

---

# ONAMERNEM PREPREČEVANJU ČUSTVENIH ODZIVOV

## Esej o slovenski umetnosti in evropski civilizaciji na splošno

---

Gretchen Bakke

---

189

### IZVLEČEK

Besedilo s pomočjo obravnave dveh različnih primerov – projekta Žige Kariža *Terror = Dekor*, ki je zasedal slovenski paviljon na Beneškem bienalu 2003, in Laibachovega koncerta vrnitve v Trbovljah 24. julija istega leta – raziskuje postopke provokacije in čustvenosti v povezavi s sistematično izključitvijo izražanja izzvanih čustev. Poseben poudarek je na tehnikah, ki jih slovenski umetniki uporabljajo za oviranje odkritega izražanje čustev, v povezavi s tem, kako se Slovenci na splošno spoprijemajo s čustvenostjo in tudi s širšimi, zlasti zahodnoevropskimi prizadevanji za civilizirano odzivanje.

**Ključne besede:** čustva, Slovenija, sodobna umetnost, nadzorovanje, razstava, koncert

### ABSTRACT

This essay takes two different cases – Žiga Kariž's *Terror = Décor* project which occupied the Slovene pavilion of the Venice Biennale in 2003 and Laibach's comeback concert held in Trbovlje July 24<sup>th</sup> of that same year – and through them explores processes of provocation into emotionality coupled with the systematic foreclosure of the expression of emotions provoked. I focus especially on the techniques Slovenes use to block the open expression of emotions in relationship both to Slovene grappling with emotionality more generally and to a wider, primarily Western European, push for civilized response.

**Key Words:** emotions, Slovenia, Contemporary Art, Surveillance, exhibit, concert

### Uvod

Isti vzorec se ponavlja. Ko greš v galerijo, koncertno dvorano ali gledališče, pričakuješ, da te bo nekaj ganilo, da boš čutil neko spoštovanje, da te bo pretresel predmet ali dogodek, ki je povsem zunaj tvojega jaza in telesa. Pričakuješ, da bo tisto, kar boš srečal v prostoru umetnosti, naredilo vtis nate, da se bo tako močno vtisnilo v tvojo zavest, oči, srce ali razum, da boš zaznamovan že zaradi samega dejanja obiska in videnja. Umetnost ali vsaj evropska umetnost je zasnovana tako, da skuša vzbuditi odziv; če je dobro izvedena, naj bi gledalca ganila ali ga v nečem spremenila. Pri tem ni pomembno, ali gre za versko ali sodobno umetnost, za dunajski akcionizem (vsepovsod je kri) ali za nadvse preudaren, obsesivno počasen francoski film, ker je namen vedno enak: učinkovati na notranjost vsakega

posameznika, ki se s to umetnostjo srečuje. Kdor tvega srečanje z umetnostjo, naj bi se domov vrnil zaznamovan s tem srečanjem. Prav zaradi te moči spreminjanja človeka se prava umetnost – ki jo nekateri imenujejo visoka umetnost – razlikuje od obrtne umetnosti ali dekorja, in ne zaradi svoje relativne neuporabnosti v kakršnemkoli pragmatičnem smislu, kot nekateri radi trdijo.

Če umetnost dojamemo tako – kot nekaj, kar naj bi učinkovalo primarno –, potem ni pomembno, ali je predmet (umetniško delo) lep, grd ali vzvišen; ni pomembno, če je narejen dobro ali slabo, če je razstavljen v galeriji ali v pisoarju (ali, če hočete, če **je** galerija ali pisoar), če je zamisel dobra ali šepava, če je delo izredno ali povprečno. Če predmetu uspeva ganiti obiskovalca, bodisi estetsko, politično ali z golo intenzivnostjo doživetja, potem ga pač moramo imeti za uspešno umetnost. V umetnosti tudi predmetnost ni več samo atribut predmetov. Bourriaud, na primer, pravi: “... predmet je ravno tako nestvaren kot telefonska celica. In delo, ki prikazuje večerjo z juho, je ravno tako stvarno kot kip.”<sup>1</sup> Slabo izvedena, neuspešna umetnost se od dobre umetnosti ne razlikuje zaradi svoje kakovosti, trajnosti, izmenljivosti, niti ne zaradi neločljivega duha stvari same ali doživetja, ampak zaradi svojega učinka oz. moči učinkovanja, vplivanja na ljudi.

Za večino sodobne slovenske umetnosti se zdi, kot da se načrtno izogiba čustvenemu vpletanju gledalca; če sprejmemo, da obstaja sistem vrednotenja, ki temelji na vzbujanju čustev, potem zlahka prihaja do trditev, da je ta umetnost preprosto zanič, in ni naključje, da to trditev tako pogosto slišimo. Vendar so slovenska umetniška prizadevanja zadnjih šestih, sedmih let vse preveč premišljeno, redno in tako rekoč predvidljivo neuspešna pri vzbujanju čustvenih odzivov – v mnogih primerih celo pri tem, da bi imela kakršenkoli učinek na gledalca –, da bi bila taka ocena ustrezna. Zdi se, da je preprečevanje čustvenih odzivov, ob hkratni izraziti želji provocirati, pogosto namerno, čeprav ne nujno tudi zavestno vključen element umetniškega dela. In ravno to zapleteno manevriranje, ki je potrebno zato, da **ne** narediš vtisa, je tema mojega članka.

Če sodobna slovenska umetniška dela ne uspevajo ganiti občinstva, to še ne pomeni, da ne zahtevajo ali ne pričakujejo čustvenih odzivov; prav nasprotno: občinstvu zelo pogosto – v samem umetniškem delu in v sekundarnih zapisih umetnikov in kritikov – očita otopelost, ko bi moralo biti ogorčeno in po možnosti pokazati neko izmerljivo (re)akcijo. Čustveni učinek umetnosti, bodisi da izhaja iz sporočila ali iz uporabljenega medija, v teh umetniških delih ni nič manj cenjen kot v sodobnih produkcijah drugod po Evropi, vendar je razlika v tem, da ga tu preprečujejo oziroma sabotirajo. Postopek je takšen, da sicer vzbuja čustva, a hkrati načrtno preprečuje njihovo izražanje. Neštete načine, ki jih slovenski umetniki uporabljajo za to preprečevanje, bom obravnavala v povezavi s tem, kako se Slovenci nasploh spoprijemajo z izražanjem čustev in s širšimi zahodnoevropskimi prizadevanji za civilizirano odzivanje, ki so tesno povezana z zelo resnično grozo ob misli, da je sposobnost pravega, pristnega čustvovanja morda že izgubljena. V ta namen bom izpostavila dva zelo različna primera: projekt Žige Kariža Teror = Dekor v galeriji

<sup>1</sup> Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Relational Aesthetics*, Dijon: Les presses du réel 1998: 47.

A + A oz. slovenskem paviljonu na Beneškem bienalu 2003 in Laibachov koncert vrnitve (čeprav je bil vedno tu) v Trbovljah 24. julija istega leta.<sup>2</sup>

## Banalnost terorja: Kariž

Projekt *Teror = Dekor: Umetnost zdaj!*, za katerega se zdi, da se je pojavil v pravem trenutku, a ki je hkrati ocenjen kot povprečen dosežek, je bil nazadnje postavljen v slovenskem paviljonu na Beneškem bienalu sodobne umetnosti in je že spodbudil vrsto besedil, vključno z zbornikom esejev o delu in življenju umetnika Žige Kariža.<sup>3</sup> Na plakatih na reklamnih panojih, ki so po Ljubljani opozarjali na razstavo, je bila samo nesporno estetska podoba eksplozije, ki v zrak vrže obris moškega telesa. Kljub obilici sekundarnih slik in besedil, ki so nastale o tej razstavi, je bila splošna ocena Slovencev in tujcev enotna: da gre za neuspeh projekt; ki ni ganil občinstva niti ni primerno zastopal sodobne slovenske umetnosti v mednarodnem, primerljivem (in tudi tekmovalnem) okolju. Vse to govorjenje o neuspehu pa je odprlo prostor – ne toliko kritiku samega umetniškega dela, kot odkrivanju načinov, kako bi to delo lahko izzvalo (ali ne) nek (če že ne kakršenkoli) odziv občinstva. Čeprav se strinjam, da je bilo bistvo razstave neizrazito, specifične pomanjkljivosti projekta *Teror = Dekor* odpirajo prostor širšim vprašanjem smiselnosti in nujnosti tako etičnih kot estetskih dejanj v svetu, v katerem sta teror in dekor pomembno in nenavadno prepleteni kategoriji umetnosti in umetniškega dela oz. predmeta.

191

## Razstava

Začnimo s kratkim opisom razstave: Slovenski paviljon je bil nekoliko napihnjeno ime za majhno galerijo (A+A, San Marco 3073, Benetke)<sup>4</sup> na prijetni lokaciji na koncu ozke beneške ulice, okrog štirideset minut hoje od središča bienala na Giardinah (v vzhodnem delu mesta), vendar blizu vrsti drugih manjših paviljonov (estonskega, iranskega, indonezijskega in drugih). Ko smo se približali galeriji, smo najprej opazili naslov *TEROR = DEKOR* in nasprotje med čistimi, močno osvetljenimi, zastekljenimi, z girlandami okrašenimi stenami galerijske stavbe in stoletja staro sivo ozko ulico, ki vodi do nje. Ta prvi vtis se je umaknil rahli zmedenosti ob vstopu, zmedenosti, ki se je ponavljala v dvignjenih obrveh in vstran nagnjenih glavah obiskovalcev, ki so hodili v galerijo in jo po hitrem ogledu zapuščali. Umetniški projekt – štiri okvirjene fotografije in slikarsko delo v prvi sobi, trije televizijski monitorji in slika v drugi – je bil dobro postavljen in lepo uokvirjen v grafičnem, čustvenem in estetskem smislu. Podobe “terorja” – tri – so

<sup>2</sup> Po prvotni zamisli bi v tem članku raziskovala pragmatizem povprečnosti in bi ga morala napisati skupaj z Jurijem Krpanom, kustosom slovenskega paviljona in torej tudi Kariževega prispevka na bienalu. Čeprav sem se medtem precej oddaljila od prvotne teme, sem Juriju hvaležna za njegovo trmasto vztrajanje, da je treba posvečati pozornost tudi mehanizmom neuspeha; seveda ne vem, če bi se Jurij povsem strinjal s sklepi v tem članku.

<sup>3</sup> *Teror=Décor Art Now*, Ljubljana: Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Domača stran na <http://www.aplusa.it>

se zdele (in so tudi bile) detajli eksplozije z enega videoposnetka.<sup>5</sup> Slike so bile prekrte s črnimi črtami, ki so dajale vtis, da gledamo fotografijo na starem televizorju ali oglas, čeprav je bila eksplozija upodobljena nesporno lepo in estetsko prijetno v negibni eleganci razdiralne sle. A groze ni bilo, kljub črnemu obrisu telesa, ki ga ja sila eksplozije vrgla v zrak. Tako za potencial sublimnega terorja kot za njegovo grozo se je na prvi pogled zdelo, da ju je zamenjalo nekaj, kar je kvečjemu ljubko. Tudi elementi, dodani podobam z računalniško tehnologijo, obiskovalca niso povsem odvrnili od občutka (vsaj po mojem), da je to delo nekoliko vsakdanje, da se vsaka naslednja slika švigajočih plamenov premalo razlikuje od prejšnje ali da je vsaka slika dejansko samo izrez ene in iste izvorne fotografije.

192

Vsa dela – vključno z njihovo vedro mondrianovsko kompozicijo – so bila spretno izdelana, računalniško obdelana in lepo uokvirjena; vsaka slika je bila opremljena z očesom spletne kamere v živo, očitno z namenom opazovati opazovalca slike. Ta “kamera v sliki” nas znova vrača k prastaremu, zaprašnemu vprašanju, kdo koga gleda, kadar stojimo pred umetniškim delom: jaz sliko ali slika mene? Bolj prizanesljiva interpretacija bi bila predpostavka (umetnika), po kateri občinstvo razume, da ima vprašanje opazovanja in subjektivnega postavljanja, ki ga ustvarja razmerje slika/opazovalec, v evropski umetnosti svoj pedigree in da Teror = Dekor k temu prispeva novo poglavje in nekaj novih predmetov. Ne glede na prizanesljivost – sama se bolj nagibam k prvi oceni – je v tem primeru pomembno, da sta bila opazovalec in slika vključena samo v konceptualno in ne v dejansko zanko. Oči kamer v galeriji niso zares beležile opazovalca slik in obiskovalec, ki je bolj seznanjen s interaktivno tehnologijo muzejskih dioram kot s stoletja staro debato o pogledu slike, jih je zlahka imel za nekaj drugega. Preprosto rečeno: kamere so izgledale kot gumbi, a če si pritisnil enega izmed njih – to je počelo kar nekaj obiskovalcev –, se ni zgodilo nič.

