than that which is being exhibited. It was on more than one occasion that I had to look for sponsors, beg for resources, and the institutions which I worked for would passively wait for the exhibition to open.

6. In your opinion, what is the difference between institutional and independent (curatorial) positions?

I would not generalize, or commit myself to one of the options you are stating. I already said that I had the opportunity to work in the most powerful institution, the Contemporary Art Gallery, as a very young man and I did not take it. I was interested in and attracted by the academic community, teaching and scientific work, and curatorial and critical aspects could easily be fit into that. In many ways institutional work has its advantages, but I cannot imagine myself being bound by time, and, ultimately, by collaboration with persons that I have nothing in common with and that very often irritate me. I feel much more comfortable when working alone and when I personally choose who I am going to work with.

7. How are your programs financed?

They are financed like all the other programs, that is, through competitions from the Ministry of Culture, the City or a third party. Those funds are very often insufficient and then sponsors come into play that I search for on my own, which is also very often. I remember working on *The Fifties in Croatia*, a very expensive project if we view it in local terms. I was completely unable to acquire any sponsorship, although I employed mediators, or in other words people who promised to solve the financing problem. I eventually got the money on my own from several sources, but had wasted several months. The exhibition, and alongside it an extensive catalogue, had been finished in impossible, almost hysterical conditions.

8. What is your view on the relation between cultural production and the private sector in Croatia – corporate competitions/awards (T-com, Erste...), and private collections (Filip Trade, Essl Collection...)?

The private sector, and by that I mean competitions, buyouts and various other ways of stimulating production, are all extremely important. However, we are still lacking in those areas. I know the Essl Collection well and the way it works, and I have also worked with the Filip Trade Collection from its inception. I think that the material of that collection is valuable, and in some aspects complementary to public collections, specifically museums. For an entire decade, and an exceptionally important one, which are the nineties, and through the beginning of this century, the Filip Trade Collection has stimulated the most important artists in Croatia and that is why there are many capital works missing from public collections. Generally speaking, the buyout system of our public collections is not good. I am not thinking only of the works by contemporary artists, but everything in general. The funding that is being put aside for buyouts is in fact grotesquely small, and that is when wealthy collectors appear and buy such works for themselves. Which is also a good thing, but not as good as it could be.

9. Do you collaborate internationally on your projects, and why is that important to you?

I have worked on international projects and the experience was important to me. However, I am in fact professionally, moreover primarily linked to the faculty and cannot accept certain more complex curatorial projects due to various obligations. I have no illusions whatsoever that things are always very good on the outside and there are many aspects for which I would not trade places easily. On the other hand, my years and experience oblige me to do something else, which is writing. I leave over a lot of my academic work to the younger ones, my assistants, and I myself would like to finish several demanding projects I have started and that do not belong to curatorial practices.

10. In your opinion, what should the transfer of curatorial knowledge be like? Do you support „the institutionalization of curatorial models" through various types of curatorial programs?

I think that various curatorial workshops are extremely important for the education of future experts. By talking with my female students, all of them being former students, that had chosen the curatorial practice and remained mostly outside of institutions, I can see it is useful to know the job more thoroughly. The education for the profile of the curator is not found at the university and this important profession is left to one's individual curiosity and choice. It does not seem at all clever to me to institutionalize the study or school for curators within the framework of current high education programs. In fact, I think it would be horrible seeing that the schooling system is bad and very slow. Museology is taught at the faculty by tenured teachers who are without quality curatorial practice, without the profile; by people who are turning the profession, which is above all dynamic and active, into something to be crammed. I also do not have much of an opinion about the majority of curators in our museums, practitioners that is, and I think it would be wrong to give the opportunity to educate others, the youth, solely to these bad and quite often aggressive self-promoters and self-made experts. I think it is much better, or simply more efficient, to organize workshops that would last for two, three or four semesters and to which known experts would be invited. They would not be there for a permanent engagement, but would simply teach certain segments of the curatorial practice. Naturally, I have in mind both our experts as well as the ones abroad.

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ZVONKO MAKOVIĆ IS AN ART HISTORIAN AND UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR. HE GRADUATED IN ART HISTORY AND COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AT THE FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES IN ZAGREB IN 1973. HE ALSO GOT HIS MASTER'S DEGREE THERE IN 1982, AND HIS PHD IN 1996.

HE HAS BEEN A CURATOR ON MANY EXHIBITIONS: *NOVA SLIKA: HRVATSKO SLIKARSTVO OSAMDESETIH GODINA* (NEW PAINTING: CROATIAN PAINTING IN THE EIGHTIES, ART PAVILION, AS PART OF THE 13TH YOUTH SALON, ZAGREB, 1981), *KNIFER: DO MEANDRA* (KNIFER: UNTIL THE

MEANDER, GALLERY OF THE JNA HOUSE, ZAGREB, 1987), *MONOKROMI* (MONOCHROMES, ART PAVILION, ZAGREB, 2002), *SVJETLO* (LIGHT, CROATIAN ASSOCIATION OF ARTISTS, 2003), *ZERO – EUROPSKA VIZIJA 1958. DO DANAS: ZBIRKA LENZ SCHÖNBERG* (ZERO – EUROPEAN VISION – 1958 UNTIL NOW: LENZ SCHÖNBERG COLLECTION, MSU, ZAGREB, 2004), *PEDESETE GODINE U HRVATSKOJ UMJETNOSTI* (THE FIFTIES IN CROATIAN ART, CROATIAN ASSOCIATION OF ARTISTS, ZAGREB, 2004), *VILKO GECAN. RETROSPEKTIVA* (VILKO GECAN. A RETROSPECTIVE, ART PAVILION, ZAGREB, 2005), *POSTSKULPTURA: NOVA HRVATSKA SKULPTURA* (POSTSCULPTURE: NEW CROATIAN SCULPTURE, CROATIAN ASSOCIATION OF ARTISTS, ZAGREB, 2005), *SLIKARSTVO SADA: RÉSUMÉ* (PAINTING NOW: A RÉSUMÉ, CROATIAN ASSOCIATION OF ARTISTS, ZAGREB, 2006), *AVANGRADNE TENDENCIJE U HRVATSKOJ UMJETNOSTI* (AVANT-GARDE TENDENCIES IN CROATIAN ART, KLOVIĆEVI DVORI GALLERY, ZAGREB, 2007), *MILIVOJ UZELAC. RETROSPEKTIVA* (MILIVOJ UZELAC. A RETROSPECTIVE, ART PAVILION, ZAGREB, 2008), AND OTHER.

HE WAS THE NATIONAL SELECTOR AT THE 49TH VENICE BIENNALE WHEN HE PRESENTED JULIJE KNIFER AT THE CROATIAN PAVILION.

HE IS THE AUTHOR OF NUMEROUS BOOKS, INCLUDING: *OKO U AKCIJI. STUDIJI, ESEJI I KRITIKE IZ SUVREMENE UMJETNOSTI* (STUDIES, ESSAYS AND REVIEWS ON CONTEMPORARY ART, MLADOST AND NARODNO SVEUČILIŠTE GRADA ZAGREBA, 1972); *MIROSLAV ŠUTEJ*, MONOGRAPH (NACIONALNA I SVEUČILIŠNA BIBLIOTEKA, ZAGREB, 1981); *LJUBO IVANČIĆ: SLIKARSTVO. CRTEŽ.* (LJUBO IVANČIĆ: PAINTING. DRAWING, MONOGRAPH, ARTTRESOR STUDIO, ZAGREB, 1996); *VILKO GECAN*, MONOGRAPH (MATICA HRVATSKA, ZAGREB, 1997); *JULIJE KNIFER*, MONOGRAPH (MEANDAR AND STUDIO RAŠIĆ, ZAGREB, 2002); *RIJEČI S IZLOŽBE. STUDIJE I OGLEDI IZ LIKOVNIH UMJETNOSTI* (WORDS ON THE EXHIBITION. STUDIES AND ESSAYS ABOUT ART HISTORY, NAKLADA LJEVAK, ZAGREB, 2004); *DIMENZIJE SLIKE. TEKSTOVI IZ SUVREMENE UMJETNOSTI* (DIMENSIONS OF THE PAINTING. TEXTS ON CONTEMPORARY ART, MEANDAR, ZAGREB, 2005); *LICA: ALTERNATIVNA POVIJEST MODERNE UMJETNOSTI* (FACES: AN ALTERNATIVE HISTORY OF MODERN ART, ANTIBARBARUS, ZAGREB, 2007).

BESIDES SCIENTIFIC AND ACADEMIC WRITING AND LITERARY REVIEWS, HE IS CONTINUALLY PUBLISHING NEWSPAPER COLUMNS. A SELECTION OF THOSE WORKS WAS PUBLISHED IN TWO BOOKS: *IZVJEŠĆA O STANJU* (REPORTS ON A CONDITION, ZAGREB, 1994) AND *PISMA BERTOLTU BRECHTU* (LETTERS TO BERTOLT BRECHT, ZAGREB, 2002).

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D.P.

ANTUN MARAČIĆ

INTERVIEWED BY IVANA PELEH

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1. What term would you use to define your profession and what was the course of your professional path?

Good question, because the answer is not very simple. I am an educated painter and I currently occupy the position of Dubrovnik Art Gallery manager, and I do various kinds of work – I am an artist, a practitioner, art critic, and yes, a curator. I conceive and put up various exhibitions, in the house and otherwise.

2. What would you list as the decisive moments that contributed to the development of your thinking and practice, whether concerning certain concepts you have developed or references and collaborations?

Decisive was the time I spent on those mutually intertwined activities. There were no plans, forethoughts, everything happened organically, moreover – almost elementary. It was all the result of unsatisfactory situation with the presentation of art at the time of "growing up", my own and of my colleagues. In my art circle there was a tendency to connect art and its presentation, to have the control over an artwork from the day of its "birth" to its exposition. We tried to put all the elements of presentation, invitations, poster, exposition, into the function of the artwork idea that was important to us, to avoid institutional noises and alienations, decorativeness and idling. Time brought cases and contacts, motifs for work. I would never call myself a curator, I ended up there almost imperceptibly, thanks to my inclination towards multimedia expression, tendency to interpret things, and maybe the ability to understand a work made by other artists. And specific activities revolved around my own exhibitions, intensively around PM, later on in my home "gallery" at the end of the '80s and the beginning of the '90s. Then there came the practice in the Student Centre Gallery, some other city spaces I invaded during the war years, periodic guest appearance on invitation by other galleries, then in Zvonimir Gallery etc. My curatorial work is actually the extension of my artistic work, the two is connected by a common denominator of a certain creative impulse.

3. What methodologies do you use in your work? What do you consider to be the field of your public activity?

I have to admit that I do not understand the question completely, and that is because I am not a part of the art history discourse. There is not much theory in my work, it is more a matter of instinct and a plastic, practical position and approach. I tend to position things clean and functionally. My basic motto is: to make things visible. Something very simple, but not always feasible.

4. From your experience, how much does a curator participate in the concept, production, presentation and promotion of an artwork? How do you set the boundaries in those relations?

Boundaries are sometimes very loose. The artist you deal with sometimes gives you great authority, you pinch a little bit more, and there comes the "danger" of becoming a co-creator. But if the frequency between you two is well balanced, and you trust each other, big things can happen, you can be a midwife to novelties in someone's artwork, catalyze and illuminate the work. That was the case in, today famous, exhibition of *Kožarić Atelier* that drags long tails. It is all about the feeling and understanding of the artist and his/her habit. The idea of the Atelier was mine and had the roots in the then Kožarić's behavior and work I recognized. I felt that it was possible to perform that acrobatic action. And with a great help from the author and other participants I did it. More than once.

5. To what extent and in which segment do you collaborate with other curators and/or experts from other fields?

I collaborate continuously, primarily with my home curators, then with the others from other galleries, with foreign colleagues on international exhibitions.

6. In what way is the mediation between a work of art and the audience enacted and conceptualized in your projects?

I have been the manager of Dubrovnik Art Gallery for almost nine years. With all the included work I also work on the animation of the public. It is necessary to publish the basic information in the various media, but also to create recognizable material you can communicate with. I especially enjoy working on invitations. I regularly use the opportunity to add an "added value" to the basic information, I often "smuggle" my own work into it, I hope not to the cost of the exhibition and its content. Many people tell me the invitations from UGD make them particularly happy, and that they

keep them, or "there is no way they are going to throw them away". There are, of course, other ways to nurture and attract audience. The most important thing is to set and manage a clear program profile and a constant quality, to create a relationship of trust.

7. In your opinion, what is the difference between institutional and independent (curatorial) positions?

Basically, there is probably no difference at all, you need creativity in any case, as well as you need to struggle to find the money for your project.

8. How are your programs financed?

Mostly from the City of Dubrovnik budget, funds (sometimes crucial) from foreign partners, then some from the Ministry of Culture, partly from sponsors.

9. What is your view on the relation between cultural production and the private sector in Croatia – corporate competitions / awards (T-com, Erste...), and private collections (Filip Trade, Essl Collection...)?

Those interests and incentives are very important, but unfortunately very rare and sporadic.

10. Do you collaborate internationally on your projects, and why is that important to you?

So far that collaboration has been unilateral, based on the "import" of great names from the international scene, what is very important for the status of the Gallery and cultural importance of the City, and the country as well.

11. In your opinion, what should the transfer of curatorial knowledge be like? Do you support "the institutionalization of curatorial models" through various types of curatorial programs?

I do not know much and I am not included in those actions, but I believe those programs could be of help. It is important not to put it in an abstract way, and that the artist and the work do not become means, "a filler" for a-priori conceived curatorial concepts. It should be insisted on the vitality of mutual relations between curators and artists/art.

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ANTUN MARAČIĆ WAS BORN IN 1950 IN NOVA GRADIŠKA. HE LIVES AND WORKS IN DUBROVNIK AND ZAGREB. AFTER GRADUATING IN VISUAL ARTS AT THE FACULTY OF TEACHER EDUCATION, HE GRADUATED PAINTING AT THE ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS IN ZAGREB. BETWEEN 1976 AND 1979 HE COLLABORATED WITH LJUBO IVANČIĆ'S AND NIKOLA REISNER'S CRAFTSMAN WORKSHOP, BETWEEN 1978 AND 1979 HE WAS A MEMBER OF POODROM GROUP OF ARTISTS. FROM 1987 UNTIL 1990 HE ORGANIZED A NUMBER OF EXHIBITIONS IN AM-M14F/1-Z GALLERY, IN AN INFORMAL SPACE OF HIS OWN APARTMENT, AND IN 1991, ONLY FOR A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME, HE WORKED AS A MANGER OF THE STUDENT CENTRE GALLERY IN ZAGREB. FROM 1992 TO 1997 HE WORKED AS A MANGER OF ZVONIMIR GALLERY, FROM 1998 TO 2000 OF ZAGREB GALLERY OF EXTENDED MEDIA (GALERIJA PM), OF WHICH HE HAS BEEN A PERMANENT COLLABORATOR SINCE THE MIDDLE OF THE EIGHTIES. IN OCTOBER 2000 HE BECOMES THE DIRECTOR OF DUBROVNIK ART GALLERY WHERE RECENTLY HE PUT UP THE EXHIBITION AMERICAN GRAPHIC FROM 1960S ONWARDS, IN COLLABORATION WITH A GUEST CURATOR PAUL TANNER. ANTUN MARAČIĆ IS THE AUTHOR OF MANY REVIEWS, CRITIQUES AND ESSAYS ON ART. IN 1995, AS THE AUTHOR OF THE TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY, IN COLLABORATION WITH ART HISTORIAN EVELINA TURKOVIĆ, HE PUBLISHED THE MONOGRAPH OF IVAN KOŽARIĆ TITLED *ATELIJER KOŽARIĆ*. IN 1996 HE PUBLISHED HIS OWN BOOK OF PHOTOGRAPHY AND TEXTS *ISPRAŽNJENI OKVIRI – IŠČEZLI SADRŽAJI* (DISCHARGED FRAMES - DISAPPEARED FACILITIES), AND IN 1998 HE PUBLISHED THE BOOK *PAVO URBAN – POSLJEDNJE SLIKE* (PAVO URBAN – THE LAST IMAGES). AS MULTIMEDIA ARTIST HE PUT UP 33 SOLO AND PARTICIPATED IN ABOUT HUNDRED GROUP EXHIBITIONS IN THE COUNTRY AND ABROAD, AND PERFORMED HIS OWN NUMEROUS ACTIONS AND PERFORMANCES.

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TIHOMIR MILOVAC

INTERVIEWED BY MARIJANA RIMANIĆ

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1. What term would you use to define your profession and what was the course of your professional path?