V naslednji sobi galerije oz. nacionalnega paviljona so bili trije monitorji in pod vsakim na steno montiran izstopajoči računalnik, velika polkrožna miza, za katero je sedela (živa) ženska, in po vsej površini zadnje stene naslikan velik zemljevid. Na mizi je bilo promocijsko gradivo. In to je bilo to. Razen, seveda, posnetkov na televizijskih ekranih, ki so se menjali na okrog 30 sekund in za katere se je zdelo, da prikazujejo notranjosti domov (kar so res). Posnetki so bili zelo zrnati in težko razločljivi, ljudje na njih vidni samo v nepovezanem gibanju in podobno kot obris telesa v eksploziji brez posebnih identitet (obrazov). Posnetki preprosto niso bili dovolj jasni, da bi videli podrobnosti potez, drže ali glasu (zvoka ni bilo) in bili so brez najmanjše podrobnosti, ki bi iz oseb naredile karkoli drugega kot povprečne ljudi; reči hočem, da so bili izrazito nespecifični. In če ni bilo nikogar doma, je ekran prikazoval nepremično sliko sobe polne praznega pohištva. Včasih je slika monitorja ugasnila (če nekdo ugasne luč, se tehnologija nadzorovanja takoj izključi) in včasih je bilo nekaj narobe s priključkom, tako da je ekran postal olivno zelen z grozečim drobnim belim x v sredini. Vtis, ki so ga ustvarjali ti domnevni videoposnetki pogosto praznih domačih prostorov skupaj z največjo sliko v prvi sobi, na kateri sta bila dva stola v stilu pohištva zdravniške ordinacije, je bil, da tema razstave ni “teror”, ampak “prazno pohištvo”.

<sup>5</sup> Fotografija je iz filma *The Rock*. Michael, režiser, 1996.

V tem je bilo dejansko in ironično neko zrno resnice, ker je obiskovalec v nadstropju – prostor je bil natančno zamejen z rdečo vrvo – naletel na dve veliki, prazni knjižni omari, zopet v mondrianovskem stilu, računalnik in večina dni tudi na vitko telo umetnika samega – v rezidenci tako rekoč. Tega prostora preprosto niso dokončali. Po prvotnem načrtu bi tu moralo biti nekakšno raziskovalno središče z računalniki in z mizo, kjer bi obiskovalci galerije lahko obdelali razne vidike razstave, predvsem tiste, ki so povezani s kartiranjem in s terorjem, in tako ves projekt naredili tekočega in interaktivnega. Izvedba te zamisli bi obiskovalčevo telo potegnila v bistvo umetnosti. Zamisel je bila izredna, ne samo zato, ker ni bila realizirana, ampak ker je ravno zaradi tega, ker ni bila realizirana, ustvarjala dodatna dva kosa praznega pohištva in ker je tako, kljub izraziti želji, da bi jih vključila, ponovno izključila ljudi kot posebna bitja tega sveta. Tako je razstavi celo po tistem, ko ji ni uspelo doseči svoje idealne inačice, (znova) uspelo potrditi občutek, da Kariž ni hotel, da bi kdorkoli opazil razstavo, niti njega samega, umaknjenega kot veverico v nadstropje, kjer je obdan s praznim pohištvom s svetom komuniciral preko računalniškega zaslona.

### **Politični teror**

Teror se v kontekstu sedanosti pojavlja kot ravna črna puščica, ki kaže na veličastno, čeprav vse bolj monotono ponavljano eksplozijo in sesutje stolpov Svetovnega trgovinskega centra. New York je kastriran, dvigajo se ogromni plameni in oblaki dima, telesa kot sence neskončno padajo proti ozadju nebotičnikov, ki ne stojita več. Dejstvo, da je ta dogodek – zdaj pretvorjen v preprost datum – postal tudi estetski, skoraj dekorativni in vedno čustveni niz podob, je skoraj samoumevno. A čeprav ima mnogo Američanov doma nekje plakata s podobo stolpov pred in po 11. septembru, te slike kljub kulturni rani, ki jo priključijo v spomin, in kljub smrtim, ki jih registrirajo, daleč zaostajajo za naslovno sliko v kateremkoli latinskoameriškem časopisu katerikoli dan v tednu. Tam človeška telesa niso prikazana kot padajoči obrisi, niso nalepljena na plakate, ampak s črnimi madeži lastne krvi mažejo asfalt; telesa so mrtvi ljudje, posamezniki z obrazi, z mrtvimi obrazi, z mrtvimi očmi in z mrtvimi, zlomljenimi hrbti. V teh slikah in v resničnosti, iz katere so vzete, ni nič, kar bi se dalo na novo postaviti, nič romantičnega. Čeprav fotoreportaže iz mest, kjer osebne, politične in policijske spore pretežno poravnavajo z umori, gotovo sledijo specifičnim žanrskim konvencijam, nasilne smrti ne prikazujejo tako estetsko, da bi lahko postala dekorativna. Vprašanje tu ni stopnja bolečine, kakor jo čutijo tisti, ki so bili osebno povezani z umrlimi, ampak način, kako je neka tragedija prikazana in kako take upodobitve, kot estetske odločitve, omogočajo sekundarno uporabo slik, natrpanih s posebno paranojo, s strahovi in čustvenimi odzivi, ki naj bi jih te podobe vzbudile.

Razstava v indonezijskem paviljonu (dve ulici stran od slovenskega), katere tema je bila ravno tako teror – v obliki bombnega napada na nočni bar na Baliju – , ponazarja razliko med tem, da teror narediš estetsko sprejemljiv – kot nekaj, kar lahko obesiš na steno – ali da iz njega narediš predmet, ki hkrati vznemirja in

vzbuja gnus, oziroma da na nek osnoven način odslikava dogodek, ki ga skuša predstaviti. V drugi, črni sobi paviljona je visela vrsta velikih slik, narejenih po časopisnih fotografijah ostankov uničenega bara na Baliu. Te s krvjo pomazane slike so prikazovale telesa žrtev terorja v naravni velikosti. Kri so na slike spravili tako, da so jih položili pod trupla sveže zaklanih volov (dokumentarec v tretji sobi je ta postopek prikazal z vsemi krvavimi podrobnostmi) in pustili, da so po njih tekli potočki goste krvi, ki se je že strjevala. Soba ni bila samo črno pobarvana, bila je tudi brez razsvetljave. Obiskovalec je ob vstopu dobil ročno svetilko in potem z usmerjanjem svetlobe, pogleda in pozornostjo sam razločeval barve, obraze in utelešene drame.<sup>6</sup> Tu je bila trenutna politična inačica terorja predstavljena umetniško, približana nosu, ki pozna vonj po krvi; in obiskovalcem je bila vsiljena bližina teme, ki jo prenesemo dosti lažje, če jo lahko gledamo od daleč. Čeprav so ob elegantnem sesutju Svetovnega trgovinskega centra pod ruševinami ostala številna telesa, prizori iz vsakdanjega vizualnega doživljanja smrti, kot je na primer sesedanje teh stavb v prah, le redko krasijo stene domov in pisarn. Zelo preprosta, a dokaj natančna analiza strukture in oblikovalske strategije celotnega bienala je bila večkrat povzeta takole: na svetu so območja z viškom senzacij in verjetno tudi s pomanjkanjem civilizacije, kjer nikoli ne manjka realnosti in kjer se je treba vsak dan znova boriti za najosnovnejše stvari, od pitne vode do spoštovanja. Umetnost iz teh držav se je osredotočila na začasna bivališča, urbani kaos, bolezni, dostojnost in hrano in je komaj kaj pozornosti posvečala pojmom, kot so nadzorovanje, izumetničenost, farmacevtski izdelki ali lepota. Ta vprašanja so bila po pričakovanju tema umetnosti z območij sveta, ki – v tem je nekaj ironije – trpi za pomanjkanjem resničnosti, z območij, kjer je več plastičnih flamingov kot pravih, kjer ljudje nosijo civilizacijo kot pretesne hlače in kjer je bojazen, da bo televizija požrla resnično življenje, enako absurdna, kot je upravičena. Sveta ni mogoče preprosto deliti na Zahod in ostali svet, kot ponazarja balijska razstava, saj ta dva dela nista ločena in celo nista samo dva. A naj se sliši še tako oguljeno, evropski projekti na bienalu so izžarevali globoko skrb zaradi groznega dejstva, da civilizacija drži v svojem smrtnem objemu človekovo sposobnost čustvovati.

### **Kulturna industrija**

Slovenski paviljon je svojo zahodnjaško posredovano abstrakcijo terorja – in hkratni premik k estetizaciji nasilnega dejanja – še nekoliko povzdignil s tem, ko se je umestil v svet, ki ga določa nekoč morda zares koristna opredelitev frankfurtske šole, da je teror osnovni posel kulturne industrije. Ali z umetnikovimi besedami: “Navdih sem dobil pri Herbertu Marcuseju, ki je avantgardno umetnost opredelil kot dekor v svetu terorja.”<sup>7</sup> Na najbolj abstraktni ravni, ki na tej razstavi ni bila eksplicitna, to pomeni, da nasilje nad nekoč živimi in zdaj mrtvimi človeškimi

<sup>6</sup> Made Winata, *Dream land*, 2003. Del projekta *Mourning of the World: Paradise Lost* v indonezijskem paviljonu Beneškega bienala sodobne umetnosti 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Teržan, Vesna. “The Pitfalls of Image – An interview with Ziga Kariž” in *Terror=Décor Art Now*, Ljubljana: Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, 2003: 22.

telesi ni teror, pač pa so teror podobe tega nasilja in vse drugo, kar se iz teh podob naredi javno in se posreduje po množičnih medijih. Po tem modelu kulturna industrija pretvarja konkretna doživetja nekaterih v neskončni tok podob, ki so kvečjemu veličastne in tudi v najslabšem primeru preprosto ljubke. In ravno to distanciranje posameznikov od neposrednega doživljanja – odtujevanje, ki ga imajo za neposredno posledico kapitalizma in oglaševanja –, je nasilno dejanje. Samo družbenopolitično osveščanje, ki vodi k neposredni, politični akciji, lahko reši kulturo pred posploševanjem in banalizacijo in hkrati še sodobnega človeka. Kariž sam pravi:

»Ker je Teror=Dekor v bistvu slikarski projekt, je odločitev o tem, katero obliko upora proti kapitalu bi izbral, temeljila na vrsti vizualnega gradiva, ki ga je gibanje, umetniško ali politično, ustvarjalo. Z drugimi besedami: odločilni faktor je bila oblika, v kateri je kapital komodificiral to gradivo. Moje kompozicije v stilu "De Stijl" so zanimive ravno zaradi tega, ker sta teror in dekor del iste oblike, slike, medtem ko je proces komodifikacije podoben procesu terorja. Na oba je vplivala popularna kultura.«<sup>8</sup>

195

Spomniti se moramo, da je velik del ostre teoretske kritike kulture množičnih medijev kot spektakla, ki ubija dušo, izpod peres Adorna, Horkheimerja in Marcuseja nastal takrat, ko so avtorji med drugo svetovno vojno živeli v izgnanstvu v Združenih državah. Medtem ko je nacistična Nemčija uničevala evropsko židovsko skupnost, ki ji je pripadala večina članov frankfurtske šole, so se ti trije in peščica drugih soočali z drobnimi žalitvami vsakdanjega življenja v Ameriki. Vse od horoskopov v časopisih do mehko zibajočih palm na bulvarjih Los Angelesa se v takih okoliščinah kvečjemu v domišljiji lahko približuje peklu. Naravnost čudno pa je, da je bila prav ta ideologija terorja kot posredovanega resničnega življenja sprejeta kot kontekst za razstavo, ki se ukvarja z razmerjem med terorizmom in dekorjem na prelomu drugega in tretjega tisočletja. Danes živimo v času, ko prevladujejo povsem drugačne in veliko bolj nujne zgodbe o terorju. In čeprav ne gre, da bi se prerekli o Kariževi izbiri teoretskega konteksta za njegovo delo, vendar povzroča zelo osnovne nesporazume med obiskovalci slovenskega paviljona in tam prikazano umetnostjo. Pričakuješ, da boš videl razstavo o terorju na ravni držav in svetovnega prebivalstva, namesto tega pa te pozdravi nekaj, kar je kvečjemu brezkrvno pogrevanje povojnih kapitalističnih strahov. Še več, osebna groza pred radikalno izolacijo, pred tem, da ne bi bil več sposoben zares čutiti česarkoli, je najmočnejše čustvo, ki ga razstava posreduje. Eden od obiskovalcev mi je pri izhodu rekel: "Tako zagonetna je, da dosega to, kar (Kariž) hoče: da je niti ne opaziš." To pa je že nekaj zares izrednega: umetnost zasnovana tako, da nima čisto nobenega učinka, a ki vendar vsebuje etično zapoved čutiti tako močno, da moraš biti aktiven na tem svetu, ki je zvezan z dvema pentljama – terorja in dekorja.

<sup>8</sup> ibid: 22–23

## Socialna izolacija

196 Občutek, ki ga vzbuja celotni projekt, je občutek nepremostljive izolacije od človekovega življenjskega sveta; ker je razstava preveč zagonetna, preveč sijajna, preveč podobna oglaševalski kampanji, preveč pohlevna, preveč pusta in preveč oddaljena od pričakovanj, ki bi lahko izhajala iz njenega naslova itd. Karižu je uspelo, da je iste cilje dosegel z neskladnimi sredstvi: opazovalce je dejansko izoliral od občutenja in jih vezal na brezbržnost, hkrati pa od njih zahteval (vsaj v sekundarnih publikacijah), naj bodo ganjeni, šokirani ali ustrahovani do moralnega ogorčenja. Projekt vse in vsakogar drži na distanci, zavrača vsako interakcijo, celo na ravneh, kjer bi si jo občinstvo morda želelo: projekt oglašuje teror, a ta ni jasno prisoten; oglašuje nadzorovanje, ki je prisotno, vendar ga ni mogoče jasno doumeti. Vse te blokade preprosto zmedejo tako rednega obiskovalca bienala kot priložnostnega ljubitelja umetnosti.<sup>9</sup>

A z drugega vidika, to je, če na razstavo gledamo kot na poskus izolirati gledalca od vsakršnega izražene čustva ali verjetne, prepoznavne povezave z resničnostjo, potem je bila izrazito dosledna. Vsi ljudje so bili brez obraza, telesa nedoločena z zabrisanimi robovi ali zaznavna samo v obrisih; tematsko se je ponavljalo serijsko, prazno pohištvo, kakršnega bi srečali v zdravniški ordinaciji ali sejni sobi na obrobju kapitalistične modernosti. Potem so bili tu še zemljevidi oz. karte, morda eno najboljših sredstev v sodobnem svetu za povzemanje navidezno reprezentativnih ali resničnih informacij o svetu iz snovnega sveta.<sup>10</sup> Domnevam, da je *Teror = Dekor: Umetnost zdaj* prav zaradi tega – zaradi abstrakcije življenjskega sveta čustev – od občinstva zahteval, da ga bo ganilo resnično nasilje na svetu, da bodo ljudje ogorčeni zaradi terorja ali zaradi vsiljivosti nadzorovanja. Ali, kakor je zapisano v razstavnem katalogu: “... projekt se provokativno obrača na gledalce in jih prisili, da se soočajo z akutnimi problemi, ki jih projekt *Teror = Dekor* tematizira.”<sup>11</sup> A tega projekt žal niti najmanj ni dosegel.