From my first work day in the Galleries of the City of Zagreb (the Gallery of Contemporary Art), today the Museum of Contemporary Art, my work place was called, and is still called the curator. Ever since my first encounter with the title, during my student years, and with understanding this occupation in practice, I realized that the job of curator was that of organizing exhibitions, in other words, activity in collecting works of contemporary art practices in all its complexity, as well as work in its documentation and museum treatment. It is exactly this last part of curator's work I listed, that is self abnegating and far from what non-institutional circles understand as curator's work. In time when I started working in the Gallery of Contemporary Art, the definition of a curator was not the same one we use today, and that is: work on exhibitions and art promotion, even though the Gallery of Contemporary Art lead the way in that direction before all the rest. This development of *personalized* curator practice as a promoter of art, in our scene we can trace with the emergence of young art historians in the late sixties and the beginning of seventies who modified previous curator practice. In the Zagreb University Student Center there was the manager Želimir Koščević and in the Gallery of Contemporary Art there were Marijan Susovski and Davor Matičević. Image of the profession up until then has been systematically developed through adapting to the context of new form of art activities so that in the decades that followed this profession will develop into a mediator practice in relationship of artist and their art and audience.

Somewhere in the middle of the seventies of the previous century occurred a radical shift in which the space of the atelier, in other words the space of artist's personal reflections was substituted with the space of public and *collective* actions in different forms of *new art practices*. That most definitely changed curator practice which is since then characterized by far more active and creative position in the processes of art production and art presentation. Today, almost four decades later we can talk of curator as an equal creator or even as a initiator of an art event.

Nonetheless, the term curator is not clearly defined in relation to the practice, and that is the case until the beginning of the nineties. Before, we did not sign our exhibition projects as curators. Editor's work was credited in the preparation of a catalog or publication, but curator's work was not.

2. What would you list as the decisive moments that contributed to the development of your thinking and practice, whether concerning certain concepts you have developed or references and collaborations?

Since the very beginning I have been interested in practice of creating an exhibition as a complex format which unites several skills. To start, a sensibility for contemporaneity in a sense of understanding time and place here and now, then understanding art disciplines and a sense of communication – an ability of articulating messages that are being send out by the artists which have to be channeled to the audience.

My first fascinations with the strategy of exhibition date to my student days during the second half of the seventies when I was completely confused and taken aback with the *anti-exhibitions* that were organized in Zagreb, as well as on the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences by Group of Six Artists. Theater experience back then has proved to be an inspiration to my later work in designing exhibitions and their representation. Theater practice outside institutions with its conditions enabling more direct communication with the audience, it was far more engaging than the one in theater houses, some of my deliberations about exhibitions started from that direction. That is the reason why my first curator exhibition in 1980. happened in a form of urban intervention in the City of Dubrovnik, with a few art installations and actions by invited artists and created as a comment to the architecture and the life of the city.

Exhibition *Bauhaus* that visited the Gallery of Contemporary Art in 1980, in which I worked as a guide, has long been my role model for the type of historical retrospectives that communicate their content excellently. In the late eighties, two significant projects took place because they distanced themselves from the usual exhibition practice. It was the exhibition *Magiciens de la Terre* by the already acclaimed curator Jean-Hubert Martin in the Georges Pompidou Centre in Paris (1989), as well as *Energieen* by Wim Breeren in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in (1990). Through their concepts, both exhibitions have shown the possibility to deal with topics that art history of that period did not deal with, by referring to its own area of work. The first exhibition opened up a new field for other civilizations and cultures outside borders of Western Europe, objects of high culture and modernist exclusivity. The second one, in a lot of segments the exact opposite to the first, showed that heterogeneity not only in its concept, but also in the exhibition format can be more expressive than the principles of modernist equalization.

3. What methodologies do you use in your work? What do you consider to be the field of your public activity?

In contemporary art, the one that is being created at this moment, and also the one that has prolonged its existence in time, I have always considered as the question of communication, so to say the space to exchange ideas, feelings, philosophies and knowledge. It is why I believe that contemporary art can and should act as a corrective of social conditions, also political and cultural practices that are being created as a consequence of their own interrelationships. For example, our curator activity must be attuned to the moment in which we are, either we are working with the artist in a completely new project or we are dealing with historical retrospectives. What matters to me is to have strong sense of presence of today, in interpretation as well as in the attitude.

4. From your experience, how much does a curator participate in the concept, production, presentation and promotion of an artwork? How do you set the boundaries in those relations?

I personally get rather involved. That kind of attitude seems important because curators are, as we understand them here, in fact, multi-capable people that possess different knowledge and skills. Along with the knowledge of comparative art history that offers a wide historical perspective, what counts is the actual awareness on the current art scene as well as on fields similar to art and understanding political and socio-cultural context. Then, good organization, often production skills and finally ability to visualize content, whether if it is an event, exhibition, action, publication etc. Today, procedure in which an artist is selecting a curator is perfectly legitimate and practiced.

5. To what extent and in which segment do you collaborate with other curators and/or experts from other fields?

Collaboration has always been one of the most important elements in methodology of designing exhibitions. Even though it sounds like a worn out phrase, but more people know more and can make a better product. I do not mind, I am even inspired, by collectivism in art and production of art events. I have personally co-signed, with other curators, more than two thirds of my curator projects.

6. In what way is the mediation between a work of art and the audience enacted and conceptualized in your projects?

Even though institutional practice is that exhibition concepts are worked through educational methods, the basic determination of every curator project is the credibility of its own concept. When the concept is clear and credible, and above all motivational justified by social, theoretical or artistic reasons, then mediation is not a problem. My approach as a mediator between artist/work and audience depends on whether the exhibition is group or solo, if it is a new production or display of the already existing work. In group exhibitions (and those are almost always exhibitions with certain emphasized question which I considered important to raise) I always manage to establish a sort of relationship between the art works, whether if it dialogical confrontation, sometimes supplementation, or a state of juxtaposing. That is how the procedure of mediation opens as multi-layered and it becomes possible to point it towards audience of different educational background.

7. In your opinion, what is the difference between institutional and independent (curatorial) positions?

By following basic understanding of the curator profession there is no difference between the two positions. Nevertheless, we have a usual understanding from the position of independent curator, that position of institutional curator is interpreted as one of more favorable status, but also more "unproductive", and also vice versa that the position of independent is interpreted as "less responsible" especially towards wide audience and that their activities, even though often very socially active, are mainly focused towards narrow elite circle of audience.

8. How are your programs financed?

Projects in Croatia are financed mainly through the funding of city and state budget and also through sponsorship. Projects abroad are financed through different European foundations and commissions won through competitions and funding from state and sponsorship.

9. What do you think about the relationship of cultural production and private sector in Croatia – corporate competitions/awards (T-com, Erste...), and private collections (Filip Trade, Essl collection ...)?

Working as a curator, I understand the dependence of art production, art market and collecting. Museums are half way in between. They are not in the market system and actually, they should not be supported, but also they are not outside of it since they have to raise funding for their own collections because public, budget funding that comes from state or city budget is insufficient for more intense program activity and purchases. Any financial help from the side of private sector to public sector, artists and museum institutions in stimulating

purchases, is welcome. However, it is not good when private collections are being created in unfavorable economic conditions of public sector, when there is no serious market competition and when under the pressure of capital conditions purchases are made at low prices (for instance Collection Sudac). We are witnesses of reverse processes in which works of young artists are being "overpaid", more as a consequence of incompetence and trendiness of "competitions" whose purpose is displaying corporative philosophy according to which sponsorship does not always have to be negatively colored towards profession (T-com, Erste…). Both the examples carry with them instability, which is *a priori* bad, but also they carry a certain confusion into value systems because they lack serious competition in public sector through regular activity of the museums that deal with contemporary art. Museums, in this case art museums, as public institutions, were created as places that recognize and reflect, above all public social interest, but they have to be places unburdened with pressure of public capital in a shape of sponsorship. Sponsors have to leave enough space to experts to define the least harmful forms of using sponsorship money.

10. Do you collaborate internationally on your projects, and why is that important to you?

I have designed a number of international projects and I believe that it is not possible to work in any other way in the area of contemporary art. Practice of international collaborations, that Museum of Contemporary Art is nourishing since the first days of its establishment in 1954, is a part of positive tradition that museum curators inherit and practice through generations. Precisely this sort of programmed activity, institutional and non-institutional network and connection with other similar institutions is quintessential in raising the norm of institutional work which is one of the basic qualities of our Museum through all the years of its existence.

11. In your opinion, what should the transfer of curatorial knowledge be like? Do you support "the institutionalization of curatorial models" through various types of curatorial programs?

Western education systems have recognized the need of curator studies as specific shape of creation and transfer of knowledge. In Croatia the study of museology, probably due to early date of formation (late eighties) just partially fits the issues of curator education. Curator workshops that were at the time initiated by the Soros Center for Contemporary Art in Ljubljana, and which were attended by our young art historians who are today mostly independent curators, is certainly a good way to follow in formalizing this completely obvious need for curator studies.

12. How visible are the curators, and in what way are their roles and responsibilities manifested within the actual cultural politics in Croatia?

Cultural policies, as a part of strategies of Croatia's cultural development, are formalized in the documents of the Ministry of Culture "National report on Cultural Policy in Croatia" from 2001. These documents, above all, suggest the strategies of creating national identity through the bond of cultural heritage and current creative potentials. Role and responsibility of curator could be recognized "in part of seeing culture as single and collective assets…". However, a few important formal roles expected for curators, as for other concrete professions in culture, there are none in these strategies. Anyway, it seems that the role of curator profession, the way we defined it here, as a promoter and a mediator of contemporary art will increase in importance. Independent curator positions like WHW, Kontejner and others have brought significant originality in Croatian curator practice that can be measured with international standards and that have surely contributed to redefining curator practice in Croatian exhibition scene.

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TIHOMIR MILOVAC WAS BORN IN VINKOVCI IN 1956. HE GRADUATED IN ART HISTORY AND ETHNOLOGY FROM THE FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES IN ZAGREB. HE HAS BEEN WORKING AS A CURATOR IN THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART SINCE 1984. HE WAS A CURATOR OF NUMEROUS EXHIBITIONS AND EDITOR OF SERIES OF PUBLICATIONS IN CROATIA AND ABROAD THAT DEAL WITH CONTEMPORARY AUTHORS, THEMES AND HISTORICAL AVANT-GARDE PHENOMENA. HE IS A MEMBER OF CIMAM'S EXECUTIVE BOARD (INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF ICOM FOR MUSEUMS AND COLLECTIONS OF MODERN ART) FOR PERIOD 2007–2010. HE HAS TAKEN PART IN A NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL EXPERT SYMPOSIUMS AND CONFERENCES. HE HAD BEEN ON SEVERAL ABROAD SPECIALIZATIONS (BERLIN, NEW YORK, MUNICH). SINCE 1977 HE WORKS AS A THEATER SET DESIGNER. HE CURATED EXHIBITIONS OF GORAN PETERCOL, DALIBOR MARTINIS, SANJA IVEKIVIĆ, MLADEN STILINOVIĆ, ANDRES SERRANO, KAZIMIR MALJEVIČ, JAN FABRE, ZLATKO KOPLJAR, KRISTINA LEKO AND OTHERS. HE ALSO MANAGES SERIES OF PROJECTS: *FUTURE IS NOW. UKRAINIAN ART IN THE 1990-S; THE BALTIC TIMES - CONTEMPORARY ART FROM ESTONIA, LATVIA AND LITHUANIA; THE MISFITS: CONCEPTUALIST STRATEGIES IN CROATIAN CONTEMPORARY ART; UKRAINE AVANT-GARDE; THE ARTIST IN A WAR LANDSCAPE; KEEP THAT FREQUENCY CLEAR; INSERT – RETROSPECTIVE OF CROATIAN VIDEO ART; A PAIR OF LEFT SHOES – REALITY CHECK IN EASTERN EUROPE.* HE CURRENTLY WORKS AS AN ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, SENIOR CURATOR AND MANAGER OF DEPARTMENT OF EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH WITHIN THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART IN ZAGREB.

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D.N.

ANA PERAICA

INTERVIEWED BY IVANA MEŠTROV
AND MIHAELA RICHTER

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1. What term would you use to define your profession and what was the course of your professional path?

My path is a logical consequence of a family story. I was born in a family of photographers. My father, whom I recently, prematurely, lost, and my grandfather were professional photographers. Grandfather was also a movie cameraman. All that influenced my path: photos, movies. After finishing my studies I followed those beaten paths. After my participation at Venice Biennale in 1999, I started my studies in art theory and new media at Jan Van Eyck Academy in Maastricht, and then continued doctoral studies in cultural analysis at the University of Amsterdam. At the same time I worked as an assistant on projects in Wien, Brussels… I came back to Croatia in 2004 on the promise of "the return of brains", which not only that it remained unfulfilled, but also my diplomas were stuck in appellate processes for four years. Today, after coming back to my hometown Peristil, where I live and manage my own atelier, I see myself as a third in line of a family of photographers. Probably being the only doctor of science in the occupation.

2. What would you list as the decisive moments that contributed to the development of your thinking and practice, whether concerning certain concepts you have

developed or references and collaborations?
When I look at it today, I think my family influenced my life the most, in the way it was connected with photography technologies in practice, as with the family archive alone, which besides first daguerreotypes has the biggest collection of *Leica* cameras in these areas, and which currently I am working on. I have seen the photographs of Crveni Peristil my father took, secretly captured reproductions of Picasso captured by my grandfather…
I graduated in logic, finished my postgraduate studies in art theory and new media, and continued with cultural analysis. But from today's perspective, maybe the most important thing I made was coming back to my own tradition, to photography. That is how the following projects originated: *Victims Symptom* from 2008, *Smuggling Anthologies* and *New International Photography Exhibition* in plan for 2010, and finally the collected papers for the Institute for Networked Culture, and of course my new book *Fotografija kao dokaz* (Photography as Evidence), for which I am negotiating edition in collaboration with Afterall and Leonardo Series. They have literally originated from practice.
3. What methodologies do you use in your work? What do you consider to be the field of your public activity?
I usually work on profiled research on an academic level, using tools of cultural analysis and logic, as if I was doing a preparation for a book. I try to document the material systematically, a detail which could be culturally produced. After that I make a statement or a hypothesis, and leave the conclusion to the public, whose opinion and debate I am always most interested in. Depending on the subject in matter I take a lot of collaborators, for example statisticians, media analysts… On the last project I even had a team of psychiatrists and psychotherapists. Such preparations take away up to thirty percent of the budget and last for a whole year for an exhibition of, let us say, seven days. I usually work on projects including production of new artworks, which are then exhibited in the most suitable way; on an exhibition, symposium, in a book, web-site, etc. That often turns out to be a combination of exhibitions and lectures, but lately even the projects which are only books and web-sites. Artworks here mostly appear as triggers of a debate, but not of the discourse, meaning they have been included without pre-valorization or imposed concept, as a sort of intrusion into discourse they summarize, turn around, complicate, provoke, but – never on the level of the context or illustration. I am interested in works as initiators of change in following the beaten thought, where art, unlike science, proves to be the most dynamic field, almost a pure heuristic. In the context of science they are therefore a sort of time bombs within the discourse, on a certain democratic rhetoric level.
4. From your experience, how much does a curator participate in the concept, production, presentation and promotion of an artwork? How do you set the boundaries in those relations?
Boundaries with artists are the same as with scientists, let us call them "academic honesty"; the domain of the work decides upon the artist, who gets all the previous research material, often even relevant collaborators throughout the whole project, and on invitation he or she replies with a summary. My research preparations then become project documentation and are the only influential thing. Other influences eventually come from a number of chosen collaborators; for example, the same psychiatrist and psychotherapist were given to each artist as assistants "in full drive" during Victims Symptom. On contextual level there are probably many other professions that would be able to provide a much more adequate answer, but that would be formal, and comment or critique is truly authorial and no one has the right to mess with it.
Still, it is not insignificant that the most artists ask for comments themselves, probably used to "control freak" curators who place themselves as authors above authors. Personally I do not like to provide those because I believe my job is only to build the relationship of trust, and that comments should be left to public.
5. To what extent and in which segment do you collaborate with other curators and/or experts from other fields?
I did not collaborate much with my fellow curators considering co-authorship, but I collaborated in the researches, especially with academic experts from certain areas. For example, for the next project, Smuggling Anthologies, there are four of us; Giuliana Carbi, Vasja Nagyjem and Sabina Salamon as performative and me as a "wandering" curator, or "the major smuggler". There is also an enormous team of historians from all of the three countries, not only historians of the 20th century, but also film historians, literature historians, art historians, more than twenty advisors. On the previous project, as I mentioned before, there was a team of psychiatrists and psychotherapeutics, and I also had two assistants on interview production and debates. On the project *Žena na raskrižju ideologije* (Women on the Crossroad of Ideologies) preparations came from government and non-government offices for women, but also from women's convents. Parallel researches and wide selections on the topic of work and freedom in Europe were made by Madelaine Bernstorff from Oberhausen, Stevan Vuković for the Balkans, and Neli Ružić with her colleague from Mexico for the South America dealing with the topic of the body. In a similar way, as a researcher or a sub-curator I collaborated with Obrist on Der Standaard, and on the media platform for *Indiscipline* by Barbara Vanderlinden and Jens Hoffman. I have also collaborated on atypical productions, for example on turning theoretical lectures into performances within the *Artentainment Project*. Blurring the borders between the form and the context I "performed" theoretical lectures followed by rhythm and music using the original sound records, and artists' speeches (statements) creating thus a new sound and presentational ambient. Within the domain of exhibition projects the most interesting one was maybe *Curating Within* from the year 2000, at Marres Center in Maastricht with the artists Fabienne Audeoud and the philosopher Katherine Zakravsky in which we completely twisted the roles within the exhibition production, and similarly in coproduction with the artists from 21 Proljeće, as well as the project *Nizovi–petlje –čvorovi* (Series–Loops–Nodes, Oreste, Venice Biennale, 1999).
6. In what way is the mediation between a work of art and the audience enacted and conceptualized in your projects?
A relationship with public must be built and nurtured. By that I do not refer to what we call "cultural public" but to a wide spectrum of individuals whom you address so you could jointly rethink a certain topic, among whom there are always various sorts of professionals and amateurs and pensioners and random passers by and villains. Manifestation is calibrated depending on the target audience. A part of preparation process is to figure out how to attract the type of the audience that could bring vitality into discussion, make a substantial change in discourse which then becomes a common topic for everyone, journalists and critics as well. They are always addressed individually.
7. In your opinion, what is the difference between institutional and independent (curatorial) positions?
Independent ones are simply unemployed, without retirement

insurance or the possibility to take a loan, and live a very difficult life. They literally share the same destiny as the artists. Institutions do not like them because they think or work too much, or how the neighbors would say "waver", and can rarely sacrifice their opinion. Of course, that amount of work and constant changes are a mere proof of survival. And of course, the more you work, the fact is that you are less desirable for institutions. Arguments used to turn down independent curators are very hypocritical "they would destroy creative freedom", and critiques such as "you get the bigger working budget, and I only get the salary", etc, are also very often. Like you could live in Croatia out of projects.

8. How are your programs financed?

All by the foreign agencies, since in Croatia I cannot find a calculation of production without ending in deficit. I generally work with the EU funds, if I work alone, and the clients are mostly coming from the field of science and technology.

9. What is your view on the relation between cultural production and the private sector in Croatia – corporate competitions / awards (T-com, Erste...), and private collections (Filip Trade, Essl Collection...)?

Private collections have always existed and more than anything else they guarantee the survival to the artists, while the prizes are merely in the domain of PR.

It is interesting, however, how the works by some local artists have entered the capital market, on which surely art has the biggest rising path in the 20th century considering the raise in value. That is the calibrating of value which involves curator as well; the fact that the work is more valuable than the person or the author is an intervention of the last decade.

10. Do you collaborate internationally on your projects, and why is that important to you?

The biggest part of my professional life I have spent outside the country, so I have more international contacts, and locally I have come only upon resistance.

But in general I believe that for every curator it is important not to work within the national borders, because those borders are only important for professions determined by language, law and economy, but certainly not for culture. Reducing the culture down to national boundaries is very reactionary and arbitrary, because the only connection you validate by doing that is the nation.

11. In your opinion, what should the transfer of curatorial knowledge be like? Do you support "the institutionalization of curatorial models" through various types of curatorial programs?

I have never attended such programs, although I often think about how such programs should look like, because I think that a formal change is actually the most interesting one in the scope of organization. Actually – the experiment concerning the structure and form of a project, is a very creative act within itself. The most can be learnt from practice and from colleagues, but not only curators.

12. How visible are the curators, and in what way are their roles and responsibilities manifested within the actual cultural politics in Croatia?

I have not paid attention, and I do not have too much to do with cultural policy in Croatia. One thing I have noticed though, that correctness to one's fellow workers and ethics within curatorial profession do not exist. When there was a debate in Split followed by a petition after a journalist wrote a bad exhibition review, of all the people who signed the petition no one did find it necessary to write his/her own review. They were rather drinking coffee on Split Riva (Waterfront), judging the only person who did her job. At the same time, the petition list did nothing to protect fellow colleagues without job, the ones on the streets, but they rather positioned themselves as the censors of someone's opinion.

That is mainly curatorial and cultural production in these, southern areas; political enforcement, censorship, mortification with great intolerance, insensibility, and ignorance as well. They have no respect for the human resources with more experience and knowledge they do not ask for advice and do not have the will to learn the things they do not know about, everything is based on arrogance, by the motto "I make business!".

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ANA PERAICA IS A THEORETICIAN, CURATOR AND A PHOTOGRAPHER. SHE GRADUATED IN PHILOSOPHY AND ART HISTORY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAGREB, AND CONTINUED HER POSTGRADUATE STUDIES AT THE DEPARTMENT OF THEORY AT JAN VAN EYCK AKADEMIE IN MAASTRICHT, AND AT THE SAME TIME AT DOCTORAL STUDIES AT ASCA (AMSTERDAM SCHOOL OF CULTURAL ANALYSIS, THEORY AND INTERPRETATION) AND UVA (UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM). SHE IS THE AUTHOR AND CURATOR OF A COUPLE OF ONLINE PROJECTS SUCH AS *VICTIMS SYMPTOM* (LAB FOR CULTURE, EUROPEAN CULTURAL FOUNDATION, AMSTERDAM, 2008), *MACHINE–PHILOSOPHER* (JAN VAN EYCK AKADEMIE, MAASTRICHT, 2000), *TECHNOLOGY OF SOUNDED SPACE* (LADA 98 RIMINI, 1998) AS WELL AS EXHIBITION PROJECTS: *WOMAN AT THE CROSSROAD OF IDEOLOGIES* (HULU, SPLIT, 2007), *21 000 – THE FIRST BEHIND* (KUDA.ORG, NOVI SAD, 2007) ETC. SHE WAS A GUEST PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM, UNIVERSITY OF ROTTERDAM, AND UNIVERSITY OF DANUBE, AND NUMEROUS ART ACADEMIES. SHE IS CURRENTLY WORKING AS AN EXTERNAL ASSOCIATE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES IN RIJEKA, DEPARTMENT FOR CULTURAL STUDIES. TOGETHER WITH NUMEROUS SCIENTIFIC PAPERS AND ARTICLES, SHE IS ALSO THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK *SUB/VERSION* (REVOLVER PUBLISHING BY VICE VERSA, BERLIN, IN PRINT) AND SHE IS THE EDITOR OF *VICTIMS SYMPTOM* (INSTITUTE FOR NETWORKED CULTURE, AMSTERDAM, 2009), AS WELL AS OF THE COLLECTED PAPERS *WOMAN AT THE CROSSROAD OF IDEOLOGIES* (HULU, SPLIT, 2007). SHE WRITES FOR THE FOLLOWING MAGAZINES: *SPRINGERIN, LEONARDO JOURNAL, AFTERIMAGE, CAMERA AUSTRIA, PAVILION, ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY ART AND CULTURE, NEW YORK ART AND THEORY MAGAZINE* AND MANY OTHERS.
SHE IS CURRENTLY WORKING ON *RE-DOCUMENTING MEMORIES PROJECT* (VARIOUS LOCATIONS, 2009/2010) DEALING WITH THE FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHY ARCHIVE, SMUGGLING ANTHOLOGIES PROJECT (TRIESTE – PIRAN – LABIN, 2010), INTERNATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION (SPLIT, 2010), AND ON THE TRANSLATION OF THE BOOK *FOTOGRAFIJA KAO DOKAZ* (PHOTOGRAPHY AS EVIDENCE).

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Z.Š.

DAVORKA PERIĆ

INTERVIEWED BY PETRA KROLO

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1. What term would you use to define your profession and what was the course of your professional path?

I would define my occupation as curatorial research enthusiasm. The experience from the festival in Momiano *Vizura aperta* first comes to mind, so I will approach the subject from that viewpoint. In a place without previous curatorial practices, without museums or galleries, and myself being without any previous curatorial experience, ten years ago I started a workshop that developed a dialogue between art and context, in the sense of both form and content. Curatorial experience was created at the specific location itself. Political,

social, and ethnic questions that became key places of retrospection in my professional path have all sprung from the context, vicinity of borders, bilingualism and multiethnicity.

2. What would you list as the decisive moments that contributed to the development of your thinking and practice, whether concerning certain concepts you have developed or references and collaborations?

Definitely the Momiano experience. Simply by coming there I got the felling that the imposition of external curatorial preoccupations (which would make for an interesting theme in some different surroundings) would be inappropriate and would seem awkward and insensitive in a place where medieval monuments, small churches, castles and princesses, as well as monuments from the Second World War, are watched over in an atmosphere of peaceful coexistence. The feeling has stuck with me for the past ten years, and it seems to me that the only correct thing to do would be a curatorial and critical reaction to the specific problems of the location in which we work.

That is why in 2003 I wrote the *Manifesto Momiano* that invited artists to abandon their personal and professional preoccupations and to achieve a dialogue with the location, to express their ability to experience and relate to the temporary context which they are a part of. They have been invited to creatively and critically react within the borders of the location's historical, culturological and social fabric.

The collaboration with Nicole Hewitt that started in 2004 marks a significant moment in terms of professional collaboration. Through her involvement one can see how the roles of the artist and the curator overlap. The work of Nicole Hewitt, a curator-artist and a mentor for the students of the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb, refers to a specific culturological-historical and ethnic context, it affects it critically and it affects cultural changes within the location. The Momiano platform is, mostly through its curatorial practice, more expressively oriented towards a socially involved practice that affects changes with its initial energy. For instance, the art action *Čišćenje ženskog WC-a u Narodnom domu* (The Cleaning of the Ladies Toilet at the Community Home) in Momiano inspired a series of changes that arose from the social and ethnic problems of the location (the action initiated the renovation of the Home and revitalized its role within the cultural life of the place). The Momiano festival functions as an international program, as a platform for artists, students and curators. Ivana Meštrov, independent curator and art critic, who is collaborating with us since 2006, used a selection of artists and an authorial video program to answer questions that originated from the sensitivity of the Momiano festival, and with this selection she also referred to the problems of *art in an age of culture* and to its transfer into everyday life, thus pointing to the presence of problems in different areas, both in the region's art scene and the one outside the region. I think that the development of the festival, with its social perspective and intertextually (intercontextually) produced theoretical paradigms, can be achieved by constantly opening and upgrading *Vizura aperta's* program. At the initiative of Kristina Careva, an architect from Zagreb's Faculty of Architecture, the forming of a social-urbanistic-research workshop that deals with the research of a location as an artistic incubator is also a part of the festival's future perspective. The idea of the workshop is to emphasize the needs and potentials of the location and to start projects that would revitalize it in the long run. In line with the concept of giving back to the community, an idea developed to exhibit art production in Momiano in the houses of its inhabitants (so far this has been done spontaneously). A symbiosis of the location and the works created in it – the storing of art works within its living tissue, enables us to consummate art in the everyday life of its locals. I see this as an alternative to museums archiving artworks and as an interesting moment in the construction of the cultural identity of a place we have been collaborating with for the past ten years, following a principle of mutual appreciation in spite of great differences.

3. What methodologies do you use in your work? What do you consider to be the field of your public activity?

The methodological apparatus acts on its own and is activated at a specific location. It is turned on spontaneously thanks to the sensitivity of the artist, curator and the audience, as to the temporary collective's receptiveness to cooperation. The basic curatorial method is the acquisition of experience that stems from dialogue. For instance, two workshops, *Laboratorio Momiano* and *Laboratorio bambini*, operate as part of the *Vizura aperta* festival and in them artists and the inhabitants of Momiano create together. The production of the children's workshop *Laboratorio bambini* is displayed and valued on equal terms with other works created in other workshops. The elitist concept of an artist or the glorification of a work of art no longer exists. One is now dealing with the valorization of the process and the circumstances surrounding the creation of the work in a social and culturological space, with methods that are close to sociology of art.

The area of public activity includes a specific multiethnic, multilingual, bordering location, and the spontaneous application of a large theoretical paradigm of the second half of the 20th century – *expanded visuality* entangled in a web of social relations based on communication.

4. From your experience, how much does a curator participate in the concept, production, presentation and promotion of an artwork? How do you set the boundaries in those relations?

I construct the relation curator–artist–object on the negation of limits, on overlapping fields of interest, and *Vizura aperta* is based on such an open conception. Permeability and the elimination of boundaries are the initiators of the festival, as well as its perspective. As a curator I am a part of the artistic production due to a dialogical relationship curator–artist, and also because of the festival's guidelines that are characterized by a multidirectional flow of ideas, in which the roles of the curator and the artist are equal to the object, location and the public. The curatorial position does not impose its subjects on the artist, or its program affinities on the location. This is, at least how I see it, a subtle collaboration based on uncertainty, and it is precisely the uncertainty that is the motivating force, the initiator of the uncertain production which is replenished on a yearly basis and incessantly revived with new ideas, based on communication and (co)existence with(in) the location.

5. To what extent and in which segment do you collaborate with other curators and/or experts from other fields?

The festival's guests are of various professional orientations – film theorists, architects, urbanists, architecture theorists, artists, curators, students, and all of them work together at constructing the festival in Momiano as a place where culturological boundaries, the memories of history and cultural differences are being questioned. In the Zagreb Architects Society, where I am employed as a program manager, I am also arguing for a transdisciplinary program. As part of the program *Performing the Space*, which I ran with Ivana Meštrov, we rounded up architects, film theorists, artists, curators and sociologists so they could discuss space (public or private,

film space…), negation of boundaries, or how things intertwine and permeate… it is a constant that has been with me since my student days where my interest was often oriented towards comparative aesthetics.

6. In what way is the mediation between a work of art and the audience enacted and conceptualized in your projects?

Meditation is actually only spontaneous communication, listening and translating out of which comes understanding. By nurturing the inhabitant's participation in the creation of works, a specific curatorial practice was created in which the role of the curator–artist–object–audience was erased. We have created communication and mutual appreciation that goes beyond the lack of understanding between an old lady speaking Italian and a contemporary art student. The festival's participants, Momiano's inhabitants and the children all work together in the creation of a work. They are its authors, participants and audience, the idiosyncrasy being that the boundary between the work and the audience is virtually non-existent.

7. In your opinion, what is the difference between institutional and independent (curatorial) positions?

Art, which is arranged for white walls and relies on the ability to display and transfer itself inside various gallery spaces, can survive easily within an institutionalized framework and is accompanied by well-run marketing and logistics. Artistic and curatorial practices without "a roof over their heads" that correspond to the moment and space of a work's conception can only be experienced *in situ* and can never be repeated. Subsequent methods of display are documentation and presentation, and not the exhibition of a work. Both have their advantages and disadvantages. Every time an institutionalized position opens up to independent curatorial practices or vice-versa, in terms of collaboration, support, visitations, is most welcome. Independent curatorial practices are slowly affirming themselves and becoming institutionalized as well.

8. How are your programs financed?

The festival's program is financed from the state budget, this year with a modest sum of 30 000 KN. As opposed to other festivals, it is a surprisingly symbolic amount, so one could say that *Vizura aperta* is financed by artists, curators, students and Momiano's inhabitants, and that it stays afloat because of the enthusiasm of its volunteers and a mutual desire for survival.

9. What is your view on the relation between cultural production and the private sector in Croatia – corporate competitions / awards (T-com, Erste…), and private collections (Filip Trade, Essl Collection…)?

The interest of corporations and private collectors did not become a part of the festival yet, and since works are created in cooperation with the locals, they mostly end up in their homes or in the specific locations of their creation, assembly places or hidden corners. Most frequently they are temporary installations and actions, and it is impossible to pack them up and re-exhibit them, and it is even harder to sell them.
That way the Momiano production seems to evade systems which manage production and corporately orchestrated interests. They are protected because they are far away from being a three-dimensional or some other aesthetic artifact, and because it is impossible to transport the context which is the integral part of the work. However, the collectors and the private sector work more and more as the opposition and as the creators of support for young artists. They support cultural production by valorizing and buying the works of young artists who still have not made a name for themselves.

10. Do you collaborate internationally on your projects, and why is that important to you?

International collaboration is present at the festival from the very start and it stems from the bordering multiethnic and multilingual location. In the beginning it was mostly regional collaboration with Slovenian and Italian artists. Culturological plurality was outlined in formal aspects in terms of trans-disciplinarity. Later on the festival's regional framework expanded.