## Racionalni odziv

To, kar je projektu *Teror = Dekor* vendarle uspelo pokazati, čeprav na najmanj učinkovit način, je, da je civilizacija sama oblika terorja. Ne na veliki, svetovni ravni, ampak na osebni. Krik civiliziranega človeka vedno odmeva v njem samem. Ohranjati je treba videz, ker nas stalno opazujejo, ocenjujejo, nadzorujejo, in ne samo naša okolica, ampak tudi abstraktna telesa – državna birokracija, policija in

<sup>9</sup> Dobila sem vtis, da so se Slovenci na *Teror=Dekor* odzvali nekoliko drugače od drugih obiskovalcev bienala. Slovenci, s katerimi sem se pogovarjala o razstavi, so se veliko bolj ukvarjali z domačo politiko favoriziranja in financiranja, ki je podprla izbor Krpana za kustosa in Kariža kot predstavnika sodobne slovenske umetnosti. Čeprav je bil splošni vtis razočaranje nad končnim izdelkom, so pri Slovencih denar, osebnosti in favoriziranje vedno postali glavne teme diskusije.

<sup>10</sup> Prav ta vidik zemljevidov kot sredstva za zamegljevanje in manipuliranje Kariža menda zelo zanima, če sklepam po članku Blaža Križnika “Mapping Now – what makes paintings run and why do we map them” v knjižici *Teror = Decor Art Now*, Ljubljana, NUK, 2003.

<sup>11</sup> Kariž, Žiga & Jurij Krpan. “Repubblica di Slovenia/Republic of Slovenia: *Teror=Décor: Art Now*” v *Dreams and Conflicts: The Dictatorship of the Viewer*, Padova: Marsilio Editori, 2003: 580.



televizijske kamere. Stalno nas nekdo ali nekaj spremlja, ne da bi se nas kdaj dotaknil, ne da bi kdajkoli lahko čutili kaj razen bolečine steklenega očesa, ki je slepo, a vendar beleži vsak gib, vsak faux pas, vsak mozolj, vsak neuspeh. To je tisti hromeči teror, ki ga je nedostopnost Kariževega dela nekako komunicirala s svojimi zahtevami (v sekundarnih besedilih), da mora biti gledalec ganjen, da se ga mora nekaj dotakniti globoko in resnično, a hkrati je umetnik v razstavo vključil samo vgrajene nedelujoče kamere v sijajnih uokvirjenih filmskih slikah. Gledalec ni imel nobene možnosti dojeti samo na osnovi razstave, da ta umetniška dela vodi neka nuja, nekakšen top meč panike, ki ga vihti slepec, medtem ko drugi veselo opravljajo popoldanski ogled umetnosti narodov "iz drugega plana": Litva, Slovenija, Iran, Finska, Indonezija. Te so vse razstavljale v majhni beneški soseski, vse so bile dostopne peš in vse presenetljivo bolj spomina vredne in bolj dosledne kot tista, ki se je sama proglasila za pomembno, ker je beseda teror krasila vse dostopne površine.

Nimam namena biti nepravilna, ker mislim, da je Kariž s to razstavo zelo natančno ujel sodobne evropske strahove o nezmožnosti, da se nas dotakne resničnost (in da se je mi dotaknemo). Res je, da se je evropska civilizacija tisočletja zaganjala v koncept resničnega in da ga je z Lacanom (De Bandom, Baudrillardom in edinim resnično slovitim Slovencem – Žižkom) tudi bolj ali manj učinkovito odpravila. Če hočemo razumeti, kaj je tej razstavi zares uspelo prikazati, moramo po mojem upoštevati način, kako Kariž sam menda živi samo v svetu medijev. Kamere snemajo resnične ljudi v resničnem svetu, take, ki se v tem primeru sprehajajo in si ogledujejo umetnost, vendar slike ne gredo nikamor, ne prikazujejo ničesar, medtem ko drugod druge kamere prikazujejo podobe teh prostorov in ljudi v njih. Kariž se poigrava z nadzorovanjem, ne da bi ga dejansko dosegel in po mojem je to zaradi tega, ker sam trpi zaradi terorja, ki ga reproducira, zaradi resničnega terorja civilizirane abstrakcije tu in zdaj.

Kot Američanki (Američani se še vedno sončimo v lastnem divjaštvu) se mi zdijo ti strahovi skoraj dolgočasni, a vendar se mi zdi tudi, da način, ki eksistencialno izolacijo ponazarja z odnosi med predmeti in ljudmi na razstavi, kaže na določeno mero umetnikove ustvarjalnosti. V življenjskem svetu, ki je vse preveč brezmadežen in reguliran, vse preveč prekleto prijeten, je logično, da iščemo nekaj, kar bo prebilo te gladke površine in pregnalo hegemonijo videzov, ki razkrivajo, da tudi tisti, ki so navzven najbolj zdravi in brezhibni, tulijo od bolečine, pa čeprav ne bodo nikoli pozabili učvrstiti svoje brezhibne pričeske z gelom ali pozabili na dieto za svoja popolna telesa.

## **Teror banalnega: Laibach**

Laibachov posel je provokacija in v nasprotju s Karižem so Laibachovci mojstri v tej disciplini. Kdor skupine ne pozna, bi jo zlahka imel za eno izmed številnih vzhodnoevropskih industrijskih rokovskih skupin in res je, da prirejajo koncerte, izdajajo albume, hodijo na turneje in se ponašajo z vsemi atributi običajne, povprečne rokofske skupine. In vendar je za njih zaradi njihove odločnosti, da o njih govorijo v klišejih, da postanejo karkoli, kar se komu zdi, da so fašisti, umetniki, vampirji,

državljeni provokatorji, Satanovi služabniki, rešitelji kulture itd. itd., preprosta oznaka "skupina" (*band*) preveč medla, čeprav je treba priznati, da v tej preobleki izvajajo svoja najbolj subtilna (in očitna) dejanja družbene provokacije.

V nasprotju s Karižem člani skupine Laibach tudi dosledno izberejo vlogo strelovoda v nevihti, ki jo sami ustvarjajo, namesto vloge koreografa v ozadju. A kljub temu, da se sončijo v radikalni, nedvoumni osebnosti, je ta osebnost izrazito neosebna in jo je težko interpretirati. Laibach je to, kar je v govorici politike identitete znano kot "skupinska identiteta", pri kateri se vsak posamezni član skupine podreja strukturi celote in v trenutkih največje pozornosti javnosti postane popolnoma anonimen. To pomeni, da se vsak človeški element Laibacha, kadar deluje kot član skupine, odpove lastnemu imenu, identiteti in ustvarjalnim zaslugam za zamisli, pobude in izdelke skupine. Ne gre za to, da je vsak enak vsem drugim, ampak da je vsak pomemben za projekt in predstave skupine, kot da bili vsi eno; odnos člana Laibacha do skupine ni takšen kot odnos rokofske zvezde do rokofske skupine (pomislite na Justina Timberlaka in NSYNC), pri njih je posameznik tako kot roka, usta ali zadnjik nujni del posameznega telesa; ali – kot je član Laibacha (na začetku 90-ih) povedal v pogovoru s Sabrina Ramet:

198

V: "Kaj je vaša definicija posameznika?"

A: "Množica enega milijona deljena z milijonom."<sup>12</sup>

Za Laibach to ni samo govorjenje. Neznansko veliko pozornosti posvečajo temu, da zares delajo to, kar pridigajo, z veliko skrbjo za podrobnosti, ki tvorijo klišeje in s spodbujanjem vseh mogočih napačnih mnenj o tem, kdo so in kaj zagovarjajo. Ustvarjalnost skupine je v tem neomajnem, izrecnem konstrukt in v predstavitev njihovega javnega lika v brezhibni izvedbi, ne da bi prava vsebina tega lika kdaj postala povsem jasna. Pri Laibachu se zlahka zapletemo v vprašanja o verodostojnosti njihove fašistične podobe (so ali niso?) in nikoli ne pridemo do tega, kaj naj bi jim ta podoba pomagala doseči in katere poti uspeha jim zapira. O prvi temi je bilo napisanega že veliko<sup>13</sup>, o drugi zelo malo, vendar je v Laibachovi nadvse determinirani vlogi in pretirani javnosti nekaj, kar močno spominja na Karižev strah, da bi bil znan ali razumljen.

<sup>12</sup> Ramet, Sabrina. "Shake, Rattle, and Self Management: Making the Scene in Yugoslavia," v *Rocking the State: Rock Music and Politics in Eastern Europe and Russia*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1994: 120.

<sup>13</sup> Kar precej je napisanega o NSK in Laibachu in o njunem zgodovinskem pomenu za slovensko neodvisnost in širjenje slovenske kulture; med najbolj pomembnimi deli so po mojem: Arns, Inka. *Neue Slowenische Kunst: Eine Analyse Ihrer Künstlerischen Strategien im Kontext der 1980er Jahre in Jugoslawien*, Regensburg: Museum Ostdeutsche Galerie, 2002. Gržinič, Marina. "Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK): The Art Groups Laibach, Irwin, and Noordung Cosmokinetic Theater Cabinet - New Strategies in the 1990s" v *Slovene Studies* 15 (1/2), 1993: 5–16. Monroe, Alexei. *Pluralni Monolit*, Ljubljana: Maska, 2003. Plut-Pregelj, Leopoldina et al. ed. *The Repluralization of Slovenia in the 1980's: New Revelations from Archival Records*, Donald W. Treadgold Papers #24, The Jackson School of International Studies: University of Washington, February 2000. Žižek "The Enlightenment in Laibach" in *Art & Design* 9(3/4), March/April 1994. in, seveda, film Michaela Benson *Predictions of Fire*, Benson, Michael (Director) & TV Slovenia (Producer). Kinetikon Pictures, 1993.

## Koncert

Po sedemletni prekinitvi je Laibach poleti 2003 izdal novo zgoščenko z naslovom "WAT" in se jeseni odpravil na turnejo po Evropi. Malo pred tem so 24. julija v domačem mestu skupine, Trbovljah, imeli koncert za povablence. Predstava je bila zasnovana kot nekakšen pridušen krik zmagovalca, ker so dvajset let prej – v času, ko so bili strašni najstniški (domnevni) neofašisti in ko je Jugoslavija še obstajala kot kolikor toliko zdrava država – nastop skupine v formalnem in skorajda plehkem okolju Delavskega doma prepovedali. Dvajset let pozneje je bil njihov nastop čuden anahronizem. Laibach je v polni formi, z vsem predvidljivim "provokativnim" arzenalom renčal besedila v stilu: EINS, ZWEI, DREI, VIER/BRUEDERCHEN, KOMM TANZ MIT MIR /EINS, ZWEI, DREI, VIER/BEIDE HAENDE REICH ICH DIR<sup>14</sup>; ... pred brezhibno oblečenim občinstvom srednjih let, prijatelji in privrženci, a še zdaleč ne navijači.

199

Ta družčina ideoloških "tovarišev v orožju" je tvorila majhen del občinstva na vsakem Laibachovem koncertu, na katerem sem bila na Balkanu.<sup>15</sup> Za razliko od trboveljske predstave so na večini Laibachovih koncertov starejši esteti in družbeni aktivisti v manjšini, ker jih popolnoma zasenčijo veliki, malo čez dvajset let stari v črno oblečeni fantje z dolgimi lasmi (privrženci metala) ali obritimi glavami (neonacisti) in tu in tam kako vitko ravno tako v črno oblečeno dekle.<sup>16</sup> Vsi pijejo pivo in stojijo bolj ali manj negibno, premaknejo se le toliko, da v pravem trenutku dvignejo pest. To pomeni, da ima Laibach svojo "bazo" navijačev, a ti niso bili med povablenci na trboveljski koncert.<sup>17</sup> Tam je bila nekakšna smetana slovenske alternativne kulture, nekaj predstavnikov medijev in peščica obstrancev: nekaj ljudi s potnim listom države NSK, ki so jih povabili z raznih koncev Evrope, in nekaj ameriških študentov, ki niso imeli pojma (edini tudi, ki niso bili v črnem); zadnji so bili sredi pettedenske udeležbe v Makrolabu (slovenskem hi-tech raziskovalnem centru / umetnostni koloniji) v Benetkah. Razen teh tujih povablencev so bili vsi prisotni lepo oblečeni in so se tudi vsi med sabo poznali. Krožili so po dvorani, si izmenjavali pozdrave in poljubčke in proizvajali neznanske količine klepeta, grizljali piškote v obliki obveznega križa NSK (oblite z barvnim sladkorjem) in zelo okusne kruhke, srebali "Laibachovo vino" (črnega in belega), ki so ga točili iz steklenic z nalepko "WAT", in (po koncertu) žvečili ocvrte ribe in klobase ter zaužili precej več vina, takrat ne več laibachovske izdelave.