11. In your opinion, what should the transfer of curatorial knowledge be like? Do you support ˝the institutionalization of curatorial models˝ through various types of curatorial programs?

The transfer of curatorial knowledge lies in a common curatorial practice, curatorial collaboration on joint programs, and the mesh of independent and institutionalized curatorial practices. I support the initiative to recognize and track curatorial orientations, as well as further categorization and valorization after a certain time period.

12. How visible are the curators, and in what way are their roles and responsibilities manifested within the actual cultural politics in Croatia?

A curator has to recognize, diagnose, and critically interpret cultural phenomena. He has to explore and expand the possibilities of his activity, change his positions and constantly reexamine his methodological apparatus. A socially engaged orientation, cultural activity on an area distanced from cultural centers and the ability to contribute to cultural change in the context of the project's creation are all a part of the curator's responsibility.

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DAVORKA PERIĆ WAS BORN IN 1973 IN ZAGREB, WHERE SHE CURRENTLY RESIDES AND WORKS. SHE GRADUATED IN ART HISTORY AND COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AT THE FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES IN ZAGREB IN 1999, AND THEN PURSUED A POSTGRADUATE STUDY IN COMPARATIVE LITERATURE, COURSE CULTURAL STUDIES, ALSO AT THE FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES.
FROM 2000 TO 2002 SHE WORKED AS A PROGRAM COORDINATOR FOR A NONPROFIT ASSOCIATION ACADEMIA MODERNA. IN 2000 SHE STARTED AN ANNUAL AUDIO-VISUAL FESTIVAL *VIZURA APERTA* IN MOMIANO. IN 2005 SHE STARTED, AND STILL IS WORKING AS A PROGRAM MANAGER FOR THE ZAGREB ARCHITECTS SOCIETY.
HER PROJECTS ARE OFTEN INTERDISCIPLINARY PROGRAMS CONNECTED WITH THE STUDY AND PROBLEMATIC OF SPACE ON THE ONE HAND, AND CONTEMPORARY CROATIAN VIDEO ART ON THE OTHER. SINCE WITH THE ZAGREB ARCHITECTS SOCIETY SHE STARTED AND LED MANY INTERESTING AND INTERDISCIPLINARY PROJECTS LIKE *PRVIH 9* (THE FIRST 9), *SASVIM DRUGIH 10* (COMPLETELY DIFFERENT 10), *PERFORMING THE SPACE I AND II* IN COLLABORATION WITH IVANA MEŠTROV. SHE'S TRYING TO PRESENT THE LOCAL ARCHITECTURE SCENE AND TO ENCOURAGE DISCUSSION. SHE IS ACTIVE AS A SELECTOR OF CROATIAN VIDEO ART FOR VARIOUS LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITIONS, OF WHICH THE MOST NOTABLE ARE *RECENTNI HRVATSKI VIDEO* (RECENT CROATIAN VIDEO) FOR THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART IN SKOPJE, *AKADEMSKO I ISTRAŽIVAČKO U STUDENTSKOM VIDEU* (THE ACADEMIC AND THE EXPLORATIVE IN STUDENT VIDEO) AS PART OF LECTURES AT THE EXHIBITION *INSERT* (MSU, ZAGREB, 2005), *MLADA ŽENSKA VIDEO SCENA U HRVATSKOJ* (YOUNG FEMALE CROATIAN VIDEO SCENE) AS PART OF THE *ALTERNATIVE FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL* IN BELGRADE.
HER TEXTS WERE PUBLISHED IN *HRVATSKI FILMSKI LJETOPIS, KONTURA, VIJENAC, ZAREZ, ŽIVOT UMJETNOSTI.*

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D.P.

SABINA SALOMON

INTERVIEWED BY VANJA ŽANKO

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1. What term would you use to define your profession and what was the course of your professional path?

I usually use the term art historian, because I believe that it is more clear than the term curator. Both of them are acceptable, even though one should specify that art historian follows the criteria of professional qualification, whereas the term curator refers to museum occupation. Beginning of my interest in contemporary art goes back to 1995 when I joined the Club of Young Artist from Rijeka who, at the time, socialized and exhibited intensively in and outside of institutions. This resulted in creation of a scene of young artists in Rijeka. In 1997 I started working as an assistant of a gallery owner Marin Cettini in his gallery Dante in Umag where he lectured me in basic functioning of a private gallery ownership in Europe and America. Afterwards I finished a curator course for contemporary art under the sponsorship of SCCA Ljubljana and started collaborating with one festival from Ljubljana in a field of organization.

2. What would you list as the decisive moments that contributed to the development of your thinking and practice, whether concerning certain concepts you have developed or references and collaborations?

A total collection of experiences in occupations I have tried out influenced the formation of my own attitudes. I realized that for me the most exciting part is multimedia approach to art and contact with living creation of art. By that I mean the places and forms in which production takes place, conditionally speaking, laboratories open for work and experiment, and when it comes to form the most exciting part are the festivals. Presentation of art as I know it from working in a gallery, in my opinion is not the crown of an art system, but necessary part of work meant for extra communication and market.

3. What methodologies do you use in your work? What do you consider to be the field of your public activity?

I am more preoccupied with organization than theory, since it was my choice at one moment. Naively I thought that public activity is more alive than cabinet work, and that it is more important to deal with infrastructure and organization. Of course those two areas do not exclude one another, but organizational labour is a great usurper of time. He who deals with it can hardly make the time for theoretical work because it is not a casual thing, but highly responsible work, more serious than organizational.

Specificity of my activity is dislocation in relation to the centre. I run the City Gallery in Labin and organize the Festival of Light and Intermedia art in Poreč, in a scope of Bravarija Art Remont group. The space of my activity is creating a need for art and everything that contemporary art has to offer, above all criteria and values. Since all of Istria population is that of Croatian bigger city, you can imagine that working in art reception and audience formation is quintessential for contemporary art here. Thus the insisting on a difference of centre – periphery is not an exaggeration, but stating the fact. However, I keep on corroborating the claim that the problem is same "here" and "there", except that centre is richer with human resources so it is easier in that respect, and it seems to me, more meaningful to work in the area of contemporary culture. Namely, the waning interest in galleries and museums is global phenomenon, if we exclude a few "meccas" like Louvre or NY Metropolitan.

4. From your experience, how much does a curator participate in the concept, production, presentation and promotion of an artwork? How do you set the boundaries in those relations?

We influence concept, presentation and promotion significantly and generally that is considered to be our job. It is a custom that artists deal with the production side, however, in my opinion boundaries between one and the other should not be as rigid. Yet, it is a very sensitive subject especially when the opinion of the artist is in question, and it is up for a discussion whether curators should influence art production. Theoreticians and curators that deal with designing exhibitions could be criticized against because it could seem that they are influencing production with their own concepts. Of course, from time to time projects appear that influence production, direct it and encourage. I personally believe that artists could take part in designing, as well as curators could influence production. Maybe it would be good to allow two – way communication. It is important to achieve content quality.

5. To what extent and in which segment do you collaborate with other curators and/or experts from other fields?

I try to collaborate with my colleagues in belief that team work can bring about greater result. Collaboration refers to all segments of work, designing, presentation and education. I cannot commend myself on collaborating with experts from other fields, like historians and sociologists, let alone scientists. Let's just say that there has not been the right opportunity.

6. In what way is the mediation between a work of art and the audience enacted and conceptualized in your projects?

Both museums and galleries are institutional forms of conducting mediation, but today they are insufficiently dynamic to be visited by audience with the same interest as in the last thirty years; all forms of entertainment and cultural production, as well as the consumption of the said, have become to fast for them. It is like comparing Tarkovsky with Spielberg. This is the reason why more dynamic forms such as festivals and clubs that function like laboratories, are far better at directly linking work to the audience. In that respect, I prefer them to galleries and museums, because, whether we like it or not, those are exclusive places. In spite of all that, each of the forms has its place in the system and it is natural that they do not conduct mediation the same way. Personally, I have been working on a "project of future", as I call the formation of the need of art in children. Reason for it is that children, unlike adults, are without (self) censorship in relating the influence of mass media. They are more susceptible to any kind of influence so it is important to work with them in need formation that they will acquire once and for all. I use very classic methods of educational and creative workshops that take place parallel to exhibitions. In that way children adapt to a gallery space that will, I presume, permanently influence their perception so they do not feel alienated in it.

7. In your opinion, what is the difference between institutional and independent (curatorial) positions?

There does not even have to be any difference, however, I understand the question. In that case, I would say: each position and form has an advantage in so much that it introduces new qualities in purpose of implementing better content. It does not necessarily need to distinguish institutional and independent positions, but the nature of the matter implies that non – institutional forces promote novelty and prosperity, which, I repeat, is not necessarily the case. The fact is that institutionalised forms generally follow patterns according to

which work is done. Another element is important: execution of a programme is different in an institution; for instance, in a museum you have a collection managed by the curator and according to the Museums Law it should be his or her main preoccupation. In that sense museum curator will primarily develop methods of managing the collection, which generally will not be interesting. Curator positioned in the institution must protect the establishment in which he or she works.

8. How are your programs financed?

Programmes are financed from the budget – Ministry of Culture and regional and city funds. EU foundations are still very demanding, trying to implement their methods of functioning – networking, profitability, self – sustainability. Those are the criteria that cannot be easily satisfied by a country that up until yesterday functioned in a closed "non – Western" system. I am currently working on one application for which several of us is trying to establish partner network. When dealing with multiplying, we are at the very beginning. Sponsorships are miserable, but present. Self-financing of culture is a myth barely reached by the greatest.

9. What is your view on the relation between cultural production and the private sector in Croatia – corporate competitions / awards (T-com, Erste ...), and private collections (Filip Trade, Essl collection ...)?

Establishing that type of practice is inevitability of processes in which we live, and it comes from a developed Western capitalism. Those are strong institutions and whether one likes them or not, it is good that they exist, because they are yet another channel through which art production is enabled existence. In that sense, private sector/capital establishes balance, negates monopoly of the museums, even though it still goes unnoticed in Croatia.

10. Do you collaborate internationally on your projects, and why is that important to you?

International collaboration makes sense, same as travelling the world: one can learn from them and thus develop by demanding that type of quality in his or her country, therewith that abroad that type of possibilities are multiplied.

11. In your opinion, what should the transfer of curatorial knowledge be like? Do you support "the institutionalization of curatorial models" through various types of curatorial programs?

Why not, I welcome institutionalization, because I believe that curatorial models should be worked on and changed in the purpose of more quality approach to content, which in the end guarantees better functioning of system.

12. How visible are the curators, and in what way are their roles and responsibilities manifested within the actual cultural politics in Croatia?

First of all, it should be said that in the context of general social movements they are unimportant. I find arguments in my own experience, and they are: approach to cultural politics from the point of local government boards is frivolous because it does not set high criteria. Non experts from government discuss the vision of cultural politics. One should not generalize, but I still believe that rule applies saying that it is worse if the community is smaller, even though people generally still approach culture as an amusement. This is the reason why there are so many amateurs in the system that impose themselves as professionals. Communities rarely bother themselves with cultural politics in terms of long-term planning, so it all ends up to few individuals whose work is finally recognized as good or bad, profitable and non – profitable.

I would also add something that proved to be a general rule: if we as curators are asked for opinion, we are rarely offered the opportunity to make decisions, probably because we do not make money but culture, and we also live in the world where creating capital /money is in the first place. Of course, culture is a capital, but the difference is that demands of the market are differently set, i.e. demand is considerably smaller so there is less money and prosperity. Therein lies the fact that culture is in a good position in the countries of well developed economy. We in the business of culture , depend on the standard of people, because culture is a luxury and not a primary need. To simplify, "nature" precedes culture. It is the reason people often comment how we work only for ourselves and for a select few. So we seem to work in a closed and self – sufficient system which politics likes to show off, but government does not like to share. Even so, we should not neglect the fact that we have a beautiful occupation for which we are paid. We are closed, but not self – sufficient, because we depend on everything that happens in a society. Sometimes it is frustrating that we do not matter as much, or so to say that we cannot influence the changes in society.

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SABINA SALOMON WAS BORN IN RIJEKA IN 1971. IN THE PERIOD BETWEEN 1995 AND 2006 SHE WORKED IN THE GALLERY OF MARIN CETTINA IN UMAG, HDLU RIJEKA AND AS AN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE MEDITERRANEAN SCULPTURE SYMPOSIUM IN LABIN.
SINCE 2006 SHE HAS BEEN THE MANAGER OF THE CITY GALLERY OF LABIN. IN A LAST COUPLE OF YEARS SHE HAS HOSTED SOME OF THE LEADING NAMES OF CONTEMPORARY CROATIAN ART, AND TURNED THE GALLERY IN A PLACE OF DIALOGUE OF A SELECT LOCAL ISTRIAN AND NATIONAL SCENE. AS A MANAGER AND A SOLE CURATOR OF THE GALLERY SHE HAS ORGANIZED EXHIBITIONS OF: ĐANINO BOŽIĆ, TOMISLAV AND PETAR BRAJNOVIĆ, BORIS CVJETANOVIĆ, TOMISLAV ĆURKOVIĆ, ALEN FLORIČIĆ, IVANA FRANKE, DANKO FRIŠČIĆ, ALEKSANDAR GARBIN, DUJE JURČIĆ, DENIS KRAŠKOVIĆ, MIRNA KUTLEŠA, BOŽICA MATASIĆ, MARTINA MEZAK, IVAN MARUŠIĆ KLIF, MILENA LAH, DALIBOR MARTINIS, NIKOLA RAŽOV, SANJA ŠVRLJUGA MILIĆ, NIKOLA UKIĆ AND MANY OTHERS. SHE INTENSIVELY PARTICIPATE IN CONNECTING LOCAL LABIN COMMUNITY AND ACTUAL ART PRODUCTION. ONE OF THE BIGGEST PROJECTS IN THAT SENSE, EVEN ON NATIONAL LEVEL, IS HER COLLABORATION WITH KRISTINA LEKO ON MULTI-ANNUAL INTERDISCIPLINARY PROJECT *TEMPORARY MUSEUM OF MINING MEMORIES* (PRIVREMENI MUZEJ RUDARSKIH USPOMENA), THAT TAKES PLACE IN THE AREA OF LABIN AND RAŠA AND IS COMMEMORATED TO THE HISTORY OF SITE SEEN THROUGH THE ACTIVITY OF MINING THAT LEFT ITS DISTINCT MARK IN THIS REGION IN THE SPAN OF TWO HUNDRED YEARS.
WITHIN THE BRAVARIJA ART REMONT GROUP FROM POREČ SHE DEALS WITH ORGANIZING FESTIVALS THAT NOURISH INTERMEDIAL APPROACH TO ART. *FESTIVAL OFFSIDE* FROM 2006 IS ACCOMPLISHED IN CO – PRODUCTION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERMEDIA ON POSTGRADUATE COURSE IN THE ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS FROM STUTTGART.
IN 2007 SHE WAS A CURATOR OF *LIGHT FESTIVAL* IN POREČ, THE FIRST FESTIVAL IN CROATIA THAT DEALS WITH THE PHENOMENON OF LIGHT IN CONTEMPORARY ART PRACTICES. IN THAT YEAR SHE HAS ALSO BEEN CHOSEN AS AN ELECTOR OF CROATIAN SELECTION ON *BIENNALE QUADRILATERALE* IN ORGANIZATION OF THE MUSEUM OF MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART IN RIJEKA.

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D.N.

BRANKA STIPANČIĆ

INTERVIEWED BY ANA KOVAČIĆ

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1. What term would you use to define your profession and what was the course of your professional path?

Art historian, curator, editor… In the mid 1970's before the end of my university days I started doing some newspaper writing, mostly about the Group of Six Artists (Grupa šestorice autora) with whom I socialized at the time. At that time I also did features on the Zagreb art scene for the Cultural Review on RTZ (Radio–Television Zagreb). I chose my own topics and seeing that I was interested in more radical art forms and in conceptual art especially, my adventure with that particular media lasted shortly. I remember that after having spent a year working there, at which time I did features on the *Gorgona* exhibition in GSU (Contemporary Art Gallery) and on *Radikalni enformel u Hrvatskoj* (Radical informel in Croatia) at Nova Gallery, that I was ultimately thanked for my cooperation. My first exhibitions *Vrijednosti* (Values) and *Linije* (Lines) were connected with artists gathered around the alternative space Podroom, as was my first collaboration with the Contemporary Art Gallery. I got a job at the Faculty of Pedagogy in Rijeka where I taught international and national art history of the 19th and 20th century and I saw that employment as some sort of an extension of my education, some sort of a master's degree. After that I spent ten years working at the Contemporary Art Gallery, and then about five years at the Soros Center for Contemporary Art – Zagreb and since 1999 I have been an independent curator (freelance profession). I see myself as an editor as well, since I edited almost every catalogue of the exhibitions where I was the curator, including low budget independent editions, as well as retrospective exhibition catalogues, monographs I have written and editions on which many world experts had collaborated. For some time I edited art sections in periodicals *Pitanja* and *Quorum*, where I tried to represent new theoretical discourses by translating foreign art theorists.