<sup>14</sup> "TANZ MIT LAIBACH" (Inspired by German - American friendship). Besedilo prepisano z naslova <http://www.nskstate.com>, 6. maj, 2004.

<sup>15</sup> Zanimivo je, da sta me med koncertom v Zagrebu dva skrbno oblečena Slovenca utišala, ko sem prijatelju razlagala svoje skromno znanje o zgodovini skupine. Bolj absurde situacije še nisem doživela; podobno bi bilo utišanje nekoga na koncertu Motorheada, da bi lahko bolje uživali v lirčnosti šova. Laibach je hrupen in niti najmanj ni subtilen, vsaj ne glasbeno.

<sup>16</sup> Priznati moram, da še na nobenem koncertu kjerkoli na svetu nisem srečala tako enotno visoko bazo navijačev; Srbi in Hrvati so morda res nekoliko višje postave, vendar se zdi, da se samo najvišji med njimi potrudijo na Laibachove nastope.

<sup>17</sup> Tudi sama nisem bila povabljena, vendar sem (čim sem zvedela za koncert) izkoristila slovenski neformalni sistem vabil: poiščeš nekoga, ki pozna nekoga drugega (ki pozna ...), ki bo priskrbel dovolj vstopnic za vse zainteresirane.

Spored samega koncerta je bil celotni album WAT, izveden od začetka do konca, z lučmi in dimom, z dvema prsatima dekletoma v uniformah, ki sta s pretiranimi, mehanskimi gibi tolkli po bobnih, in s pesmimi, ki so jih kot ponavadi izvajali v mračno resni nemščini in angleščini; eno samo pesem, "Antisemitizem", so izvedli v slovenščini. Na koncu koncerta je posnet glas v umetno robati angleščini z močnim slovanskim naglasom povabil celotno občinstvo na zabavo na Kumu, malo izven mesta. Zabava je bila prav prijetna: dolga, z obilico hrane in pijače in pogovorov, nekaj disko plesa in z izrecno spolno naravnano pridigo v stari cerkvi na vrhu gore.<sup>18</sup> Skratka, dobro režiran dogodek in vsestransko prijeten večer, z veliko druženja in dobre volje kljub dejstvu, da sta tako prizorišče koncerta – skrbno vzdrževani Delavski dom z oblazinjenimi sedeži in z odlično akustiko – kot občinstvo bila daleč od tistega, kar bi pričakovali na običajnem rokovskem koncertu.

Pravzaprav se je zdelo, da je bilo občinstvo tako zaposleno s čenčami, grizljanjem in srebanjem, da je komaj utegnilo uživati v Umetnosti – koncertu samem – in tudi po njem so zmogli le hitre in površne ocene. "Saj vedno naredijo dober šov," ali "Laibach pač, vedno je enak," so bili bežni komentarji v odgovoru na vprašanja podpisane antropologinje. Niti mimogrede nisem slišala kakih vnetih diskusij o koncertu, kar ne pomeni, da jih ni bilo, vendar je bilo najkasneje potem, ko smo zapustili dvorano, se spravili v avtomobile in se po vijugasti cesti počasi povzpeli na Kum, povsem jasno, da v Trbovlje nismo prišli zaradi "šova". Laibachov koncert – navidezno bistvo večera – je bil, milo rečeno, dokaj dolgočasen. To pa ni majhen dosežek: organizacija dolgočasnega rokovskega koncerta, ki kljub temu, da uporablja ves arzenal zares dobrega nastopa, od vojaško krojenih oblek do odličnega zvočnega sistema v podporo slovitih rokovskih zvezd (edinih slovenskih rokovskih zvezd z mednarodnim slovesom), ki izvajajo nekaj svojih najboljših kompozicij zadnjega desetletja, ne naredi skoraj nič vtisa. Ko so obiskovalci počasi zapuščali dvorano, so se pravzaprav obnašali zelo podobno starejšim obiskovalcem MGL, ki po novi, zelo konzervativni produkciji Čehova vstanejo in takoj začnejo opravljati skupne znance. Kot da se ne bi pred dvajsetimi minutami na odru zgodil samomor ali, preneseno, kot da Laibacha na odru sploh ni bilo.

A to seveda ni čisto res, ker je bilo vzdušje po Laibachovem koncertu polno dobre volje, medtem ko je bilo pred predstavo nekoliko bolj razpršeno in formalno; prišlo je do subtilne, vendar zelo izrazite spremembe v skupinski dobri volji te družbe. In tudi ni res – kakor bi dala misliti primerjava s tradicionalnim obiskom gledališča –, da Laibachu tokrat ni uspelo premagati spodobnega opravljanja "družabnih obveznosti", ki vse banalizirajo. Prav nasprotno, dogodek sam je bil past in proslava hkrati. Tako kot pri vsem, kar je povezano z Laibachom, ne prva ne druga razlaga ne zadošča povsem.

<sup>18</sup> Zaradi Laibacha, Petra Mlakarja, besede "jebi" in drugih kvazirazvrtnih dogodkov tistega večera v cerkvi so nekateri menili, da je bila cerkev onečaščena in katoliška skupnost jo je avgusta 2003 ponovno posvetila. To je bil edini škandal – in še ta je bil zrežiran –, ki ga je večer proizvedel, a to je že povsem druga zgodba.

## Pragmatizem banalnega

Vsako delo sodobne umetnosti pušča odprt prostor za množico možnih zgodb o ozadju, o tem, kaj bi to delo lahko bilo, recimo x, in kaj bi to pomenilo, če bi bilo zares x. Edina napačna interpretacija – in to je skoraj univerzalna resnica – je tista, ki stvar preprosto jemlje tako, kot je, ki ima zunanja stanja kot natančen odraz notranjih; to je, recimo, domneva, da če se nekdo oblači kot nacist in citira Hitlerja, potem je verjetno fašist. Imperativ sodobne umetnosti je, da moramo ugibati o motivih in pomenih, ki so na površini stvari skriti. Prostor za interpretacijo je odprt in treba ga je zapolniti, če hočemo, da umetniško delo kot tako sploh lahko obstaja; če ne, ostane zgolj “okrnjen silogizem brez izhodne izjave in brez sklepa”.<sup>19</sup> Sodobno umetniško delo – Laibach je nazoren primer – je torej zasnovano z grozečim in neizogibnim logičnim prepadom, ki je sestavni del samega dela.

201

Če je primerno utrjen v svojih pričakovanjih od izvornih ustvarjalnih del v prostoru umetnosti, si mora obiskovalec galerije ali koncertne dvorane torej sam izmisliti zgodbo o tem, zakaj so te reči tam. Vpraševati se moramo, zakaj Laibach izgleda, zveni in ravna ravno tako. Brez tega postopka izmišljevanja ali odkrivanja ozadja je sodobna umetnost dejansko pogosto zgolj kič – naplavine sodobnega življenja, zbrane v novem kontekstu in obnovljene s prenosom v umetnost. In če nam iz kateregakoli razloga ne uspe sestaviti sprejemljivega ozadja, potem razstava ali predstava ne postane umetnost in ostane nekaj, a ne prav veliko, kar si človek na hitro ogleda in preide. Ne gre toliko za to, da je umetnost lahko vse (iz te kategorije je izključena trajna smrt), ampak da se vse lahko skonstruira kot umetnost in uspeh tega konstruiranja je odvisen ravno toliko kot od samega umetniškega dela od pripravljenosti gledalca, da ustvarja, razume ali verjame, da je zgodba, ki ji je priča, verjetna. To je učinkovito ubesedil Danto:

»[Bralec [umetniškega dela]] mora sam zapolniti vrzel, ki jo je [izdelovalec [umetniškega dela]] nalašč pustil odprto: sam mora dodati tisto, kar manjka in priti do lastnih sklepov (“lastni sklepi” so tisti, ki bi jih potegnil “vsakdo”), ... najti mora sredino, zapolniti vrzel, spraviti um, pamet v akcijo. Vendar je ta način provociranje gledalčeve udeležbe nemočen pri tistih, ki nimajo zadostnega znanja oziroma jih zgolj zmede.«<sup>20</sup>

Danto v logičnih pojmi govori o entimemski vrzeli.

Entimem je okrnjen silogizem brez izhodne izjave ali sklepa, ki pa je vendar veljaven silogizem, če je – poleg tega, da ustreza običajnim pogojem veljavnosti – manjkajoča vrstica ali očitna resnica ali ga jemljemo kot očitno resnico: to je nekaj, od česar lahko pričakujemo, da ga bo sprejel vsakdo brez posebnega napora – nekaj banalnega.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Danto 1981: 170.

<sup>20</sup> Danto 1981: 171.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*: 170.

Ne glede na svojo banalnost ali očitnost, izključitev nujne izjave ali določene informacije, brez katere ni mogoče ugotoviti smisla, bralca entimema subtilno sili v interpretacijo znotraj dokaj ozkega sklopa možnosti ali je pač obsojen na neznanje o zahtevah predmeta in situacije. V sodobni umetnosti ne manjka verjetnih načinov za polnjenje vrzeli zato, da postane nekaj resnično, in vsi so banalni. Kar pomeni, da čim so izrečeni, razgalijo neumnost celotnega projekta. To je eden izmed načinov za “branje” tega, kar se je dogajalo na Laibachovem šovu v Trbovljah: občinstvo je bilo na tekočem.

202

To ne pomeni, da je Laibachov projekt (ali širše rečeno projekt NSK) preprosto passé. A kjer ni neke nujne napetosti, pomanjkanja razumevanja s strani občinstva, umetnost biti Laibach izgublja svoj učinek. Tvorino odsotnost, ki je značilna za Laibach, je treba polniti, a ne preveč zavestno ali jasno, ker prav neizrecen način smiselnosti iz sodobne umetnosti naredi nekaj več kot sicer ne preveč subtilne rekontekstualizacije. In možnost, da je napačno razumljena, tvori ustvarjalni potencial umetnosti (in Laibacha), v dobrem in v slabem smislu. “V zvezi z umetniškim delom, ki ga občuduješ, je vedno nevarno z besedami povedati, kaj pomeni, ker se potem vedno najde nekdo, ki reče “in to je vse?” v smislu, da se mu to ne zdi ravno pohvalno”.<sup>22</sup> Tako kot ogromno večino sodobnih umetniških prizadevanj bi sodobno slovensko umetnost – vključno s Karižem in Laibachom – zlahka ocenili na prav ta način. Odsotna izhodna trditev/ premisa se nahaja in se lahko najde v zgodbah, ki krožijo o stvari, in dejstvo, da krožijo diskusije in zapisi, dopolnjuje predmet (delo) samo pod pogojem, da so te zgodbe dovolj preproste in banalne, da so verjetne in da sledijo določenemu žanru diskurza, ki iz njih naredi sprejemljive premise.

Z vsem tem želim povedati, da je eden izmed načinov “branja” koncerta, da je bil prenapolnjen, da je bil po pravici rečeno samo prikaz kakovosti, ki jih ljubitelji Laibacha prepoznavajo kot osnovne značilnosti skupine. Kakor nekoga, ki ga imamo radi, prepoznamo po kljukastem nosu, tako je že malo tevtonskega pompa in blišča dovolj, da prepoznamo Laibach. In tako kot se je dvignil hladni gorski večer in objel obiskovalce koncerta, ki so prihajali s prizorišča, je prijeten topel občutek zaradi večera z znano in priljubljeno skupino prežal družbo prijateljev in občudovalcev, ne pa navijačev.

### **Slovenska umetnost**

Tako kot večina prisotnih na trboveljskem koncertu sem kar velikodušna do skupine; konec koncev me je Laibach (ne da bi za to vedel) pripeljal v Slovenijo, in tako nisem več navijačica, ki bi uživala v verodostojnosti njihovega blišča, niti me ne skrbi, če so verodostojni ali ne. Čisto dovolj mi je zadovoljstvo, da se Laibach po vseh teh letih še vedno *gre*, da še vedno udarja na isti boben. Kljub temu je pri Laibachu vmes še nekaj drugega kot občudovanja vreden kolektiv, ki se je skupaj staral in z leti postal vse bolj predvidljiv. Razkriva nekaj o slovenski kulturi, česar niti Kariževa mučna prizadevanja za javnost niso uspela ujeti. Laibachovo grmenje

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*: 173–4.

proti civilizaciji se je vedno posluževalo najbolj zadržanih oblik te iste civilizacije. Zahteva odziv, zahteva, da nekaj čutiš, če že ne zaradi bednega stanja sveta, pa zaradi skupine kot mikrokozmosa zlih (beri: provokativnih) značilnosti iz najbolj nasilnih in nadzorovanih ideoloških gibanj dvajsetega stoletja. Laibach zahteva čustveni odziv občinstva in vsa ta leta ga je gotovo bil deležen; zaradi Laibacha ljudje vzkipijo, se rojevajo strasti, dvomi, gnus, skrbi, vendar sami zavračajo čustvenost. Kompaktna oblika skupine, ki se je trdovratno držijo, deluje kot zaščitni premaz – ali kot družbeni eksoskelet – in na precej podoben način kot Karižu njegov odmik iz javnosti – celo s površine lastnih umetniških del – zagotavlja zatočišče in uteho.