2. What would you list as the decisive moments that contributed to the development of your thinking and practice, whether concerning certain concepts you have developed or references and collaborations?

There have been many influential ideas and events. I will try to remember the earliest and most important ones that directed me in a certain way. The activity of the Contemporary Art Gallery and of the Students Center Gallery was certainly one of them, then *Genre Film Festival, Musical Biennale, Student Theatre Festival in Zagreb, April Encounters* in Belgrade which I started attending since 1974. I was interested in historical avant-gardes,

anti-art, minimalism, conceptual art, Fluxus, happening… I read about it mostly in periodicals – *Polja, Treći program, Delo, Ideje*, or publications like *Rok, Mixed Media*… Texts by L. Lippard, J. Kosuth, A. Kaprow, U. Mayer, C. Millet, G. Celant, G. C. Argan, S. Morawski… When it comes to foreign periodicals, *Avalanche* was the one that discovered land art to me, and I was subscribed to *Studio International*… Ješa Denegri and Dimitrije Bašičević were the most significant ones for me personally. Spending quality time with conceptual artists of the then Yugoslavia opened up new horizons for me. On the one side there was the dematerialization of a work of art, and on the other were new media – everything seemed possible, boundaries did not exist. The fact that Mladen Stilinović is my partner since 1970 surely defined my professional life.

3. What methodologies do you use in your work? What do you consider to be the field of your public activity?

I approach every exhibition differently so methodologies also vary. My area of activity is wide-ranging but at the same time it is somehow focused. I have dealt with Croatian artists whose activity was defined in the 1960's and 1970's and who have a visible conceptual background (Josip Vaništa, Dimitrije Bašičević Mangelos, Goran Trbuljak, Mladen Stilinović, Vlado Martek, Goran Petercol and others). On the other hand I was interested in world art ranging from historical avant-gardes to contemporary art, which resulted in exhibitions that were first shown locally and then abroad, and in books and catalogues.

4. From your experience, how much does a curator participate in the concept, production, presentation and promotion of an artwork? How do you set the boundaries in those relations?

There is more than one question here, and they all vary depending on the situation. Every exhibition is "a temporary world", according to Szeemann. As a curator I did not collaborate on the concept of somebody's artwork. I suppose when collaboration exists in that segment that it must lead to great mutual satisfaction. I view the presentation of a work as a part of the curatorial domain. A work lives within a context, and the curator is most often the one that creates the conditions in which the work will communicate with other works and with the audience. A curator definitely takes part in the reception of a work. We did not use to talk about the production of a work. From my experience, it was not until the *Riječi i slike* (Words and Images) exhibition by the Soros Center for Contemporary Art in 1994 at MSU (Museum of Contemporary Art) that we worked more seriously on production and produced most of the selected projects. Artists need stimulus and support. I am glad it became standard practice later on. When I did *The Baltic Times* at MSU and Paromlin (2001) together with Tihomir Milovac we managed to actualize the work *Formula X,* i.e. a plane in a fog, by the Latvian artist Olegs Tillbergs. Naturally, the curator has a significant role in the promotion of a work of art. There are exceptional artists in our parts which do not have an international career only because that particular link is missing.

5. To what extent and in which segment do you collaborate with other curators and/or experts from other fields?

I have worked with many curators, most of all with Tihomir Milovac. I worked with Sue Cramer, the curator for the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sidney, on the exhibition *Radical Art in Croatia;* I did the exhibition *Aspekte/Positionen* at the Museum Moderner Kunst in Vienna with a group of curators; also *Chinese Whispers* at Apex Art in New York with Ana Dević; and others… Certain themes/exhibitions demand collaboration with experts from various fields of art, and not only art. That enabled me to meet and work with many exceptional curators and art theorists. When we worked on the exhibition and the book *Ukrainian Avant-garde 1910–1930* Tihomir and I rounded up about ten of the world's best experts in that field. Collective work always makes me very happy. Dialogue offers new solutions. Just look at how successful WHW are!!!

I am currently working together with Zdenka Badovinac, Eda Čufer, Charles Harrison, Boris Groys, Vito Havranek, Piotr Piotrowski and Cristina Freire on the exhibition *L'Internazionale – The Post-war Avant-garde Project*.

6. In what way is the mediation between a work of art and the audience enacted and conceptualized in your projects?

Although I am an independent curator I almost always use institutions to actualize my projects. In this respect I am

relatively conservative. I like good museums and I think that their departments can handle the audience much more successfully than I can. Some exhibitions are more communicative than others.

7. In your opinion, what is the difference between institutional and independent (curatorial) positions?

One could talk about it in theory, but seeing that I use to work in a museum and am now an independent curator, I will say something about how I feel. For me personally some greater difference does not exist. If an institution is liberal and if the collegiums use democratic procedures while making their decisions, a curator can actualize his ideas freely and have full support and cooperation while doing it. Nevertheless, however you may love and value the institution you work in, you can never agree with all the programs and strategies that go on in it. An institution gives the curator an advantage but it is also a burden. When you are an independent curator you stand for yourself and I feel great doing that. Before I started working as an independent curator (1999) I had worked on many exhibitions, locally and internationally, and had known many artists, curators and museum directors, so the shift to freelance profession was quite painless for me. Now, instead of working in a single museum, I work with many and find it much more interesting – new people, stunning museum architecture, specialized teams working on publishing, taking over works, setup, education… Many museums abroad have a different division of labour than we do. It is more functional so the curator can focus more on his work.

8. How are your programs financed?

I am the happiest when some museum asks me to do an exhibition for them or to collaborate on a project of theirs. Then I do not worry about financing at all.

When I initiate a project on my own, the procedure is as follows: I apply for funding with the Ministry of Culture and the Municipal Fund. After they approve a part of the expenses I continue with my search. For instance, when I did the exhibition *Veze – Suvremeni umjetnici iz Australije* (Connections – Contemporary Artists from Australia) at HDLU (Croatian Association of Artists) my Australian partner was Melbourne's Living Museum, since the support I requested from Arts Victoria could have only been actualized through an Australian institution. They helped with the organization of the transport of works, the arrival of the artists, etc. I had been looking for sponsors in Zagreb, and then I presented the exhibition in Ljubljana which participated in the overall expenses of the exhibition. It was a demanding, complicated and expensive exhibition for which I spent a lot of time gathering funding. A problem occurs when I enter a project and do not succeed in finding foreign partners for the exhibition, since the funds provided by the Ministry and the City are at least four times smaller than what is necessary. Also, their answers come too late so the curator can hardly organize an exhibition on time.

9. What is your view on the relation between cultural production and the private sector in Croatia – corporate competitions / awards (T-com, Erste…), and private collections (Filip Trade, Essl Collection…)?

At last the private sector became interested in contemporary art in our parts as well. But the question is do the people that want to invest their money into the promotion of contemporary art, into their collections, etc., know how to recognize what is truly valuable and do they consult experts? When I left MSU I thought I would never again work on the formation of a collection and I felt sorry because of that. Today I am back in that business again. I am working for the Erste Bank-Group's *Kontakt* collection in Vienna together with Silvia Eibelmayr, Georg Schöllhammer, Ji í Ševčík and Adam Szymczyk. In 2004 we were invited to plan the collection as a team and to work on it. At the current moment it is a serious collection of Middle-European and Eastern-European contemporary art with a historical nucleus dating back to the 1960's and on its basis the collection is further expanded with the addition of newest works and youngest authors. We tried to acquire key masterpieces by artists such as Julius Koller, Julije Knifer, Stano Filko, Ji í Kovanda, Edward Krasinski, Karel Malich, Tomislav Gotovac, Sanja Iveković, Dalibor Martinis, Vlado Martek… Many of the works could have been seen at the exhibitions of the collection that we have so far organized in Vienna, Belgrade, New York, Karlsruhe, etc., or at large manifestations such as Documenta that borrow from *Kontakt*. We are hoping that this collection will offer the audience and experts an opportunity to revise their understanding of the history of contemporary art and that it will bring some justice into our divided world.

10. Do you collaborate internationally on your projects, and why is that important to you?

Yes, I collaborate internationally; otherwise I would be out of work. I am kidding. I was always interested in promoting our art across the world. I have done exhibitions in many cities ranging from Vienna and Graz to Vilnius and Riga, from New York and Pittsburgh to Sidney. On the other hand I love to explore while abroad and I love working with foreign artists. It is a beautiful and wide world.

11. In your opinion, what should the transfer of curatorial knowledge be like? Do you support ˝the institutionalization of curatorial models˝ through various types of curatorial programs?

It would be nice if we would have something like the Bard College so young people would not waste time learning from their own mistakes. In 1998 we organized a curatorial workshop at the Institute for Contemporary Art (former SCCA) and it seemed to me it was quite successful. Later on I spent years giving lectures in a curatorial workshop at the SCCA (Center for Contemporary Arts) in Ljubljana. Students from Zagreb attended as well because the need obviously exists.

12. How visible are the curators, and in what way are their roles and responsibilities manifested within the actual cultural politics in Croatia?

The question is too difficult for me. I think that we do not recognize different curatorial profiles and consequently curatorial projects are inadequately supported. The quality of somebody's work and the reputation someone made for themselves abroad also means very little in our parts. It seems that one cannot see past the local.

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BRANKA STIPANČIĆ IS AN ART HISTORIAN, CURATOR AND EDITOR. SHE WAS BORN IN 1953 IN ZAGREB, AND CURRENTLY RESIDES AND WORKS THERE. SHE GRADUATED IN ART HISTORY AND COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AT THE FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES IN ZAGREB. FROM 1983 TO 1993 SHE WAS THE CURATOR AT THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART IN ZAGREB AND FROM 1993 TO 1996 SHE WAS THE DIRECTOR AT THE SOROS CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ART IN ZAGREB. SINCE 1999 SHE HAS BEEN WORKING AS AN INDEPENDENT CURATOR.
SHE DID A SERIES OF EXHIBITIONS THROUGH WHICH SHE PRIMARILY DEALS WITH THE RECONTEXTUALIZATION OF CROATIAN CONCEPTUAL ART, NEW ARTISTIC PRACTICE: *WORDS AND IMAGES* (SCCA–ZAGREB – MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, ZAGREB, 1994), *LES PAYSAGES DES MOTS* (THE DRAWING ROOM, BERLIN, 2001), *O NEPOZNATIM*

RADOVIMA (ON UNKNOWN WORKS, NOVA GALLERY, ZAGREB, 2006, ART WORKSHOP LAZARETI, DUBROVNIK, 2006, ŠKUC GALLERY, LJUBLJANA, 2006), *JOSIP VANIŠTA* (NOVA GALLERY, 2007) AND OTHERS. SHE WAS ALSO THE CURATOR OF TWO RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITIONS OF MANGELOS AT MSU IN ZAGREB IN 1990 AND AT THE MUSEU DE ARTE CONTEMPORÂNEA DE SERRALVES IN PORTO IN 2003, AND SHE WAS THE CURATOR OF THE CROATIAN SELECTION AT THE EXHIBITION *ASPEKTE/POSITIONEN – 50 JAHRE KUNST AUS MITTELEUROPA 1949–1999* (MUSEUM MODERNER KUNST, VIENNA, 1999).

TOGETHER WITH GEORG SCHÖLLHAMMER, SILVIA EIBELMAYR, JIŘÍ ŠEVČÍK AND ADAM SZYMCZYK SHE IS ONE OF THE CURATORS FOR THE ERSTE BANK GROUP'S CONTEMPORARY ART COLLECTION WHICH IS FOCUSED ON COLLECTING WORKS BY ARTISTS FROM MIDDLE, EASTERN AND SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE.

HER EDITORIAL ACTIVITY IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR THE FIELD OF CONTEMPORARY ART. SHE EDITED NUMEROUS BOOKS AND EXHIBITION CATALOGUES: *IVO GATTIN* (MSU, 1992), *WORDS AND IMAGES* (SCCA, 1995), *GORAN TRBULJAK* (MSU, 1996), *ARTIST AT WORK* (ŠKUC GALLERY, LJUBLJANA, 2005), *JOSIP VANIŠTA – THE TIME OF GORGONA AND POST-GORGONA* (ZAGREB, 2007), *MANGELOS 1 – 9½* (DAF, ZAGREB, 2007), *EXPLOITATION OF THE DEAD* (MSU, ZAGREB, 2007), *MLADEN STILINOVIĆ – ARTIST'S BOOKS* (ISTANBUL – EINDHOVEN, 2007, ZAGREB, 2008) AND OTHERS.

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D.P.

KLAUDIO ŠTEFANČIĆ

INTERVIEWED BY MARIJANA RIMANIĆ

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1. What term would you use to define your profession and what was the course of your professional path?

I really enjoy the title of my workplace: manager of the Galženica Gallery. Namely, it points to the specific line of my work, since I am prone to look at curators work either in the context of museum or in the context of independent cultural scene. Since the gallery in which I work is not a museum, even though it has a small collection of modern art, and it's neither a part of independent cultural initiative, the term *manager* may be the one to best describe the position in which I am at the same time responsible for the annual gallery program as well as for individual exhibitions. (Even though, for the sake of better understanding, I tend to use the term curator).

I entered contemporary art the *old* way: through museums and galleries, taking the proficiency exam at the Museum Documentation Center, which was a requirement for getting any type of employment in museum-gallery system. In fact, today most of the young curators of contemporary arts enter the sphere through different non-governmental organizations, thus bypassing main museum–gallery institutions.

Concerning the professional path, it sort of looks like this: my first employment was in the Sisak City Museum in 1995; then from about 1997 to 2000 I worked in the Klovićevi Dvori Gallery, afterwards I worked as a freelancer for about a year. In year 2001 I became manager of the Galženica Gallery.

2. What would you list as the decisive moments that contributed to the development of your thinking and practice, whether concerning certain concepts you have developed or references and collaborations?

There are three decisive moments that greatly profited my curator practice (and I list them chronologically). First of all, the concrete work with artists in designing and organizing exhibitions. Artists with whom I worked usually came from little known discourses to me, and that surely, whether positive or negative confrontation, clarified to me the complex structure of contemporary art. Then, it is the phenomenon of digital technology, Internet and World Wide Web, which in my art knowledge based on university curriculum, almost thoroughly redefined *basic terms* of modern art and culture. As a final moment, I list a postgraduate course of literature in Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb which offered, through tradition of cultural studies, a new perspective on *sociability* of every art work.

3. In which way and in what direction did World Wide Web redefine your vision of modern/contemporary art?

Modern art, as well as contemporary art, is based on the idea of art work autonomy. Even when that autonomy is negated or temporarily abolished, the principle of autonomy in essence stays intact. Of course, it refers to the position of art in society, or so to say art's production, communication and reception. Internet and World Wide Web reinterpreted modern art on all three mentioned levels. On production level, computer software, desktop-impersonating most of avantgarde techniques and methods (L. Manovich), enabled quantitative and quality changes in art work. In terms of communication, distribution, and reception of art, Internet and World Wide Web enabled new ways of art presentation, as well as new spaces for its "reading". In other words, due to Internet it was possible to avoid mediating institutions of art world like museums and galleries, and the myth of the original was seriously undermined not just on production level (W. Benjamin), but also on reception level (where, by the way, with the concept of context, a sort of a space for reading of an artwork, B. Groys is trying to shift the defence of the idea of original). Namely, where is more appropriate to watch net.art works? In a specialized museum of new media or on a computer in your own apartment? Therefore, shifts in distribution and reception of contemporary art are the most important phenomena which came to be under the influence of the so-called new media.

4. What methodologies do you use in your work? What do you consider to be the field of your public activity?

Exhibition, intervention or a project decide which methods I'll use in the annual program or exhibition. However, in managing gallery I try to keep to certain *poetics* distinguished by, on the one side with the topography of a *gallery on the city's outskirts*, and on the other side with the Barthes idea that it is necessary to avoid places in which you are expected. And by that I am not only referring on the latent pressure of cultural market (innovation, dynamics etc), but also – how I understand this Barthian aphorism – to the critical discipline that keeps on questioning subject matter, as well as the methods of work in the endless process of artistic communication.