V obeh primerih je jasni namen provokacija in v obeh primerih se provokator umakne v svojo lupino anonimnosti kot rak samotar in tako kaže protislovnost med željo biti viden in željo ostati neviden. Skorajda vsem slovenskim umetnikom, intelektualcem in članom kulturne industrije je skupna prav ta želja: da provocirajo, ne da bi postali ranljivi, da razburjajo ljudi, a sami ostanejo racionalni, da vplivajo, a le tako, da ostanejo neopazni. Želja provocirati – povezana z nečim, kar je sorodno sramu, če bi se kdaj zares razkačili –, je skorajda nacionalna značilnost in verjetno je tudi edini družbeno sprejemljiv način, da se pušča kri. Nešteto primerov je, tako v umetnosti kot v javnem življenju nasploh, v katerih je preračunljiva zakritost – z neko vlogo, z uniformo, s sposojeno identiteto – omogočala javno izkazovanje čustvenosti, javno sproščanje osebne, individualne notranjosti. A ne Laibach ne Žiga Kariž ne dosežeta te točke samoizražanja. Namesto tega sta vsaj v teh dveh primerih ponavljala lastno obliko – tesno zaprto, skrito, nedostopno – v zrežiranih dogodkih, očitno zasnovanih zato, da provocirata, a hkrati podanih tako, da nobena učinkovita provokacija – čeprav je v teh dveh primerih niti ni bilo – ni mogla biti izražena.

Ko so obiskovalci koncerta v Trbovljah pojedli piškote in se odpravljali v dvorano, da bi zasedli svoja mesta, ko so klepetali in jih je malce skrbelo, ali bodo našli dobro mesto blizu prijateljev, ko so se počasi spuščali po s preprogo pokrite stopnišče in potem hitro švignili mimo vrst oblazinjenih sedežev, je postalo povsem jasno – še preden se je Laibach pojavil na odru –, da v takem okolju ogorčenja (če bi ga bili sposobni čutiti, čeprav ni šlo zato, bila pa je le nujna premisa) preprosto ni mogoče izražati. Ne samo zato, ker je bila ta družba že tako ali tako predobro seznanjena s provokacijami skupine, ampak zato, ker ni bilo fizičnega prostora za čustvenost, sproščanje, vpitje ali skakanje na noge, plesanje, korakanje ali dviganje pesti. Sedeži in oder niso dovolili hripavih odzivov in strogo vzdušje spodobnosti, ki je označevalo večer, je bilo tako močno, da je bilo tudi topotanja zelo malo, potem ko je koncert zares stekel.

V teh pogojih vpliva, čeprav je bil morda pričakovan in tu in tam tudi dosežen, ni bilo mogoče sprostiti iz telesa. Pravila spodobnega, civiliziranega vedenja so bila dobesedno vgrajena v okolje, režijo in elitizem samega dogodka. Vsak je bil ujet v udobnem sedežu, obdan z drugimi tihimi in negibnimi obiskovalci, verbalno in fizično izražanje čustev pa je bilo popolnoma blokirano, tako socialno kot glede na okoliščine. Med samim koncertom so ves Laibachov pomp in blišč, kruh in

igre, provokativna besedila in mehanski ritmi postali kvečjemu “formalna” kakovost, simbolično nujna, a sama po sebi nesmiselna estetika. Samo zares naiven obiskovalec bi večer lahko napačno razumel kot nekaj, kar je bilo zares namenjeno izzivanju čustvenega odziva namesto sistema za posredovanje določene kulturno specifične utehe, ki izhaja iz vzorca zahtevanja čustvenih odzivov. In ravno to je koncert dosegel, dajal je uteho skozi obredno ponavljanje znanih sestavin in s tem ustvaril silen občutek dobre volje.

### **Zlo banalnosti**

204

Morda je ena najboljših ocen Laibacha, ki sem jih kdaj slišala, ta, da “ohranja nujnost boriti se z zlom banalnosti”.<sup>23</sup> To ne pomeni, da so v tej bitki zares ali vsaj večinoma uspešni, vendar je pomemben njihov taktični pristop, ki se povsem razlikuje od tistega, ki ga uporablja Kariž. Namesto da bi ponavljali banalnost terorja kot sredstvo, s katerim bi ponazarjali teror, se banalnemu strogo izogibajo in raje objemajo tako po obliki kot po vsebini vse zlo, ki iz tega izvira. Laibach preprosto ne odstopa od svojega premočrtnega načina biti ravno to, kar imajo drugi ljudje za odvratno. Tako kot črvi, ki so odvratni, a hkrati čistijo, Laibach najde točko strahu – Jungovo Amfortasovo rano, če hočete – in se prostovoljno spušča vanjo. Celo nedolžni šov v Trbovljah, ki je bil samo prijeten, je imel posledice. In ko se je Laibach naslednjič pojavil v javnosti, na tiskovni konferenci ob predstavitvi zgoščenke *WAT* septembra 2003, so bili že demonizirani ali, bolj natančno, povampirjeni. Vloga, v kateri so seveda uživali. Prišli so s stekleno krsto oz. razstavno vitrino in s prepolnimi skledami česna, čebule in repe za prisotne novinarje (in, seveda, z Laibachovim vinom). Povsem nepomembno je, kako so zaradi vneme tiska znova postali najbolj stereotipni hudobneži; tokrat so pač razdražili katoliško cerkev. Kar preseneča, je to, da še naprej dregajo v slovensko družbo, tako da ta skoraj ne more drugače, kot da se odziva. Čeprav vsi vedo, da gre samo za Laibach, tisk zagradi vsak potencialni škandal(ček) – Laibach jih pač kar naprej proizvaja – in najmanjše draženje in prekrške napihuje do onemoglosti. V tem Laibach resnično blesti, ne toliko zaradi tega, ker bi mu uspevalo skaliti mir in blagor družbe, ampak ker tako vztrajno učinkovito drega vanjo. Tako z enim samim dogodkom razgali banalnost rokovega koncerta (in njegove publike), medijev, katoliške cerkve in, kar je najbolj pomembno (z novim občutkom ironije), Laibacha samega.

### **Evropska civilizacija na splošno**

»BARBARI PRIHAJAJO Z VZHODA / PRIŠLI BODO OD NIKODER / VDRLI BODO V VAŠO DRŽAVO / NAROD ZGUB / PLEME POLNO SOVRAŠTVA / Z NOŽI V ŽEPIH / IN Z BOMBAMI V ROKAH / POŽGALI BODO VAŠA MESTA / IN VAŠE DISNEYLANDE.« (Laibach).<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Mislim, da je to rekel Aleksej Monroe, lahko pa je bil tudi Jani Novak; vsekakor je bilo izrečeno na uradni tiskovni konferenci ob predstavitvi zgoščenke *WAT* na Bledu 7. 9. 2003.

<sup>24</sup> Iz “Now You will Pay,” Laibach. *WAT*, 2003.



*»Zgodovinsko so bile zahodne države najbolj barbarske in največje osvajaške in zdaj druge sodijo po lastni zgodovinski izkušnji in lastnem barbarstvu. Bojijo se seveda, da bodo prej ali slej morale plačati za vse stare (in nove) grehe proti človeštvu. In prav pravično je, da jo bodo verjetno res plačale« (Laibach).<sup>25</sup>*

Spomladi 2003 je bila v Gradcu, od koder sta doma Arnold Schwarzenegger in Leopold von Sacher-Masoch in samo lučaj severno od slovenske meje, velika razstava o mazohizmu. En del razstave je bil čisti kič (bela krznena soba), drugi del vsiljivo izobraževalne narave (spolne igrače iz 19. stoletja) in tretji del, zgoraj v tretjem nadstropju, surov. Medtem ko so krožili med slikami moških obešenih na najbolj osupljive načine, izpostavljenih vsakovrstnemu mučenju/uživanju, ki ga je možno fotografirati (od tega, da so nanje urinirali, do prebadanja z iglami, vtikanja dildov ali obešenja na kavlje iz nerjavečega jekla), so se odrasli obiskovalci, domnevno Avstrijci, držali napeto in se premikali z nekakšno tiho preudarnostjo. Ogledali so si vse slike po vrsti, načrtno in tiho kot v grobu. Tudi sama sem se tako premikala, s stisnjenimi zobmi in z antropologovo beležnico v pripravljenosti in si vsak sklop slik in naprav ogledala studiozno in pozorno. Kakšno olajšanje mi je pripravila skupinica štirih Hrvatov, starih okrog 25 let, ki so ob vsaki sliki rjuli od gnusa ali šoka in spuščali rafale besed, ki so odmevale od belih obokov in sten galerijskega prostora. Vse slike so si zaslužile tak odziv in vse so ga bile deležne. Samo z jasno in glasno ustreznostjo njihovih odzivov je absurdnost poskusa samoobvladovanja (s katerim smo se drugi tako vneto ukvarjali) dobila jasne, ostre oblike. Močna, boleča ponotranjenost (ljudi) pred eksplicitno, čeprav anonimno zunanostjo (v umetnosti), je bilo zame najbolj šokantno doživetje na tej sicer izredno uspešni razstavi, zasnovani tako, da je provocirala čustvene odzive in jih je, v nasprotju s slovenskima primeroma, ki sem ju tu obravnavala, tudi dobila.

Če si Evropejec, ti ni treba iskati daleč, da najdeš barbarskega Drugega; pri roki so balkanski Slovani ali muslimani in tudi Američani, če hočete.<sup>26</sup> Vendar groza, resnična groza je tista pred zlom, ki prihaja od znotraj, to neprepoznavno zlo, ki cveti sredi nas – nacist, ne Žid; mazohist, ne Hrvat, in civilizacija, ne barbarstvo – in tako Kariž kot Laibach ponazarjata to grozo pred črnim srcem civilizacije, ne pred strastnim Drugim, ki žre otroke. Čeprav morda nista tako eksplicitna ali profesionalna kot graški poklon mazohizmu na treh ravneh, oba ujameta nekaj bolj delikatnega pri neuspehu samoizražanja, ki je kljub vsemu tudi izredno natančen izraz jaza. Kariž se bori za to, da bi razburjal občinstvo, in vendar še najbolj jasno sporoča lastno odtujenost od življenjskega sveta, v katerem živijo in se potijo ljudje, ki niso zgolj posredovani. To je odtujenost, ki je vsekakor tipična, a vendar jo je neznansko težko posredovati. Laibach čisto zlo, ki izvira iz samega civiliziranega jaza, naredi ekstremno, vendar neškodljivo; ponazarja samokontrolo,

<sup>25</sup> Laibach v pogovoru s Pitchonom, Avi. "Post Modern Post Mortem", prva objava v reviji Terorizer (<http://www.nskstate.com/> 24.4.2004)

<sup>26</sup> Nekoč mi je mlad univerzitetno izobražen (filozofija in psihoanaliza) slovenski kolega rekel, da so Američani divjaki, tako kot Srbi, ker so oboji odkriti in takoj prijazni do ljudi, ki jih ne poznajo.

samoomejevanje, samoodtujenost in vendar mu s tako eksplicitnostjo uspeva, da navdaja z grozo in hkrati šarmira. V obeh primerih je nemoč prikazana prvinsko, a tako, da se ne reproducira v občinstvu, kakor se je na graški razstavi, kjer je povnanjena umetniška, spolna surovost (in užitki) izzvala samo mrtvo hladno samoobvladovanje s strani "evropskih" obiskovalcev. S tem hočem povedati, da je graška razstava kot srečanje z umetnostjo vzbujala in reproducirala navade spodobnega vedenja in popolne fasade, namesto da bi jih raztrgala. Čeprav se oba tu obravnavana primera med seboj razlikujeta tako zelo kot se oba – po namenu, sredstvih in izdelku – razlikujeta od graške razstave, ju povezuje njun odnos do omejitev civilizacije in njun neuspeh komunicirati karkoli drugega enako jasno kot meje teh omejitev; povezuje ju kot izraza družbene vezi – kavlja 22 civilizacije, tj. da moraš biti popoln, a če si popoln, se ti zapre možnost resničnih doživetij.

Včasih se morda zdi, da ni izhoda iz civilizacijske zanke spodobnosti razen z radikalnim rezom. Laibach se s to mislijo poigrava, Teror = Dekor jo dokazuje skorajda nehote. In če se teror, množično politično nasilje, dejansko izenači z dekorjem, potem je izgubljeno vse. Ker tisti trenutek – in to je Laibachova poanta – ne bo nič surovega, hladnega ali divjega zmoglo predreti trde kože civilizacije, da bi nam vrnilo našo človeškost. V veliki meri so to evropski strahovi in bolj kot se oddaljuješ od francoskih bencinskih črpalk, kjer žubori pop glasba in kjer strežejo sveže rogljičke tudi ob treh zjutraj, bolj se oddaljuješ od te čudne posamezne groze, da morda ne boš nikoli več občutil česar koli resničnega, ali drugače rečeno, da ne boš nikoli več imel pristnega doživetja brez občutka, da si pri tem opazovan. Kot je pokazal Kariž, se pristno doživetje snema, ponovno uporablja in se s svetlobno hitrostjo potlači, posreduje in naredi neresnično. Mogoče so vsi ti ljudje v dnevnikih sobah, ki jih opazujejo, snemajo in posredujejo skozi slike, resnični, vendar niso resnični ne za nas ne za obiskovalce galerije, ki strmijo v zabrisane podobe ljudi ali samo njihovega pohištva na televizijskem ekranu. Pri tem prenosu se je nekaj izgubilo – resničnost sama. In zaradi te izgube provokacija v obeh primerih kriči svoje globoko pošteno sporočilo, da moraš še naprej čutiti, a hkrati ves čas zagotavlja, da je bitka proti pretvarjanju že izgubljena. Kajti če bi nekoga po naključju dejansko nekaj ganilo, preprosto ni bilo prostora za odkrito izražanje čustev. Ne gre samo za neuspeh pri izzivanju ali izražanju političnega ali družbenega ogorčenja (na primer proti naraščajočemu javnemu nadzorovanju), ampak je izginilo, tako se zdi, tudi že preprosto topotanje.

## LITERATURA

- ARNS, Inka, 2002. *Neue Slowenische Kunst : eine Analyse ihrer Künstlerischen Strategien im Kontext der 1980er Jahre in Jugoslawien*. Regensburg
- BOURRIAUD, Nicolas, 1998. *Relational aesthetics*. Dijon
- DANTO, Arthur, 1981. *Transfiguration of the commonplace : a philosophy of art*. Cambridge (MA)

- GRŽINIĆ, Marina, 1993. Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK) : the art groups Laibach, Irwin, and Noordung  
Cosmokinetical Theater Cabinet – New Strategies in the 1990s. *Slovene Studies* 15, št. 1/2, str. 5–16
- KARIŽ, Žiga; KRPAN, Jurij, 2003. Repubblica di Slovenia = Republic of Slovenia : Terror=Décor: Art Now.  
V: *Dreams and conflicts : the dictatorship of the viewer : La Biennale di Venezia : 50<sup>th</sup> international art exhibition*. Padova
- MONROE, Alexei, 2003. *Pluralni monolit*. Ljubljana
- PLUT-PREGELJ, Leopoldina [etc.], 2000. *The repluralization of Slovenia in the 1980's : new revelations from archival records*. Seattle
- RAMET, Sabrina, 1994. Shake, rattle, and self manegement : making the scene in Yugoslavia. V: *Rocking the state: rock music and politics in Eastern Europe and Russia*. Boulder, str. 120
- KARIŽ, Žiga, 2003. The pitfalls of image [intervju z Žigo Karižem, pogovarjala se je Vesna Teržan]. V: *Terror=decor : art now*. Ljubljana, str. 22–23
- ŽIŽEK, Slavoj, 1994. The enlightenment in Laibach. *Art & design* 9, št. 1, Ljubljana, str. 81–87

---

---

# ON THE DELIBERATE FORECLOUSE OF EMOTIONAL RESPONSE

## An Essay on Slovene Art and European Civilization More Generally

---

Gretchen Bakke

---

209

### Introduction

The same pattern repeats itself. One goes to the gallery, or concert hall, or theater in hopes of being moved, of feeling a certain awe, of being touched intensely by an object or an event located entirely outside of one's own self and body. The expectation is that the stuff one encounters there, in the space of art, will make an impression, press itself literally into the mind or the eye, into the heart or the intellect, firmly enough that one is marked by the act of having gone and seen. Art, or at least European art, is designed to provoke a response and, if well done, it should move – or change – the viewer in some way, it matters not if the art is religious or modern, Viennese actionism (blood everywhere) or hyper-deliberate, obsessively-slow French cinema, the goal is the same: to have an effect on the inner being of each and every individual with whom it comes into contact. So that we who venture out into art should come home again marked by the encounter. And it is this transformative potential that differentiates art proper – what some might call High Art – from crafts or décor, and not its relative uselessness in any pragmatic sense, as some are wont to hold.

If art is conceived of in this way – as primarily effective – it matters not if the object is beautiful, ugly, or sublime; if it is well done or poorly realized; if it is shown in a gallery or a urinal (or for that matter if it is a gallery or urinal); if it is a good idea or a lame one; if it is exceptional or mediocre. As long as it succeeds at moving its audience – be it via aesthetics, politics, or pure intensity of experience – then it must be considered something of a success. Nor does the materiality of art remain an attribute only of objects. As Bourriaud points out: “...an object is every bit as immaterial as a phone call. And a work that consists in a dinner around a soup is every bit as material as a statue”.<sup>1</sup> So that poorly realized, failed art is differentiated from good art not by its quality, durability, fungibility, nor by the inherent genius of the thing/experience itself but, rather, by its impactfulness.

---

<sup>1</sup> Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Relational Aesthetics*, Dijon: Les presses du réel 1998: 47.

Much of Slovene contemporary art, however, appears to systematically sidestep engaging its audience and thus, given an evaluative system based upon the evocation of emotion, it becomes easy to make the claim that such art is simply crap – a claim that is, not incidentally, often made. And yet Slovene artistic undertakings of the past six or seven years are far too considered, regular, and almost predictable in their failure to incite emotional response or, in many cases, to make any sort of impact at all upon their audience for such a judgment to be fitting. For it seems as if the foreclosure of an emotional response, concomitant with an articulated desire for provocation, is often a deliberate and integrated, though not necessarily conscious, element of the work of art. It is precisely the difficult maneuvering necessary in order not to make an impression with which I will be concerned in this article.

The “failure” not to move their audience has in no way diminished the imperative to feel in contemporary Slovene artworks, in fact quite to the contrary, the audience is very often berated – both in the work of art itself and in the secondary texts produced by artists and critics alike – for their apathy in the face of what should have provoked outrage and, ideally, some sort of gaugeable (re)action. The emotional impact of the art, be it rooted in message or medium, is no less valued in these works than in contemporary productions elsewhere on the continent, the difference is that here it is sabotaged. The process then is one of provocation into emotionality coupled with the systematic foreclosure of the expression of emotions provoked. The myriad techniques used by Slovenes to accomplish this task of foreclosure will be here explored both in relationship to Slovene grappling with expressing emotion more generally and in relation to a wider, primarily Western European push for civilized response trussed tightly to a very real horror at the thought that the capacity for true, authentic feeling might already have been lost. To this end I will take up two very different cases: Žiga Kariž’s *Terror = Décor* project which occupied the A + A gallery qua Slovene pavilion of the Venice Biennale in 2003 and Laibach’s comeback (but always already been here) concert held in Trbovlje, Slovenia on July 24<sup>th</sup> of that same year.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Banality of Terror: Kariž**

The seemingly timely, though most often judged mediocre, *Terror = Décor: Art Now* project, the latest instantiation of which inhabits the Slovene Pavilion at the Venice Biennale of Contemporary Art, has already generated myriad texts, including an accompanying book of essays about the artist’s - Žiga Kariž’s - work and history.<sup>3</sup> There are also billboards advertising the exhibit scattered throughout

<sup>2</sup>The original form of this article was as an exploration of the pragmatics of mediocrity to be co-written with Jurij Krpan, curator of the Slovene pavilion and thus also of Kariž’s contribution to the biennale. While I have since digressed significantly from the original thematic I remain grateful to Jurij for his hard-headed insistence that the mechanisms of failure also be given their due, though I know not if he would entirely agree with the various conclusions here reached.

<sup>3</sup> *Terror=Décor Art Now*, Ljubljana: Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, 2003.

Ljubljana bearing a single undeniably beautiful image of an explosion flinging the silhouette of a man's body up and away. Despite the lushness of secondary images and texts produced about this exhibit, the most common opinion of both Slovenes and foreigners alike was that it had failed; that it neither moved its audience nor adequately represented Slovene contemporary art in an international, comparative (and, arguably, competitive) setting. This rhetoric of failure did, however, crack open a space less for the critique of the art work itself and more for an exploration of the ways that work might evoke (or fails to evoke) a particular (let alone any) response from its audience. And while the substance of the exhibit was admittedly, in my opinion too, unremarkable, the particular failings of *Terror = Décor* provided a precise point of entry into larger issues of the meaningfulness and necessity of both ethical and aesthetic action in a world where terror and décor are relevant and curiously intertwined categories of act and object.

### **The Exhibit**

To begin, then, a brief description of the exhibit itself. The Slovene pavilion was a grand name for a small gallery (A+A, San Marco 3073, Venezia),<sup>4</sup> with a lovely location at the end of a narrow Venetian alleyway, a forty minute walk away from the biennale's hub in the Giardini (in the eastern part of the city), but near a scattering of other small pavilions (Estonia, Iran, Indonesia, etc.). Approaching, one's eye was first caught by both the title *TERROR = DÉCOR* and the contrast between the clean, brightly-lit, glass-encased, art-festooned walls of the gallery space and the aged grey narrowness of the alley leading up to it. This first impression faded into a certain weak puzzlement upon entering, a puzzlement repeatedly expressed in the knitted brows and tilted heads of visitors wandering into, and quickly through and out of, the gallery. The art – four framed pictures in the first room plus a painting, and three TV monitors plus a painting in the second – was well displayed, nicely framed and flat: graphically, emotionally, aesthetically. The images of “terror”, of which there were three, appeared to be (and were) details of a single explosion from a single frame of video.<sup>5</sup> Each was riddled with black lines giving the impression that one was looking at a still frame on an old TV set or at an advertisement, though the explosion depicted was itself undeniably beautiful, aesthetically pleasing as it boiled in the still grace of destructive passion. *Terror*, however, was absent despite the requisite black silhouette of a human form flung into the air by the force of the blast. Both the potential of terror's sublimity and/or of its horror appeared at first glance to have been replaced with something at best simply pretty. Nor did the elements added to the images via computer quite relieve the viewer of the sensation (and this is my opinion) that the art was a bit common, each image of roiling boiling flames differing too little from the next; each image being, in fact, a piece of the same original still.

---

<sup>4</sup> Homepage at <http://www.aplusait>

<sup>5</sup> The still is taken from the film: *The Rock*. Michael, Director, 1996.

All of these pieces - including also a sort of cheery Mondrianesque redux - were slickly produced, computer rendered, and nicely framed with a web-cam eye embedded in the picture itself, ostensibly to observe the viewer observing the painting. This “camera in the painting” bringing us round once again to the age old, and dry with dust question of who is looking at whom when one faces a work of art: does the painting look at me or do I look at the painting? A more charitable reading is one, in which the audience is assumed to understand that there is a certain pedigree to the issue of observation and the subjective positioning generated by the painting/viewer relationship within the history of European art, and to which *Terror = Décor* is contributing a new chapter and some new objects. Regardless of the generosity of one’s opinion – and I lean more to the former view than the latter – what emerges as important in this case is that both viewer and painting were incorporated only into a conceptual, not actual, loop. The camera-eyes in the gallery didn’t actually record the viewer of the painting and, what’s more, the cameras were all too easily misunderstood by the visitor more versed in the technology of the museum diorama than a centuries old debate about the gaze of the painting. Simply put, the cameras looked like buttons, but if you pushed one – as more than one visitor did on more than one occasion - nothing happened.

In the next room of the gallery qua national pavilion were three TV monitors, each with a computer conspicuously mounted on the wall beneath it, a large curved desk behind which sat a woman (a real one), and a large map painted over the entirety of the far wall. On the desk were promotional materials. And this was basically it. Except, of course, for the images on the TV screens which reload ever 30 seconds or so and appeared to be (and were) the interiors of peoples’ homes. The images were grainy, and difficult to make out, so that the people there imaged were only visible in their disjointed movements and, as with the silhouette of death, were without specific identities (faces). The images simply were not clear enough to see the peculiarities of facial features, stance, or voice (there was no audio), and they lacked even the minimum level of detail necessary to make those therein anything but average humans; that is to say, they were pointedly non-specific. And if no one was home, what the TV screens displayed were a series of still rooms filled with empty furniture. Occasionally a screen would go dark (if someone turns out the light, the technology of surveillance is immediately rendered ineffectual) and sometimes something would go awry with the connection itself, causing the screen in the gallery to turn olive-mint green and be marked with a threatening little white X in the middle. The impression produced by these apparent video tapes of oft empty domestic spaces coupled with the largest painting in the first room of two empty European doctor’s office style chairs is that the exhibit’s thematic was not “terror” but “empty furniture”.

There was actually an ironic grain of truth to this, for upstairs - an area neatly cordoned off with a bit of red twine - were two large empty bookcases, again Mondrianesque, a computer, and on most days the slight body of the artist himself. In residence as it were. This space was simply never finished. The original plan



was to build a research center of sorts up there with computers and a table where visitors to the gallery could work on aspects of the exhibit, mostly those having to do with mapping and terror, making the whole project ongoing and interactive. This idea would have pulled the body of the visitor in to the stuff of the art. And this idea is remarkable in that not only was it not realized, but in not being realized it managed to produce two more pieces of empty furniture and to once again exclude humans as particular beings in the world, despite an articulated craving to incorporate them. Thus, even in the ways that the exhibit failed to achieve an idealized version of itself, it managed to confirm (yet again) the sensation that Kariž did not want anyone to actually notice it, or him for that matter, squirreled away as he was in the upstairs room, communicating with the world through a computer screen and flanked by empty furniture.

### **Political Terror**

Terror, in the context of right now, appears as a straight black arrow pointing at the sublime, though increasingly monotonous, replay of the explosion and collapse of the World Trade Center. New York city castrated, flames and smoke on a grand scale, bodies as shadows, falling infinitely against the background of skyscrapers which no longer stand. That this event – now rendered simply as a date in time – has clearly become also an aesthetic, almost decorative, always emotional, series of images goes almost without saying. And while many Americans do have images of the towers both before and during 9/11 posted up somewhere in their home, these images, despite the cultural wound they evoke and the deaths they index, do not hold a candle to the lead photo of any given Latin American newspaper on any day of any week. There human bodies are not pictured as plummeting silhouettes, or pasted up poster images, but rather mark the asphalt with the black smears of their own blood; bodies are dead people, individuals with faces, dead faces, dead eyes, and dead broken backs. There is nothing recuperable, neither in the image nor in the reality from which it is taken, nothing romantic. And though photojournalism in cities where personal, political, and police disputes are still largely settled by means of assassination certainly also follows specific genre conventions, violent death is simply not being aesthetically rendered in the ways necessary for it to become decorative. The issue here at stake here is not the degree of pain those personally connected to the dead feel, but the ways in which tragedy is depicted and how such depictions as aesthetic decisions allow for the secondary deployment of images, replete with the particular paranoias, fears, and emotional responses they are designed to generate.