Through my work I would like to activate all three listed spaces, but it seems to me that I mostly work in the space of generating theory discourse and in the space of *off* and *on-line* networking.

5. From your experience, how much does a curator participate in the concept, production, presentation and promotion of an artwork? How do you set the boundaries in those relations?

Collaboration in the design of an art work mostly depends on the artist: on his/her attitude towards the idea of the authenticity of an art work, on their relationship towards the media through which they express themselves, as well as their relationship towards the exhibition, towards *displaying* as a specific medium of communication etc. Namely, the possibility to intervene into finished paintings is smaller than that of the possibility to participate *in situ* in a creation of some multimedia installation.

Nevertheless, the role of a curator in presentation and promotion of an art work is very important. Also, sometimes it seems to me that today, besides the curator and the artist, nobody is concerned with that.

6. To what extent and in which segment do you collaborate with other curators and/or experts from other fields?

I try to collaborate as much as possible. In the last two or three years especially with the young curators, through designing annual gallery program, as well as organizing separate exhibitions.

7. In what way is the mediation between a work of art and the audience enacted and conceptualized in your projects?

By printing publications (leaflets, invitations, catalogues), guiding tours, web site maintaining (www.galerijagalzenica.info) or blogging (www.kiberdzezva.blogspot.com), also by announcing events through several big or specialized media channels.

8. In your opinion, what is the difference between institutional and independent (curatorial) positions?

In the first case, curator is, above all, positioned in a context of museum institution, or to say, collection, a certain database. In the other case, curator is positioned in an inter-institutional context, because of which he is forced to create his own "collection", database, from scratch. In relation to an independent curator, a museum curator can be self-sufficient: he is a part of a self-sustaining system, which can relate to contemporary society, or to contemporary art in a mediating way, "from above". The role of museum curator is for that reason similar to that of Borges' librarian: he/she does not have to leave a museum to be good at his/her work. They can combine and remix the existing museum artefacts, or to say information from databases without limits all in the existing frame of the world of art. Since the independent curator does not usually have the access to museum databases, he/she is forced to work outside of them, outside of previously set context of a collection. In other words, independent curator is the one primarily working with the art work, cultural and social practices that are not yet in the possession of museum or any other (bank, corporation etc.) usually closed institutions. Internet and World Wide Web phenomena pointed out the importance of a collection of systematized data on culture and art. In that way museum curator spread out his managing jurisdiction from a depot and archive to database, while independent curator is in a way forced to run his own *collection*. Considering the growing role of certain collection of systematized data on art, it is possible to claim that the difference between institutional and non-institutional curator is in a degree of availability of databases they work with. Generally, museum databases are usually closed, while those created in a framework of non-governmental cultural initiatives are open. Degree of availability of a certain collection of systematized data on art and culture is thus one of the most important distinguishing factors between institutional and independent curator position. In that sense, it is important to emphasize that revolutionary of digital technology is today shifted from the area of production and distribution of art to the area of networking data on art, in other words on readiness of different cultural, governmental and non-governmental institutions to offer their databases to public for free use. Another difference lies in their social status. Institutional curator, especially in post-socialist countries, is more socially secure: work status is mostly set indefinitely, medical and pension fund security, little but regular rewards for their efforts (money bonuses on Christmas holidays and annual vacation). Independent curator is left to one's own cultural market. He, working on time limited projects goes from one institution to another; from museum to corporation, from bank to non-governmental organization. Insecure with the future of his work, or his social status, independent curator always counts on changes, on instability of his own position as well as the position of culture in which he operates.

9. How are your programs financed?

The Galženica Gallery is a non-profit cultural institution. It is being mostly financed through taxpayers' money of the city of Velika Gorica. Smaller amount of funding we receive from the Ministry of Culture, County of Zagreb and private companies (Filip Trade d.o.o., Lush Croatia etc.)

10. What is your view on the relation between cultural production and the private sector in Croatia – corporate competitions/awards (T-com, Erste ...), and private collections (Filip Trade, Essl collection ...)?

Good in principle: any flow of financial and symbolic capital in the world of contemporary art is welcomed. I have to, however, pay my depreciation that T-com donation/award is not being used in systematic production and promotion of art based on contemporary technologies.

11. Do you collaborate internationally on your projects, and why is that important to you?

Yes, since 2003 we collaborate internationally. There are a number of reasons for that, some of which include the nature of modern art itself. Modern art is, namely, from its very beginning a transnational project. Current social and economic globalization additionally emphasizes that ingredient of modern art. With positive effects of globalization it is necessary to give credit to the de-nationalization of art, since it cannot be discussed from the position of a single culture, one language or one institution.

12. In your opinion, what should the transfer of curatorial knowledge be like? Do you support "the institutionalization of curatorial models" through various types of curatorial programs?

Yes.

13. How visible are the curators, and in what way are their roles and responsibilities manifested within the actual cultural politics in Croatia?

I think the role of curator in actual cultural policies is not big, at least not since the first shift of parliamentary government in 2000. Up until then a few highly positioned art critics and curators, nevertheless took part in creating official (national) art taste. Today in Croatia, contemporary art is a marginal phenomenon and the role and responsibility of a curator are not big.

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KLAUDIO ŠTEFANČIĆ GRADUATED IN COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AND ART HISTORY AT THE FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES IN ZAGREB 1995. IN DESIGNING GROUP AND INDEPENDENT EXHIBITIONS AT THE GALŽENICA GALLERY HE PAYS GREAT ATTENTION TO NEW MEDIA ART, INTERNET AND TECHNOLOGY IN CORRELATION WITH NEW ART PRACTICES. AMONG OTHERS ARTISTS WHOM EXHIBITED IN THE GALLERY, A LARGER NUMBER OF CROATIAN ARTISTS OF A YOUNGER GENERATION STAND OUT LIKE: IVANA FRANKE, IVANA PEGNAN BAĆE, GORDANA BAKIĆ, MATIJA DEBELJUH, GORDAN ŠKOFIĆ, ANA ŠUFMAN, LALA RAŠČIĆ, MARIO MIŠKOVIĆ, IVAN FIOLIĆ, ZLATAN VEHABOVIĆ, MARKO TADIĆ ETC. HE COLLABORATES WITH YOUNG, NOT YET AFFIRMED CURATORS IN DESIGNING AND FINALIZING THE GALLERY'S PROGRAM IN OFFERING IT AS A PLATFORM FOR RESEARCH AND LEARNING.

HE WRITES AND PUBLISHES TEXTS IN THE AREA OF ART CRITICISM AND ART THEORY IN *ŽIVOT UMJETNOSTI, KONTURA, ZAREZ, UMJETNOST RIJEČI* AND ON THE II. PROGRAM OF CROATIAN RADIO RESPECTIVELY. HE ALSO WRITES ABOUT THE PHENOMENA OF POPULAR CULTURE IN THE AREA OF VISUAL ARTS, ABOUT SO-CALLED NEW MEDIA ART AND CULTURE AND ABOUT CONTEMPORARY ART PRACTICES DEDICATED TOWARDS CRITICAL HERITAGE OF MODERNIST ART PRINCIPLES. HE IS THE AUTHOR OF MONOGRAPHY *MONTAŽA ORGANIZMA* (FRAKTURA, 2005, ZAPREŠIĆ) ON THE ART WORK OF DANIEL KOVAČ.

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D.N.

MARINA VICULIN

INTERVIEWED BY IVANA MEŠTROV

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1. What term would you use to define your profession and what was the course of your professional path?

I have been a curator in Gallery Klovićevi Dvori from the very beginning of my professional path and that has undoubtedly defined me, whether I wanted it to or not. I work at a public institution *par excellence* which absolutely would not have been my first choice. A state institution has its own constitution that must be followed, and no one is too happy about it, or free. You can have some kind of creative freedom in smaller non-profit settings, but there exist other restrictions. Working in a large operation such as Gallery Klovićevi Dvori (GKD) has led me to finding ways of how to construct my own creative space, within a very "rigid" system, where it is possible to do some very autonomous projects. It was a long-term process, but it shows that even within "rigid" settings one can find ways to occasionally push the boundaries by having a lot of persistence and stubbornness

Also, my generation's path was defined by the war years. When we were supposed to do the most and our best, the war started that marked the following ten years. After the war had ended, Croatia has had the status of an unsafe zone for a long time and exhibitions demanding a high-security level were not doable.

2. What would you list as the decisive moments that contributed to the development of your thinking and practice, whether concerning certain concepts you have developed or references and collaborations?

Well, when you have worked in a single "house" this long, then you have two parallel lives completing each other. I was surly partly defined by the exhibition policy of Gallery Klovićevi Dvori within which, and in spite of which, I had to fight for my personal identity.

On the other hand, you have the personal space within which I had developed by following lines of special interest to me. Naturally, at first I was able to state them in text and in the way the text was written, and then in an exhibition to some degree. I fought for the mental and physical space in which I could show a complete interactive engagement present on all levels from the exhibition's concept to its design. When we started working at the Gallery (back then called Muzejski prostor), only exhibitions of dead authors were done. Only confirmed values from previous times were exhibited, such as museum collections or cathedral treasuries. Projects like the Kulmer exhibition were maybe decisive in terms of a certain shift because that was the first time a living artist entered the GKD's system. Following that first step we moved on. We worked in outside, marginal spaces – GKD's atrium and basement, gallery Kula Lotrščak and on the terrace of Gradec. A special undertaking was when photography made its first grand entrance into representative gallery spaces.

I also produced five *Zagreb Salons*. With the support of Kožarić who was the chairman of the Organizing Committee, we invited only one selector – Igor Zabel, at the *33rd Zagreb Salon*, the last one I did; and that was a really great collaboration. Ana Dević, a young curator back then, worked with me at that time. In fact, over the course of those five years it seemed impossible to me that a good exhibition is possible when it is based on the choice of a reviewing panel. Regardless of how interesting or high quality the members were as individuals, in a jury they would fell compelled to do certain accommodations that did not result in a consistent exhibition. Back then it provoked a storm of discontent because the concept of the salon was changed. But a good exhibition was done. It was an important step for me and a proof that certain things can be done differently. But, naturally, there are always consequences…

3. What methodologies do you use in your work? What do you consider to be the field of your public activity?

When talking with artists about the types of artists' and curators' positions and about what should an exhibition be, I often compared an exhibition to a theatre play. By that, first and foremost, I have in mind the particularity of working together where the final result goes beyond that what each one of us could think of on his own. It can be seen even better in an exhibition with more artists. A recent example of such an exhibition is *Otočka karta* (Island Map), which was the result of the time we spent together at Zlarin Island. Namely, there was a certain time we all spent together in a place outside of our everyday life. An important social interaction took place that way and it is very visible in the final product. Those kinds of exhibition projects are my favorite ones.

I do not find it interesting going in an exhibition project with an already clearly constructed concept. I am interested in what will happen when we start working together on an exhibition. Naturally, I have a direction and a framework before I start working, but I am really interested in that which will move the framework, which will possibly break it and create something completely unexpected. My profession as a curator is also constantly redefined that way. When I did the *Snapshot/Brzo okidanje* (Snapshot/Fast tripping) cycle in Kula Lotrščak my main desire was to do a "curatorial shot in the dark". To go for that which is completely new and presently arouses my attention.

Kula as such became a space where photography is explored, seeing that we started in that direction, although there were a lot of video artists as part of the *Snapshot* cycle, and even some performance projects. A crucial fact for Kula is that it allows that "other" curatorial approach, the one that treats renowned gallery spaces first of all as public and not representative spaces.

4. From your experience, how much does a curator participate in the concept, production, presentation and promotion of an artwork? How do you set the boundaries in those relations?

Although the curator's job is defined by social norm, in time one articulates its framework and what it should stand for; what are the boundaries of your mission, what is the form of your work, how far will you go and when will you hand over the reins to the artist, etc. But, naturally, those are never firm boundaries. The most interesting part of the work is the interaction going on between the artist and the curator, where the usual forms of work and the boundaries of responsibility and decision-making process become only auxiliary moments that change and articulate with every specific relation.

It is quite evident that a curator deals with the exhibition

concept, planning and design. That other part is the artist's job. It is a convention that is protecting us and making certain situations easier for us when relations become unclear. It is very exciting to let an artist into that which is usually considered the job of the curator, but I on the other hand never interfere with an artist's work. I always try to create an atmosphere for the artist in which I will bring the image that I have of his work and of how I would want the exhibition to look like closer to him.
But our main task as curators is to do the exhibition within the given framework. An important segment of the job is to follow the artist's desires, but also to know when an idea becomes unachievable. The transformation of the job into an exclusively creative segment is unjust and impoverishing since it is a very practical job existing in a certain space and time, financial framework and in a relation with the audience. The responsibilities are great.

5. To what extent and in which segment do you collaborate with other curators and/or experts from other fields?
Collaboration with other curators is equally complex and important as is the collaboration with artists.

6. In what way is the mediation between a work of art and the audience enacted and conceptualized in your projects?
Well we do it all for the audience. Sometimes it is small, sometimes large, but we never forget it. After all, the audience is the important factor here! If I do not feel that way, I would have probably never gotten into a project like the Zlarin *Island Map* where the experience of the audience and of the space itself comes first. The quietest form of mediation is writing. But one also forms the exhibition discourse in order to get through to somebody and one absolutely ponders on how to relate an idea. Mediation is important and has every form available. It depends on the context you are working in. Those strategies of convergence need a lot of work.
When I do designs for large exhibitions, I make sure that they have the right rhythm, that it varies, that no segment is too long, so one does not drown, and that the rhythm has contents evoking different kinds of viewing, engagement and sensation. I always think about how the visitor will fell. What is his rhythm like? Where he will grow tired, where he will need something new to entertain him, make him smile, wake him up? It is completely like theatrical scenery, and the most interesting one is the one which is unimposing, virtually invisible. You do all of this so precisely that particular work could be experienced the best possible way.

7. In your opinion, what is the difference between institutional and independent (curatorial) positions?
I work in the context of a state gallery, so my position is clear. But however, I always find ways of maintaining a certain dose of independence when approaching my projects. An institution as well is actually quite often only a good background and a starting position. How much it may limit you, it also gives you an official framework that often makes work easier. One should try to profit from the advantages given by an institution (i.e. solid logistics).
I necessarily speak about the work of an independent curator from a completely different position, so it is something I have not yet experienced and thus project all my desires and needs into it. On the other hand, it is a lot harder to find enough money for certain projects in mind, so some things are given up on while some (most definitely) are not conspicuous enough simply because there was no way of doing them better.

8. How are your programs financed?
We are financed by the City and the state, but the percentage of that funding grows smaller on a yearly basis and we look more and more for alternative forms of financing.

9. What is your view on the relation between cultural production and the private sector in Croatia – corporate competitions / awards (T-com, Erste...), and private collections (Filip Trade, Essl Collection...)?
Although they are sometimes badly and clumsily articulated it is very important they exist since they are currently one of the few contacts between contemporary art and the ˝real world˝. But in these parts those are only the beginnings and it is good that shifts are happening. Every region is specific. Considering that our market is still undeveloped it is very important that the matter is being dealt with.
I value Kličko's engagement with the Filip Trade Collection because it shows that there is individual interest from the private sector in contemporary art and that they are willing to back it financially.

10. You often collaborate internationally on your projects - why is that important to you?
Well of course. I mean, we are not closed in our little house, the whole world is our playground. As the working area gets wider and larger, the better we are at our work. After all, we are in the business of mediation, contact and exchange in the widest sense of the term.

11. In your opinion, what should the transfer of curatorial knowledge be like? Do you support "the institutionalization of curatorial models" through various types of curatorial programs?
We learned from our own mistakes. It certainly is not the most fortunate way of acquiring knowledge. One way of acquiring knowledge and gaining insight into specific problems is by learning from people who are active in the curatorial business. But unfortunately, sometimes the battle for positions occurs precisely in that direct transfer of acquired knowledge within a single working community and relationships become more complex due to the presence of possible competition.
I think that classic curatorial programs are important because they offer the possibility of acquiring a series of different experiences. They also provide learning in conditions of ideal practice and in a temporary context. Mot curatorial programs go on outside Croatia, so that is an additional opportunity to get knowledge from some other context. If our region was to have more people that have gone through such programs, the standard of the entire profession would rise. I think it is better that such programs take place outside the institutional educational system.

12. How visible are the curators, and in what way are their roles and responsibilities manifested within the actual cultural politics in Croatia?
The curatorial profession presupposes social responsibility, affirmation of various kinds of thinking and of social values. Every good work of art is a socially valuable work because it goes into the symbolic-imaginative potentials of the community. Art is not necessarily a place where a political standpoint is stated, but it is always implicitly there. The point is not to make a shift, but that shifts are possible!

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MARINA VICULIN IS AN ART HISTORIAN AND CURATOR, BORN IN ZAGREB (1957), WHERE SHE LIVES AND WORKS. SINCE THE NINETIES HERE ACTIVITIES ARE RELATED TO GALLERY KLOVIĆEVI DVORI IN ZAGREB. SHE CURATED A SERIES OF EXHIBITIONS, RANGING FROM MONOGRAPHIC EXHIBITIONS OF CROATIAN PHOTOGRAPHERS LIKE IVAN POSAVEC, MIJO VESOVIĆ, NENAD GATTIN, JOSIP KLARICA TO INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITIONS LIKE DORA MAAR AND MARC CHAGALL. SHE GAVE HER OWN VIEW OF THE CURRENT SITUATION IN

CONTEMPORARY ART WITH THE EXHIBITIONS *OTOČKA KARTA (ISLAND MAP)* AND *OLTARI AVANGARDE* (*ALTARS OF THE AVANT-GARDE*) IN GKD IN 2008. HER CURATORIAL ACTIVITY RELATED TO CURRENT ARTISTIC TRENDS AND THE PHOTOGRAPHIC MEDIUM IS MOST VISIBLE IN THE *SNAPSHOT/ BRZO OKIDANJE* CYCLE (GALLERY KULA LOTRŠČAK, SINCE 2004 AND CONTINUING).
SHE STARTED THE PUNTA ARTA ASSOCIATION IN 2006 WITH ARTIST VEDRAN PERKOV. A PROJECT TAKING PLACE ON THE ISLAND OF ZLARIN STRIVES TO QUESTION THE RECEPTION OF CONTEMPORARY ART IN TERMS OF AN ISLAND ENVIRONMENT BY USING ARTISTIC RESIDENCES AND EXHIBITIONS.
SHE IS CURRENTLY PREPARING THE EXHIBITION PROGRAM FOR THE 2009/2010 SEASON IN WALDINGER GALLERY IN OSIJEK.

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D.P.

JANKA VUKMIR

INTERVIEWED BY MIHAELA RICHTER

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1. What term would you use to define your profession and what was the course of your professional path?

I like being an art historian of contemporary art, and I am interested in the social aspects of art today, so that can then include curatorial practices as well. I am a curator only then when I have a legitimate reason to do an exhibition, when art indirectly attains a social role.

Independence may well be the only continuity guiding me through my professional path up to this point. It always enables one to initiate something new or to react to the existing with full personal integrity.

2. What would you list as the decisive moments that contributed to the development of your thinking and practice, whether concerning certain concepts you have developed or references and collaborations?

The fact that I kept myself away from dogmatic world views and that I remained constantly alert, I believe, take the point. Society, everyday life and art are an inexhaustible source.

As far as collaborations go, it was always my intention to create situations in which all the parties included can enjoy an equal amount of benefit, and the greater the inclusiveness, the greater the quality and pleasure. Culture is intended for the entire society, and it is good when we can share our collaborations with the society around us. The trouble is that contemporary Croatian society does not soak in much of that which is good. It is a shame that the nineties and the first decade of the current century brought with them the market as the only criteria for growth, work and success, while the thinking process and the forming of the same became an uneconomical excess of effort and an unwanted excess of meaning in the eyes of society. That certainly does not mean that one should give up.

3. What methodologies do you use in your work? What do you consider to be the field of your public activity?

Constant communication and transfer of knowledge in every segment of work, the mediation of artworks and their meanings to the public.

4. From your experience, how much does a curator participate in the concept, production, presentation and promotion of an artwork? How do you set the boundaries in those relations?

It should be immediately added that artists, too, set the boundaries in those relations, and that the final result is most often the result of an agreement.

In an age of liberal capitalism and the fierce criticism which follows it, the present status of the artist and the curator, as the status of culture in general, is one which has every option available, and the capital is precisely the one that determines which roles are to be given. It is not the same to do an exhibition in a non-profit context, a non-governmental, public or academic institution, in a private gallery or in a space run by artists. The conditions of exhibition production often depend on it too, and the conditions of the production of a work often get confused with it.

I myself have worked in a lot of those situations, in Croatia and internationally. Each of those territories also determines the role of the curator, which the curators themselves describe as the work of a selector, administrator, bureaucrat, producer, documentarist, tourist, cultural nomad, “cartographer”, catalyst, mediator, cultural impresario… and the boundaries between these roles are never fixed or firm.

The traditional perception of the curator’s job is considered to be individual. A curator should enable the contextualization of ideas and artist’s works into a system which is often criticized and commented on by precisely those ideas and works.

By constantly adapting the production of their works to the dominating situation in society, artists are less and less the producers of their own work. That way the production of a work stops being an individual, and becomes a collective and often public act, thus becoming not only a personal, but a collective means of resistance, as well.

Such a system of activity drags the curator into the collective creation of a work, and it is considered that the work still does not lose its autonomy.

In this case collectivism still often does not eliminate the boundary between the artist and the curator. Most frequently the disputes between artists and curators mostly come down to social status, economic inequality (in individual cases it can benefit one of the parties involved), and similar questions regarding social and economic equality.

I personally do not get involved with the conception of a work, since I consider the territory of the work’s concept to be the artist’s area, and the territory of the exhibition’s idea the area of the curator, especially when it comes to group, theme, or problem exhibitions. I have a similar opinion when it comes to individual exhibitions, but the collaboration between a single artist and a single curator always depends on personal world views, mutual relations, attitudes and energy. In each of these cases I do not have any problems with segments which eventually turn out be either a bad choice or a bad concept, since the area of utopia is immanent in art, artists, curators and people in general.

5. To what extent and in which segment do you collaborate with other curators and/or experts from other fields?

As much as it takes in order to achieve working conditions that will be as optimal as possible, in any segment of a project’s conception, organization or realization.

Whether it is collaborating with my colleagues, wherever they might be located, or collaborating with agronomists, the police, language advisers, technical and technological experts, seamen and divers, administration, musicians, merchants, statisticians… I do not see any problems, difficulties or reasons that would stop me from actualizing any form of collaboration.

6. In what way is the mediation between a work of art and the audience enacted and conceptualized in your projects?

When it comes to the Institute for Contemporary Art, for whom I do most of my projects, it is a very specific question, since we are one of the few organizations that do not have their own public space. Our office is a lecture hall, classroom, library, archive, projection hall, meeting place, bedroom…

Without one’s own public space it is difficult to systematically

build a relationship with the audience or to create your own audience. However, some good features do exist, such as the collaboration with the audiences of the institutions and organizations whose spaces we use for the realization of our projects all over Croatia.
A pressing problem is the level and the amount of media presence which the culture in Croatia is getting, where the announcements for specific projects that we send to the media are mostly copied (at best), shortened, cut or edited, thus often creating misinformation and misunderstanding.
The situation in Croatia, which is the result of segmented financing – "everyone gets a little bit, but no one gets enough", makes it impossible for projects to be quality equipped with accompanying programs that would develop a more serious dialogue about the theme, project, artist or whatever is the basic meaning of the project being communicated.
Better mutual collaboration between various organizations would help, but that is often a utopian plan.

7. In your opinion, what is the difference between institutional and independent (curatorial) positions?

In practical work an independent curator has more room to make his choices, and accordingly more room in which he can act freely, but when talking about everyday work in local circumstances, he has significantly poorer conditions. It is not accustomed for our practice to work as a "guest curator", to use a term that does not even exist in our parts in everyday work. However, it is possible that experts, that are dealing with certain areas or issues and are working in a certain institution, mostly academic or some other, function as curators of specific exhibitions in some gallery or museum.
The fact that not a single price list or any other criteria of work compensation exists, places the job of the independent curator in an undefined and unprotected status. Any kind of society, association or organization that deals with the issues and problems concerning the work of curators also remains to be desired. In our practice the designation independent/freelance curator usually means an unemployed curator. A curator that acquires a "freelance" status with the HZSU (Croatian Freelance Artists Association), is actually partially financed by the state, and an average "freelance" pension awaits him, as is the case with all artists that have the phantom "freelance" status.

8. How are your programs financed?

Through public resources, private resources, international funds, sponsorships, favors, our own resources, volunteer work, donations in kind, partnership projects… The ratio of what we get and what we invest is about the same.

9. What is your view on the relation between cultural production and the private sector in Croatia – corporate competitions / awards (T-com, Erste…), and private collections (Filip Trade, Essl Collection…)?

The corporate sector has made tremendous progress in the past ten years considering its presence within culture, but the quality of that presence is still found wanting. The competitions are mostly the same, very badly written, unfocused, and one cannot see the difference, whether they are sponsorships or donations.
Most of the corporate contributions to culture are directed towards commercial projects. An actual mode of financing cultural work, or a cultural process, does not exist, and finances remain an exclusive of cultural products, whose quantity is limited.
Whether we are dealing with donations or sponsorships, the amount of advertisement demanded by the corporate sector in return is the same. If a certain media is reporting on a sponsored cultural event, it is unacceptable that a company logo must be published alongside the article. Considering the amount of money invested, how would the sports section look like if we were to follow the same principle?
The decision making process at corporate competitions is nontransparent, and all the rumors of it being personal are mostly true. This fact had already been criticized on several occasions.
When it comes to association financing, as well as the whole concept of associations' activity in Croatia, one does not differ between professional orientations of various associations. The financed projects can be classified either as the general work of a civil society or as humanitarian and social actions. In this kind of situation culture comes out poorly, since excellence is primarily immanent in culture, and not humaneness.
It is a large area that can be qualitatively developed.
I congratulate private collectors on their decision to devote themselves to contemporary production, especially the Filip Trade Collection on the way they take care of and handle their collection, and on the decision to continually "publish" it.

10. Do you collaborate internationally on your projects, and why is that important to you?

We often collaborate internationally, more often than locally. It is just natural, seeing that we are all a part of the international situation. Strategically, without international collaboration many of the projects could not be financed or realized considering the way resources are distributed in Croatia.

11. In your opinion, what should the transfer of curatorial knowledge be like? Do you support "the institutionalization of curatorial models" through various types of curatorial programs?

Every form of knowledge transfer is most welcome. If by "the institutionalization of curatorial models" you mean the forming of an organized knowledge transfer, then I think it is a necessary approach. If you think that a certain type of a curatorial model should be institutionalized, then I think it leads to dogmatic preaching of your own values. In any case, more open conversations about all the segments of the curator's job are necessary. In fact, I think that the job of the curator, as any other job that takes part in the formation and creation of cultural space, needs greater expert and public visibility.

12. How visible are the curators, and in what way are their roles and responsibilities manifested within the actual cultural politics in Croatia?

Croatia does not have cultural politics, singular, and let alone plural, as your question implies.
The everyday visibility of curators is extremely limited in the public, and their responsibility is nonexistent. The situation in culture, as well as in society, is even worse, so ethics, morals, and responsibility too, do not have either the role or the meaning they ought to have.
Only closer expert circles pay some attention to the curator's responsibility, but that attention stays recorded in "corridor" discussions or in discussions between various fractions and never reaches the public, because the means by which it could reach the public do not exist.
I do not remember when was the last time I heard any conversation about what a specific exhibition should mean to our audience, when viewed as the public in the widest sense of the word, and why should it mean something at all, and did it justify our expectations, especially when it comes to international exhibitions. Likewise there is no conversation about the justifiability of certain organization's programs or of the existence of those organizations in general, which reflects

directly on the utterly nonexistent notion of the lack of various organizations on our cultural/art scene.

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JANKA VUKMIR IS AN ART HISTORIAN. SHE GRADUATED IN ART HISTORY AND ETHNOLOGY AT THE FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES IN ZAGREB, WHERE SHE LIVES AND WORKS. SHE IS THE DIRECTOR AND CO-FOUNDER OF THE INSTITUTE FOR CONTEMPORARY ARTS THAT CAME OUT OF THE SOROS CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ARTS, WHERE SHE WAS THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR AND DIRECTOR FROM 1996.
SHE IS ACTIVE IN CROATIA AND ABROAD AS AN ART CRITIC, CURATOR, LECTURER AND A MOVIE AND VIDEO PROGRAM SELECTOR. A SELECTION OF EXHIBITIONS UNDER HER ORGANIZATION: *LANDUNG IN WIEN* (VIENNA, 1992), *JAVNO TIJELO* (ZAGREB, 1997), *GRUPA ŠESTORICE AUTORA* (ZAGREB, 1998), *FREEDOM & VIOLENCE* (WARSAW, 2001), *PERIPHERIES* (ZAGREB – QUEBEC, 2002), *DOMAĆICA* (ZAGREB, 2002), *ZALJUBLJENI U KRETANJE* (2003), *POREČKI ANALE*, SEXY (POREČ, 2004), *NIKA RADIĆ, SCREAM* (TRST, 2005), *SVEN STILINOVIĆ, FOTOKOLAŽI* (2006–2007), *DONUMENTA, CROATIA* (REGENSBURG, 2008).
SHE HAS BEEN PUBLISHING TEXTS IN ELECTRONIC AND PRINTED MEDIA SINCE 1984 IN CROATIA AND ABROAD. SINCE THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2001/2002 SHE IS THE LEADING AND RESPONSIBLE EDITOR OF *RADIONICA*, A PERIODICAL FOR CONTEMPORARY ART AND CULTURE.
IN THE SAME YEAR SHE STARTED WORKING MORE INTENSIVELY ON STRATEGIC PLANNING IN CULTURE. IN 2004 AND 2005, TOGETHER WITH SANJIN DRAGOJEVIĆ, PHD, TEODOR CELAKOSKI AND MAJA JURIĆ SHE LED AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM WORKSHOP *ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND STRATEGIC PLANNING* FOR CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS IN ZAGREB, AND IN 2008–2009 SHE WAS A MEMBER OF THE WORK GROUP THAT PREPARED THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CITY OF ZAGREB. IN 2010 SHE IS PREPARING A PUBLICATION ABOUT THE SPONSORING OF CULTURE IN CROATIA.
SHE IS THE FOUNDER OF THE RADOSLAV PUTAR AWARD, THE ANNUAL AWARD FOR YOUNG VISUAL ARTISTS IN CROATIA, WHICH WAS FOUNDED IN 2002.

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D.P.

WHAT, HOW AND FOR WHOM? / WHW

INTERVIEWED BY JELENA GRAOVAC AND TANJA ŠPOLJAR

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1. What term would you use to define your profession and what was the course of your professional path?

We definitely consider ourselves as curators, in the widest understanding of the term curator as a service activity cultural worker, facilitator, mediator, administrator, explorer, translator, initiator of social and artistic changes, entertainer, agent, advocator, diplomat, but before all else, before all those stated functions, and many others, a curator is a service utility for art, a position that stimulates and enables artistic practice, regardless of the fact that it also necessarily filtrates and directs it in the process. Although the authoritarian side of the curatorial job is by no means negligible, it seems to us that the most important part of our job is to enable negotiation of authoritarian pressures within the art system, of which the curator is a notable protagonist. What matters to us in the process is not the concern for abstract artistic autonomy, but a curatorial practice that encourages and creates possibilities for complex forms of dialogues and for an exchange of artistic practice and theory, the borders of which are being lost at an ever increasing pace, a practice that directs their entanglement and fusion which goes beyond the level of illustration or beyond that which is merely contextually set. We see the job of the curator as the production of knowledge through various practices that does not limit itself to analysis and interpretation and mechanisms of exhibition design, but deals with the intentional and unintentional effects and ideologies involved in the process, relational and participating properties of created knowledge, its limitations and possibilities having in mind various sources of knowledge, which implies curatorial practice as the actualization of politics, not only by a possible reflection of political questions, but by one's own performativity and by activity in actual circumstances.

As far as our professional path is concerned, as a curatorial collective WHW occurred spontaneously, with our first mutual project *What, How and for Whom, on the occasion of the 152nd anniversary of the Communist Manifesto*, that was realized in the House of Croatian Association of Artists in 2000, and whose title we later on took for the collective's name. Questions *what, how and for whom* are the three basic questions of every economic organization: *what*, a problem of how much of every possible goods and service will be produced having limited resources and society's inputs, *how* is the choice of a specific technology with which every goods, that is already selected by the solving of the who question, will be produced, and the question *for whom* relates to the distribution of nondurable goods among members of that society. Those questions also determine the problematic of planning, conception and realization of exhibition projects, as well as the production and distribution of artworks, or artist's position in the labor market. Those questions, asked for the first time in relation to the exhibition of the Communist Manifesto, became the motto of our work and we took them for our collective's name.

2. What would you list as the decisive moments that contributed to the development of your thinking and practice, whether concerning certain concepts you have developed or references and collaborations?