The exhibit at Indonesia's pavilion (just 2 contorted Venetian blocks from Slovenia's), which also took terror, in the form of the nightclub bombing in Bali, as its topic, exemplifies this difference between making terror aesthetically tenable – that is something one might not mind hanging on one's wall - and making an object of it which is both disgusting and disturbing – that is in some fundamental way true to the event it attempts to re-present. In the black second room of this

pavilion hung a series of large paintings made from news photographs of the remains of the blasted-out Bali nightclub. In these paintings bodies were everywhere and life size and the paintings themselves were smeared with blood. They were actually held under the bodies of newly slaughtered oxen (a documentary film in the third room depicted this process in all its gory detail) until the images of the dead-by-terror ran with rivulets of thick, already coagulating, red. And the room itself was not only painted black, it was unlit. One was given a flashlight upon entering and then left to make out the colors, faces, dramas embodied by focusing one's light, one's eyes, and one's attention upon them.<sup>6</sup> Here a far more politically current version of terror was rendered artistically, brought close to the nose which knows the smell of blood, and forced intimacy with a subject much more pleasing when kept at a distance. And though the graceful fall of the World Trade Center buried numerous bodies within it, everyday visual experiences of death do not come so easily to grace the walls of homes and offices as did the crumbling into dust of these edifices.

There is a very simplistic but largely accurate analytic idea, hinted at here, that emerged repeatedly from the structure and design strategy of the entire biennale: that there are parts of the world with an excess of sensation and, arguably also, a dearth of civilization where reality is in no short supply and coming by even the most basic of things -from drinking water to respect – is a daily struggle. The art from these nations focused on temporary housing, urban clutter, illness, dignity, and food while paying very little concern to notions like surveillance, artificiality, pharmaceuticals, or beauty. These latter issues formed instead the predictable thematics of art from the parts of the world that seem to suffer, ironically, from a lack of reality, where plastic flamingos outnumber real ones, where civilization is worn like an over-tight pair of pants, and where the fear that TV will eat up real life, while absurd, is justified. The divide is not simply between the West and the rest, as the Bali exhibit exemplifies, the two worlds are not separate, nor are there only two, but, as trite as it may seem, there is a deep concern in the European projects at the biennale about the terror that is civilization's stranglehold on our very ability to feel.

### **The Culture Industry**

The Slovene pavilion took this westernized, mediatized, abstraction of terror – and concomitant move toward the aestheticization of a violent act - one step further by situating itself within a world defined by the Frankfurt school's albeit once useful categorization of terror as the primary business of the culture industry. Or in the artist's words: "I was inspired by Herbert Marcuse who defined pre-avant-garde art as décor in the world of terror".<sup>7</sup> At the most abstract level, which is not

<sup>6</sup> Made Winata, *Dream land*, 2003. Part of *Mourning of the World: Paradise Lost* the project presented of the Indonesia pavilion of the Venice Biennale of Contemporary Art 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Teržan, Vesna. "The Pitfalls of Image – An interview with Žiga Karž" in *Terror=Décor Art Now*, Ljubljana: Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, 2003: 22.

made explicit in the exhibit, this means that it is not the violence wrought against once living, now dead, human bodies that counts as terror but the depictions of it and of everything else as made manifest by and transmitted through the mass media. The culture industry, according to this model, transforms the lived experiences of some into an endless stream of, at best sublime and at worst simply pretty, images. And it is this distancing of individuals from direct experience – an alienation understood to be the direct result of capitalism and advertising – that is the violent act. Only a socio-political awareness that leads to direct and political action can salvage the genericizing and banalizing of culture and of modern man right along with it. Or as Kariž himself puts it:

Because Terror=Décor is essentially a painter's project, the decision about which form of the revolt against capital I was going to choose was based on the type of visual material the movement – be it artistic or political – had produced. In other words, the decisive factor was the form into which the visual material had been commodified by capital. My De-Stijl-like compositions are interesting precisely because terror and décor are part of the same form, the painting, while the process of commodification is similar to the process of terrorism. Both were affected by popular culture.<sup>8</sup>

It must be remembered, however, that much of Adorno's, Horkheimer's and Marcuse's harshest theorizing of spectacle-making, soul-consuming, mass media culture was produced while they were in exile in the United States during World War II. While Nazi Germany obliterated European Jewry, of which most members of the Frankfurt school were a part, these three and a scattering of others were confronted with the petty insults of daily life in America. Everything from newspaper horoscopes to the gentle waving palms of Los Angeles boulevards can, under such circumstance, only but be imagined as a fair approximation of hell. It is decidedly odd however, that this particular ideology of terror as the mediatization of real life has been adopted as the context for an exhibit dealing with the relationship between terrorism and decoration at the turn of the new millennium. Now is an epoch in which entirely different and more immediately pressing narratives of terror hold sway. And while Kariž's choice of the theoretical context of his work cannot be quibbled with, it does lead to certain very basic misunderstandings between visitors to the Slovene pavilion and the art displayed therein. One expects to see an exhibit about terror at the level of states and world populations and is instead greeted with an at best obscure rehashing of post-war capitalist anxieties. What's more, the personal terror of radical isolation, of never being able to really feel anything, is the emotion most strongly communicated by the exhibit. As one viewer said to me upon leaving: "It is so obscure that it does what he [Kariž] wants, it makes you not notice it." Now this is truly something remarkable, art that seems designed to make no impact at all, and yet which holds within it an ethical imperative to feel so strongly that one must act in the world, all tied up with the twin bows of terror and décor.

---

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*: 22 – 23

## Social Isolation

216 The sensation, then, that under-girds the entire undertaking is one of unbridgeable isolation from the human life-world. In making the exhibit too obscure, too shiny, too like an advertising campaign, too bland, too flat, too out of keeping with the expectations one might have based upon the title etc., Kariž managed to reach the same ends using disparate means, effectively isolating the observers from sensation, binding them to indifference, while demanding (in the secondary literature at least) that they be moved, shocked, or awed into a state of moral outrage. The project keeps everything and everyone at a distance, refusing interaction with it, even on the levels at which the audience might desire such interactions: terror is advertised but not clearly present, and surveillance while present cannot clearly be grasped. And all of these foreclosures combined to simply puzzle the biennale-goer and casual art aficionado.<sup>9</sup>

However, if one takes a different tact and looks at the exhibit as an attempt to isolate the viewer from any evocative emotion or tenable, identifiable connection to reality, then it was remarkable for its consistency. All the human's were faceless, non-specific bodies, blurred around the edges, or captured only in silhouette; there was a thematic of generic, empty furniture, furniture that one might see in a doctor's office or boardroom at the fringes of capitalist modernity. And there was the issue of maps, perhaps one of the best tools in the modern world for abstracting seemingly representative, or true, information about the world from the stuff of world itself.<sup>10</sup> And I posit that it was for precisely this reason – that of abstraction from a life world of feeling - that *Terror = Décor: Art Now* demanded that its audience be touched by the real stuff of violence in the world, that they be outraged by the terror or by the invasive action of surveillance. Or, as it was put in the exhibit catalog: "...the project provocatively addresses the viewers and forces them to face the acute problems thematized in the *Terror=Décor* project."<sup>11</sup> But of course, it did nothing of the sort.

## Rational Response

The point that *Terror = Décor* did manage to make, albeit in the least impactful of ways, was that civilization is itself a form of terror. Not on a grandiose scale but on a personal one. The scream of the civilized man resounds always inside of himself. Appearances must be maintained as one is continuously being watched, judged, surveilled

<sup>9</sup> It is my impression that Slovene reactions to *Terror=Décor* were slightly different than those of a more general audience to the biennale. The Slovenes I spoke with about the exhibit were far more caught up in the local politics of preference and finance that undergirded the selection of Krpan to curate and Kariž to represent contemporary Slovene art. Though the general tone was disappointment in the final product among Slovenes, money and personality and preference always emerged as the main topics of discussion.

<sup>10</sup> It is precisely this aspect of maps as tools of obfuscation and manipulation that seems to interest him as attested to by Blaž Križnik in the article "Mapping Now – what makes paintings run and why do we map them" in the booklet *Terror = Décor: Art Now*, Ljubljana, NUK, 2003.

<sup>11</sup> Kariž, Žiga & Jurij Krpan. "Repubblica di Slovenia/Republic of Slovenia: *Terror=Décor: Art Now*" in *Dreams and Conflicts: The Dictatorship of the Viewer*, Padova: Marsilio Editori, 2003: 580.

not only by one's peers but by abstract entities like state bureaucracies, police departments, and TV cameras. Always being monitored without ever being touched, without ever being able to feel anything except the ache of a glass eye turned blind – but recording – one's every move, every faux pas, every pimple, every failure. It is this immobilizing terror that was by and large communicated by the inaccessibility of Kariž's work, by its demands (in secondary texts) that the viewer be touched, or moved in some deep and real way, while providing only non-functional embedded cameras in glossy framed films stills. It was impossible for the viewer – based on the exhibit alone - to even understand that these works wield a sort of imperative, a blunt sword of panic swung by a blind man as the rest go blithely about their afternoon tour of the art of “second-tier” nations: Lithuania, Slovenia, Iran, Finland, Indonesia, all sharing a small Venetian neighborhood, easy to walk from one to the next, and all, oddly enough, more memorable and more consistent than the one that proclaimed itself relevant, emblazoning the word terror on every available surface.

I do not mean to be unjust, for I think that in this exhibit Kariž has very accurately captured modern European anxieties about the inability to be touched by (and touch in turn) something like reality. Certainly, European civilization has systematically hacked at the very concept of the real for millennia and has with Lacan (De Bord, Baudrillard, and Slovenia's only truly famous native, Žižek) more or less effectively, dispatched it. In order to understand what this exhibit really did manage to depict, I think that one must actually take into account the ways in which Kariž himself appears to live only in the media world. Real people in the real world, in this case walking around looking at art, are fed into cameras which go nowhere and display nothing while other cameras in other places broadcast images of those places and the people in them. Kariž is playing with surveillance without actually accomplishing it, and it is my sense that this is because he himself suffers from, and reproduces, the very real terror of civilized abstraction from the here and now.

As an American (we still bask in our own savagery) I find these fears almost boring, but nevertheless it does seem to me that the way existential isolation is being mimicked in the object/human relations of the exhibit does betray a certain genius. In a life world that is too spotless and well regulated, too damn pleasant, it is logical to look for something that will crack open smooth surfaces and banish the hegemony of appearances, revealing that even those who seem soundest and most flawless on the outside also roar with pain despite never failing to gel their perfect hair and diet in their perfect bodies.

### **Terror of the Banal: Laibach.**

Laibach is in the business of provocation and, unlike Kariž, they are masters of the discipline. Someone unfamiliar with the group could easily mistake them for just another Eastern European industrial rock band, and certainly they do have concerts, produce albums, go on tours and exhibit all the trappings of your average rock group. And yet their will to be stereotyped, or to become whatever one might imagine them to be - fascists, artists, vampires, citizen provocateurs, Satan's minions,

cultural saviors, etc., etc. - makes the simple moniker “band” fall a bit flat, though admittedly it is in this guise that they accomplish their most subtle (and blatant) acts of social provocation.

218 Also unlike Kariž, Laibach consistently choose the role of lightning rod in a maelstrom of their own making over that of backroom choreographer. And yet, despite basking in a radical explicitness of personality this personality is pointedly neither individual nor entirely easy to interpret. Laibach is what, in the common parlance of identity politics, is known as a “teamwork identity” each individual member of the group subsuming themselves into the structure of the whole, becoming most fully anonymous at moments of greatest publicness. That is to say that each of the human elements of Laibach when acting as a part of Laibach eschews their personal name, identity, and creative claim to the ideas, initiatives, and products of the group. It is not so much that each one is the same as the others, but that each is critical to the project and productions of the whole as if it were a singular, so that the members of Laibach stand in relation to it not as rock star to rock group (think Justin Timberlake and NSYNC) but as an arm or a mouth or an anus might be understood as a critical component of an individual body. Or as Laibach put it (in the early 1990’s) in conversation with Sabrina Ramet:

Q: “What is your definition of an individual?”

A: “A multitude of one million divided by one million”<sup>12</sup>

For Laibach, this is not just talk. They devote an immense amount of attention to practicing what they preach, caring for the details that constitute stereotypes, and encouraging misperceptions of every conceivable sort about who they are and what they stand for. And the group’s genius lies in this unwaveringly explicit construction and performance of their public persona, so perfectly realized, without the precise content of this persona ever becoming entirely clear. For it’s easy with Laibach to get caught up in issues of the veracity of their fascist persona (are they or aren’t they?) and never proceed to just what such a persona might help them to accomplish and also what avenues of accomplishment it might critically foreclose. Much, by now, has been written on the first subject<sup>13</sup> and very little on the second and yet there is

---

12 Ramet, Sabrina. “Shake, Rattle, and Self Management: Making the Scene in Yugoslavia,” in *Rocking the State: Rock Music and Politics in Eastern Europe and Russia*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1994: 120.

13 Indeed much has been written on NSK and Laibach and their importance historically to Slovene independence and cultural spreading, some among the most seminal (in my opinion) are: Arns, Inka. *Neue Slowenische Kunst: Eine Analyse Ihrer Künstlerischen Strategien im Kontext der 1980er Jahre in Jugoslawien*, Regensburg: Museum Ostdeutsche Galerie, 2002. Gržinič, Marina. “Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK): The Art Groups Laibach, Irwin, and Noordung Cosmokinetical Theater Cabinet - New Strategies in the 1990s” in *Slovene Studies* 15 (1/2), 1993: 5-16. Monroe, Aleksej. *Pluralni Monolit*, Ljubljana: Maska, 2003. Plut-Pregelj, Leopoldina et.al. ed. *The Repluralization of Slovenia in the 1980’s: New Revelations from Archival Records*, Donald W. Treadgold Papers #24, The Jackson School of International Studies: University of Washington, February 2000. Žižek “The Enlightenment in Laibach” in *Art & Design* 9(3/4), March/April 1994. and, of course Michael Benson’s film *Predictions of Fire*, Benson, Michael (Director)& TV Slovenia (Producer). Kinetikon Pictures, 1993.

something strongly reminiscent of Kariž's anxieties about being known - or even perceived - in Laibach's hyper-role-defined, almost excessive, publicness.