The fundamental experience of our curatorial practice is the experience of the social context of the late nineties when we began our work. By working in cultural surroundings burdened with the conflation of nationalism and transition, and under the burden of the so-called 'transitology', a quasi-scientific discourse imposed by the West as the framework that should explain the situation in the European East after the collapse of socialism, our dissatisfaction with the inherent belief that western neo-liberal capitalism is the only solution for post-socialist societies and that the construction of a new national identity is the only defense from globalization found its expression in our curatorial practice in various ways. Under those circumstances it was clear to us from the beginning that collective activity is the only efficient way of a critical cultural engagement that is trying to open up a platform for public discussion about repressed social questions and traumas, that encourages dialogue with institutions burdened by bureaucratic limitations and a lack of imagination from adequate cultural politics, and that questions the options of national and international cultural interventions and presence. Simply put, from the beginning we were conscious of the fact that collaboration enables us to realize projects that neither of us could do individually, and that the insistence on organizational horizontality and non-hierarchy showed itself as an important strategy which supports a constant process of internal negotiations and the deconstruction of prescribed roles and enables long-term collective work.

Our first project dedicated to the Communist Manifesto came from the need to question "communist" past, and as a result of dominant cultural politics that, with its insufficient intellectual contextualization, made it impossible to seriously reflect on the

immediate past and the "transitional" moment. The incentive for the exhibition came from Arkzin, which published a reprint of the Manifesto with Žižek's introduction in 1998 for its 150th anniversary, which did not provoke any kind of public reaction and, organizationally speaking, we also took over the financing models and the know-how of the civil scene. Seeing that the project was planned with extremely limited production resources, the principle of optimization became a leitmotif of the exhibition concept and method. In other words, the fundamental questions "what" and "how" converged more and more and finally overlapped. By confronting the recent production of artists that appeared on the local scene in the late eighties and during the nineties with artists whose practice belongs to the tradition of socially engaged art of the late sixties, we intended to intervene into the contemporary art scene by emphasizing continuity and not interruption. On the other hand, we tried to establish an international context for local artistic production, which really was not there in the nineties.

Our next project *Broadcasting Project, dedicated to Nikola Tesla* was focused on communication and an attempt to expand the circle of audience. In a way that project tried to continue the discussion started with the project *What, How and for Whom, on the occasion of the 152nd anniversary of the Communist Manifesto* about the relation of art and economy by exploring the economic/political terms that prevent the total realization of the democratic potentials of new technologies. Naturally, Nikola Tesla was important to us during that process, both as the then nationally unfit hero of the socialist darkness and as a scientist whose visions changed the world.

It is clear to us today that already the mere possibility of realizing Broadcasting Project, dedicated to Nikola Tesla was an early symptom of normalization. In 2006, a year declared the "Year of Tesla" anent the 150th anniversary of his birth, we did an exhibition *Normalization: dedicated to Nikola Tesla* which presented over forty proposals by visual artists, journalists, architects, designers, students, writers, etc. that came on an open call for an anti-monument to Nikola Tesla, as well as archive material relating to the reception of Nikola Tesla and its broader socio-political background over the last four decades. That exhibition tried to connect and explore complex relations between several burning social issues – the collective relation to the past and to the construction of history, economic transition and the question of national identity and nationalisms, postwar normalization and Croatia's pro-EU orientation, the status of ethnic minorities (Serbian above all) in contemporary Croatian society – and the role of the monument as a point around which political rituals converge.

"Normalization" is a theme we have dealt with in the likewise named project realized from 2004 to 2006. With that project, which was initiated in collaboration with Rooseum Center for Contemporary Art (Malmö, Sweden) and Contemporary Art Center Platform Granati (Istanbul, Turkey), we tried to point out the need to deconstruct the false universalism characteristic of normalization processes trying to reach an imaginary ideal of liberal democracy and free market. When dealing with Nikola Tesla in 2006, in a situation where the symptomatic nature of the perceptional shift of Nikola Tesla in public discourse was glaring, the recurrence of motifs of our earlier projects insisted on them being unresolved and urgent: Nikola Tesla, a cause for one project, now appears as a symbol of political processes and of the problem/atic of the identity question, and the recurrence of the second project's theme – 'normalization', is not exclusively an ideological indicator of "the state of affairs", but a kind of discussion starter.

The fact that we are not trying to close down spaces with our exhibitions but to open them up is visible through all our projects where one continues on to the next and one completes the other, like the Collective Creativity exhibition we did in 2005 in Kunsthalle Fridericianum, which gave us considerable international visibility. It was created as the result of a multiyear program Collective Action that was realized primarily in Gallery Nova in various formats – group and individual exhibitions, publications, lectures, round-tables, etc. The exhibition presented some forty artists and art groups of historical and contemporary positions, ranging from mainstream groups such as Art & Language, General Idea, or Gilbert & George, to Collective Action, a seventies' Moscow based group, Gorgona, OHO, Tucumán Arde collective, Irwin, the Group of Six Artists, and to the youngest ones such as Etc…, GAC and Taller Popular de Serigrafia from Buenos Aires, Bijari or Contra-File from Sao Paolo, Radek from Moscow, Temporary Services from Chicago or chto delat? from Sankt Petersburg. At the basis of the exhibition was the question of how to show that complex trans-generational and trans-cultural dynamics of the artistic collectivity in a fundamentally inadequate medium of the museum exhibition, and we tried to answer that with a strategic affirmation of a collectively adopted and developed principle of self-representation.

Working on the biennale, which is a highly representative manifestation that is inevitably in the service of promoting city image, the question of unnatural coupling with an institution that is the object of most fierce criticism is brought to its extreme. We often use dedications in our exhibitions, but like the Communist Manifesto was not the theme of the exhibition but a trigger to start off a public discussion on the questions about recent history, the biennale titled *What Keeps Mankind Alive?*, a song title from Bertolt Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera* from 1928, does not take Brecht's legacy directly as the theme. Brecht's claim from *The Threepenny Opera* that "a criminal is a bourgeois and a bourgeois is a criminal" seemed to us as equally provocative back then when it was written as it is now, as are the striking resemblances between the influence of the expedited development of liberal economy on the meltdown of the social consensus existing up to that point in 1928, a year before the economic crash, and the context of the today's global crisis. In that sense the question 'what does a man live on?' links on to the basic questions of every economic organization, 'what, how and for whom', that permanently form our curatorial work.

3. What methodologies do you use in your work? What do you consider to be the field of your public activity?

We primarily do exhibitions, and we emphasize this because some of the most interesting curatorial practices nowadays work towards opening new areas of relation between the public space and visual culture and arts, towards erosion of exhibition as a dominant medium and "white cube" as an archetypal location of modern art. We are interested in real ideological coordinates in which "white cube" reveals itself as a timeless, neutral frame in which "autonomous artistic objects", "invisible" external signifiers that mark institutional and ideological character of that kind of representation concept are exhibited. For us, the answer to question why contemporary art production still maintains the classic exhibition format does not lie in the dependence upon mechanisms of representation of the art system, but in the fact that we see this exhibition space as a public space, as a temporary modulation of social frame and possibilities of its creative change. All of our projects are aimed towards opening a space for a public discussion about

issues that are being ignored, swept under the rug or openly suppressed. Our activity is defined by social display of the local milieu, which we see as a "symptom" seen at other places as well, in different formulations and different accents, and in that sense we do not make a difference between projects we realize in Nova Gallery and the ones we do somewhere else.

4. From your experience, how much does a curator participate in the concept, production, presentation and promotion of an artwork? How do you set the boundaries in those relations?

Contemporary art paradigm calls into question the notion of visual artwork that we can critically and aesthetically value according to external features, whereas the philosophical and interpretative aspects of art and the systems producing its meaning and values are the reason of tension between artists and curators. A curator filtrates and mediates the initial artistic scenarios and therefore significantly determines the process of their future reception. From these initial positions the fact that the context of exhibition influences the artwork is a subject to constant negotiation, not on the artist-curator level only, but in the artwork itself, in which the immanent hierarchy can be formulated anew in the realization of common goals. Exhibition reduces the traditional autonomy of the artwork by placing it in the public space of the exhibition, but in that way it functions as resonator of various artistic, social and political contexts contained within specific works, creating the forms of subjectivized polyphony. In these basic negotiational positions the boundaries are every time reshaped based on mutual trust.

5. To what extent and in which segment do you collaborate with other curators and/or experts from other fields?

Collaborations are the basis of our activity, from the ones within the long-term interdisciplinary cooperational platform Zagreb Cultural Capital of Europe 3000, to strategic networking with activist or cultural initiatives on an international level, using tactics with institutions or informal and formal exchanges with other curators. The same way we have been collaborating with Dejan Kršić from the beginning, whose design is of key importance for our mediation strategies, i.e. interaction among "authors as producers", artwork, mediators and audience constituted exactly through the processes of interaction.

Contemporary curator does not have much in common with the original meaning by which that profession marks the activity of the person guarding the museum collection, and in its basic meaning contemporary curator combines complementary professional profiles of an art critic, art historian, administrator, organizer, etc. Nowadays curator's work requires an interdisciplinary activity and collaboration with other disciplines, as well as with activist and political platforms. Exhibitions are created in the process of interdisciplinary interaction. That process is not based on previously gathered knowledge limited by traditions of the existing disciplines (sociology, economy, philosophy, urbanism, etc), but art becomes the catalyst of encounter of various areas, which dissolves dogmatic knowledge and narrow limits of professionalism and leads to the creative cognitive process based on micropolitics of an interdisciplinary dialogue. Art is one of the platforms on which is possible to articulate knowledge outside the boundaries of hegemonic politics and specialized knowledge that is often authoritatively esoteric for non-specialists in many contexts.

6. In what way is the mediation between a work of art and the audience enacted and conceptualized in your projects? How did you realize that in the concept of the 11th Istanbul Biennial?

The most challenging creative imperative for today's curators is not to put up imaginative and intelligent exhibitions but to overcome cultural obstacles created by the functioning of the system within which, almost obsessively anti-hegemonic and anti-institutionalized art, returns under the wing of "art world" with the structure of its exhibitions. In that way we think that, today, mediation does not have to be limited to the accompanying lectures and projections programs, but it has to intervene into revealing its own mechanisms and mediate in the direction of activating the difference between what society is and what it should be. In other words, it is not only about mediation as a part of tradition in art practice known as "institutional critique", which is defined by works that criticize systems that perpetuate fine arts as their specialization, but it is also about setting ethical goals that surpass art problems in a narrower sense, without which such critique too easily becomes only one more trend of self-sufficient feeling of informed insider. That attitude was crucial for mediation of the Istanbul Biennial, which we have seen as the continuation of methodologies of our previous projects, although it was clear that manifestation of such size brings them into question. But we tried to turn the problem of its visibility and representativeness to our own benefit, setting up an exhibition with clear political message at the heart of the system that finds biennials important, and is therefore unprepared to ignore them completely, regardless of their content. Of course, that benevolence of the system is the reason for the current depolitization of every image, thought or act in the area, because we have, through mediation, imposed the concept and political content of the exhibition as an almost propaganda frame of how to read the exhibition, on the other side presenting the works in an almost classic museum way that supports their autonomy. That tension reflects the context of the exhibition.

As a part of the exhibition we have also showed some statistical data concerning the budget and organization of the biennial, usually kept invisible, and which are very significant for the situation cultural workers work within nowadays, even at such a "prestige" manifestation such as biennial. That is in a way a "Brechtian" gesture which reveals our own position and the fact that we are not neutral and detached from the problems exhibition is dealing with.

We have collaborated with the director Oliver Frljić at the press conference at which we announced the concept of the biennial, as well as at the Biennial opening ceremony, where the performative character of those common procedures was brought to the extremes and used to express "the truth of our situation", as Brecht would put it, to mock the imposed "glamour" and the stereotype of curator's position of power, calling into question the relation of the curator, artist and the public, revealing the hierarchical and institutional relations that especially mark representative manifestations such as the biennials, but are immanent to the presentational techniques of contemporary art.

7. In your opinion, what is the difference between institutional and independent (curatorial) positions?

Dominant model of culture in Croatia has institutions, market and concepts based on the models of the West, but many

elements of modernist paradigm that have been transcended long ago in the West, still basically form the system of art institutions. Although this understanding is changing today, its main engine has not changed the understanding of the nature and role of the arts, it was rather the reaction to the pressures of inscribing to neo-liberal models in which "creative industry" is in great demand, and art is the lucrative product of the urban economy and a token for the placement of "regional specificities". Critique of such understanding of culture and affirmation of its concrete creating impulses in the society is the basic initiator of autonomous cultural initiatives, whose activity is based on collaborative models, which opposes the notion of art determined exclusively by the regime of public visibility and redefines institutions and their roles of presenting the production and reproduction of presentability.

8. How are your programs financed?

Programs are financed from the projects we apply for financial support on the annual contest of the Ministry of Culture and City Office for Culture, Education and Sports. Those resources vary from year to year and are usually not enough for the complete realization of the project. We are also currently working on the realization of the project financed by the EU, and in collaboration with partners from Budapest, Lodz and Novi Sad. Institutional support comes from the National Foundation for Civil Society Development, and program resources also from foundations like European Cultural Foundation, at times from Kulturstiftung des Bundes Program, Erste Bank and so on. Focuses of those foundations change according to geo-political changes, and our programs necessarily adapt to it. Program financing of that kind make long-term planning and stability difficult. When we work abroad, partner institution that invited us secures the majority of resources needed for the realization of the program.

9. What is your view on the relation between cultural production and the private sector in Croatia – corporate competitions / awards (T-com, Erste...), and private collections (Filip Trade, Essl Collection...)?

Financing of culture is an important contribution of the private sector, and in future we expect an increase in this private financing because that is the trend we follow everywhere in the world, but it should not replace public culture financing programs. Public financing of culture ensures less pressure in prescribing the conditions that canalize the development in determining what is acceptable and what remains undefined. Before everything else, today it seems like we need interventions that would work on creating self-sustainability ad long-term stability of independent cultural initiatives and better production and work conditions of the artists.

10. Do you collaborate internationally on your projects, and why is that important to you?

International collaborations are the basis of our work. We think that every kind of local activity gains a conceptual and social convenience only when intertwined with other levels and scales of interpretation, not only "global" ones but regional, urban and even "block" ones in the sense in which Brian Holmes suggests the metaphor of "continents tectonic" for a description of big political and economical changes after 1989 and their impact on contemporary cultural production in geo-political conditions of emergence of new "block" groupations. In that sense the exhibitions we set up deal with issues not only concerning the local environment, although we regularly start from their specific articulation, or the lack of the same, in the local context.

11. In your opinion, what should the transfer of curatorial knowledge be like? Do you support "the institutionalization of curatorial models" through various types of curatorial programs?

Institutionalization of curatorial models is necessary in the conditions of ever growing internationalization of art market understood as a set of relations revolved around power, packaging, geopolitics and career strategies. On one hand it results in that many programs adapt to that pressure passing on the set of competencies and narrow professionalization that does not go deeper into the wide platform of normative procedures, first of all ideological ones, but there are also programs that incite and qualify for critical questioning of normativity of the art world and prominent role curators have in the processes. Self-organization, non-hierarchical relations and control over the conditions of work and distribution of products, in tactical negotiation with institutions, are a necessary counterbalance to institutionalization of creation and transfer of curatorial knowledge.

12. How visible are the curators, and in what way are their roles and responsibilities manifested within the actual cultural politics in Croatia?

Although politics in its ideal form has almost completely disappeared today, its possibility remains alive in the public space of culture and education. Since those areas are the avant-garde of "immaterial work", it still enables critical disclosure of antagonisms that are usually suppressed or neutralized by normative language of power. For us, to set up exhibitions means to keep the public space in society, space that can become a foundation for other principles of social formation, outside the absolute domination of private property. In so doing in local conditions of Croatian cultural politics it is not difficult to be self-critical according to your own possibilities and authenticity of your own power.

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WHAT, HOW AND FOR WHOM / WHW IS A CURATORIAL COLLECTIVE FOUNDED IN ZAGREB IN 1999, WHOSE MEMBERS ARE IVET ĆURLIN, ANA DEVIĆ, NATAŠA ILIĆ AND SABINA SABOLOVIĆ, AS WELL AS THE DESIGNER AND PUBLICIST DEJAN KRŠIĆ. WHW ORGANIZES EXHIBITION, PRODUCTION, DISCURSIVE AND PUBLISHING PROJECTS, AND SINCE 2003 IT HAS BEEN MANAGING NOVA GALLERY IN ZAGREB. WHW CURATORIAL COLLECTIVE WAS THE CURATOR OF THE 11TH ISTANBUL BIENNIAL IN ISTANBUL TITLED *WHAT KEEPS MANKIND ALIVE*? (12TH SEPTEMBER UNTIL 8TH NOVEMBER 2009).

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