### **The Concert**

After a seven year hiatus Laibach issued a new CD – entitled “WAT” - in the summer of 2003 and went on a European tour that autumn. Shortly before either of these events they held an invitation only concert on the 24<sup>th</sup> of July in the group's hometown of Trbovlje, Slovenia. This show was designed to be something like a muffled cry of triumph, for 20 years earlier the group – when they really were scary teenage (maybe) neo-fascists and Yugoslavia was still exigent and relatively sound - had been banned from playing this formal, almost stodgy, venue, and yet now, 20 years later, their appearance on the proscenium of Delavski dom was oddly anachronistic. There was Laibach in full-form, encased in all their predictable “provocative” Teutonic trappings, growling out their lyrics: EINS, ZWEI, DREI, VIER/BRUEDERCHEN, KOMM TANZ MIT MIR /EINS, ZWEI, DREI, VIER/BEIDE HAENDE REICH ICH DIR<sup>14</sup> ... in front of a nicely dressed middle-aged audience of friends and supporters, not fans.

219

This group of ideological comrades in arms makes up some small portion of the audience at every Laibach show I've attended in the Balkans.<sup>15</sup> But, unlike the Trbovlje show, at most of Laibach's concerts aging aesthetes and social activists are in the minority, over-shadowed entirely by huge guys in their early 20s dressed all in black, sporting either long hair (metal fans) or no hair (neo-nazis) with a smattering of slim girls, also in black, interspersed.<sup>16</sup> Everyone drinks beer and stands more or less motionless, moving only to raise the occasional fist at the appropriate moment. That is to say, Laibach has a fan base and they were not on the invited list in Trbovlje.<sup>17</sup> Instead it was a who's who of Slovene alternative culture, some press, and some outsiders: a certain number of passport carrying citizens of the NSK state who had been invited from around Europe and some clueless American college students (the only ones not in black) who were in the midst of a five week stint at Makrolab (a Slovene live-in, high-tech research center/art amalgam) in Venice. Excepting these foreign invitees, all in attendance were well-dressed and well known to one another, circulating, exchanging greetings and goodbyes with a kiss-kiss and generating a

---

<sup>14</sup> “TANZ MIT LAIBACH” (Inspired by German - American friendship). Lyrics accessed at <http://www.nskstate.com>, May 6, 2004.

<sup>15</sup> Remarkably, I was even shushed by two finely dressed Slovenes at a Zagreb concert for explaining smatterings of the history of the group to a friend. The absurdity of this situation cannot be overemphasized, it is akin to shushing someone at a Motorhead concert so as to better appreciate the fine lyric quality of the performance. Laibach is loud and not subtle, at least not musically.

<sup>16</sup> Honestly, I have never attended any concert event anywhere in the world with such a universally tall fan base, Serbs and Croats do tend to be a bit larger than average, but only the most gigantic of them apparently take the trouble to attend Laibach shows.

<sup>17</sup> Nor was I, incidentally, invited but I used the Slovene informal invitation system (once I found out about the show) of getting someone you know to get someone they know to provide enough tickets to get everyone in.

truly prodigious amount of small talk. All the while snacking happily (before the show) on cookies shaped like the ubiquitous NSK cross (decorated in colored sugar), some especially delicious buns, sipping “Laibach Wine” (red and white both) decanted from bottles labeled with the “WAT” CD cover and (after the show) munching on fried fish and sausages and imbibing much more wine - of the non-Laibach variety.

220 The concert itself was the full album of WAT performed from beginning to end, lights, smoke, two buxom uniformed girls beating on snare drums with exaggerated, machine-like motions, and the vocals rendered, as per usual, in deep gravely German, English, and, in this case, also a single song - “Anti-Semitism” - in Slovene. At the concert’s end the entire audience was invited by a recorded voice speaking an artificially thick, Slavic accented English to attend a party just outside of town atop Kum mountain. This after-party was itself a lovely event: long, full of food and drink and talk, plus some disco dancing and sexually explicit preaching in an aged church also located at mountain’s top.<sup>18</sup> It was, in short, a well orchestrated event and an all-round pleasant evening, with much mingling, and good cheer, despite the fact that both the concert venue – the meticulously kept Delavski dom (workers hall) with plush padded seats and fine acoustics – and the audience, were very much out of keeping with what one might expect of a standard average rock show.

In fact, kibitzing, snacking, socializing, the audience seemed hardly to pause to enjoy the Art – that is, the concert itself - which afterwards merited only the most cursory of judgments: “Oh they always put on a good show” or “Laibach, its always the same,” blithe commentary produced in direct response to an anthropologist’s queries. Neither did I overhear any burning discussions of the concert, which isn’t to say that it wasn’t discussed, but it was clear as we filed out of the auditorium and trickled toward our cars for the slow curvy drive up Kum mountain that the “show” was not the reason we had come. The ostensible substance of the evening – the Laibach concert – was, not to put too sharp a point on it, a bit dull. And this is not an easy feat, the construction of a boring rock concert, that despite exhibiting all the trappings of a really good show, from hard-edged costumery to a well-tuned sound system, all in support of some famous rock stars (Slovenia’s only internationally famous rock stars) performing some of their best music in a decade, still failed to make much of an impression. And the crowd trickling out behaved not unlike aging theater goers at the MGL (Mestno gledališče ljubljansko) who, after having seen some new, highly conservative, rendition of Chekhov, stand up and immediately begin to gossip about mutual acquaintances. As if the theatrical suicide 30 seconds before had never happened, or alternately, as if Laibach had never taken the stage.

This is, of course not exactly true, the mood that prevailed after the Laibach concert was one of pleasant good cheer, the mood before was slightly more atomized and formal; there was a subtle though marked swing in the collective good humor

---

<sup>18</sup> Later deemed defiled, on account of Laibach, Mlakar, the word “fuck.” and the other debauchery-like events of the evening, this little church was resanctified by the Catholics in August of 2003. This was the only bit of honest – though orchestrated - brouhaha generated by the entire evening, and another story entirely.



of the crowd. And neither is it simply true – as the analogy with traditional theater going might suggest – that Laibach failed on this one occasion to overcome the banalizing power of “social niceties” properly performed. Quite to the contrary, the event itself was a trap. And it was also a celebration. As with all things Laibach, neither the first explanation nor the second entirely suffices.

### **Pragmatics of the Banal**

Every work of contemporary art leaves open a space for a multitude of possible back-stories about what it might be (x) and what its being x might mean. The only faulty interpretation - and this is almost universally true - is the one that takes the thing to be simply what it is, mistaking external states as accurate reflections of internal ones; namely, a reading that assumes that if it dresses like a Nazi and quotes Hitler then it probably is fascist. The imperative of contemporary art is that one must guess at motivations and meanings snugly invisible on the surface of things. A space of interpretation has been opened and must be filled in for the work of art to even exist as such; else it remains merely “a truncated syllogism, one with a missing premise or a missing conclusion”.<sup>19</sup> The contemporary work of art, of which Laibach is exemplary, is thusly designed, with a looming and unavoidable logical gap constitutive of the thing itself.

221

The visitor to the gallery or the concert hall, if he or she has been properly inured to expectations of original works of genius in the space of art, thus, has to make up a story as to why these things are here: Why, we must ask ourselves, does Laibach look like, sound like, act precisely like that? For without the process of inventing, or coming to know, the back-story contemporary art really is in many cases just trash, the flotsam and jetsam of contemporary life recontextualized, remade, via transportation, into art. And if one cannot, for whatever reason, come up with a plausible back story then the exhibit, or the performance, fails to become art and remains just nothing much, something to be glanced at and glossed over. It is not so much that anything can be art (permanent death remains excluded from the category), but that anything can be construed as art and the success of this joint act of construal is premised as much upon the work of art, as upon the willingness of the spectator to create, understand, or believe as plausible the story he or she is being told (or inventing) about it. Or as Danto so nicely puts it:

[The reader of the [work of art]] must himself fill the gap deliberately left open by the [framer of the [work of art]]: he must supply what is missing and draw his own conclusions (“his own conclusions” are those “anyone” could draw)...the middle term has to be found, the gap has to be filled in, the mind moved to action. The provocation to participation is powerless against or merely puzzling to a person with insufficient knowledge.<sup>20</sup>

He is speaking, in logical terms, of the enthymematic gap.

---

<sup>19</sup> Danto 1981: 170.

<sup>20</sup> Danto 1981: 171.

An enthymeme is a truncated syllogism, with a missing premise or a missing conclusion, and it yields a valid syllogism when, in addition to meeting the usual conditions of syllogistic validity, the missing line is an obvious truth, or taken to be an obvious truth: something anybody can be expected to accept without special further effort: a banality.<sup>21</sup>

222 Regardless of its banality, or obviousness, this exclusion of a necessary term or a particular piece of information without which there is no sense to be made, subtly forces the reader of the enthymeme into interpretation, within a fairly narrow set of possibilities, or else dooms him or her to ignorance of the demands both of the object and of the situation. In the case of contemporary art there are many plausible ways to fill in the gap in order to make something true, and all of these are banalities. Meaning that when they are made explicit, the dumbness of the entire project shines forth. This is one way of reading what happened at the Laibach show in Trbovlje: the audience was in the know.

This is not to say that Laibach's project (or that of NSK more broadly) is simply passé but, lacking a certain necessary tension, or lack of understanding, on the part of the audience, the art of being Laibach is drained of its impact. The constitutive absence that characterizes Laibach must be filled but not too consciously or articulately for it is this inexplicit act of sense making that causes the contemporary work of art to be other than just a not so subtle series of recontextualizations. And it is the possibility of being misread that constitutes art's (and Laibach's) creative potential – be it for good or for evil. “There is always a danger, in connection with an artwork one admires, to put into words what [it] means, for it is always available to anyone to say “is that all?” meaning that they can see very little recommendatory in that”.<sup>22</sup> As with the vast majority of contemporary artistic undertakings one could easily judge most Slovene contemporary art – Kariž and Laibach inclusive - in precisely this way. The missing premise is located and locatable in the stories that circulate about the thing and it is the fact of circulation of text and talk that completes the object as such provided that these stories are simple and banal enough to be believable, and that they follow a certain genre of discourse which renders them acceptable premises.

All of this to say that one way of reading the concert is that it was over-full, that properly speaking it was just a display of the qualities that people who love Laibach have come to recognize as the constitutive characteristics of the group, like the crooked nose on the face of a loved one, so also a little Teutonic pomp and circumstance makes Laibach recognizable as themselves. And so as the chill mountain evening rose to embrace the concert goers easing their way from the venue it was, of course, the warm afterglow of having spent the evening with a known and beloved entity that permeated a crowd not of fans, but of friends and admirers.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid*: 170.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid*: 173–4.

**Slovene Art**

I, like most others present at the Trbovlje show, tend to be magnanimous about the group; Laibach, after all (and unbeknownst to them) got me to Slovenia, and I too now fail to be a fan, no longer basking in, and worrying over, the veracity of their trappings; I find it easy enough to just enjoy the fact that Laibach is still at it, all these years later, still banging that same drum. And yet there is more to Laibach than just an admirable collective grown older and increasingly predictable with the years. They reveal something about Slovene culture that even Kariž's pained attempts at publicness failed to capture. Laibach's raging against civilization has always taken the shape of that selfsame civilization's tightest sphincter. They demand a reaction, that one feel something, if not about the miserable state of the world then about the band itself as a microcosm of evil (read: provocative) characteristics drawn from the 20<sup>th</sup> century's fiercest and most highly controlled ideological movements. They demand emotionality from their public – and over the years they have most certainly gotten it; around Laibach tempers flare, arousing passions, misgivings, disgust, worry – and yet they refuse emotionality themselves. The tight form of the group, so tenaciously adhered to, acts as a protective coating – or a social exoskeleton – in much the same way that Kariž's retreat from public view – retreat even from the surface of his own artworks – provides him with shelter and solace.

223

In both cases the articulated intent is that of provocation and in both cases the provocateur withdraws like a hermit crab into a shell of anonymity, exhibiting a very real ambivalence between wanting to be seen and wanting to remain invisible. Almost all Slovene artists, intellectuals, and members of the culture industry share this desire to provoke without becoming vulnerable, to excite while remaining rational, to make an impact without ever being perceived. The will to provocation – coupled with something akin to shame if one is ever personally riled up – is almost a national characteristic and it is arguably also the only socially acceptable means of hemorrhaging the norm. There are innumerable instances, in both art and public life more generally, in which a calculated hiddenness – in role, in uniform, in borrowed identity – allowed for a public display of emotionality, that is, the public release of a personal, individual interiority. But neither Laibach nor Žiga Kariž ever reach this point of self-expression. What they do instead, at least in these two instances, is replicate their own form – tight, hidden, inaccessible – in the events that they orchestrate, events ostensibly designed to provoke and yet set up in such a way that any effective provocation – of which there was arguably none in either case – could not have been expressed.

As the audience in Trbovlje, finished up their biscuits and filed gradually into the auditorium to take their places, chatting and worried a bit about whether or not they'd find a good spot close to friends, slowly making their way down carpeted stairs and scooting along rows of plush seats, it became clearly apparent, before Laibach even took the stage that outrage (were one capable of feeling it, which wasn't the point but was the necessary premise) simply could not be expressed in such environs. It was not just that the crowd was one already overly-well versed

in the particular provocations of the group, but that there was no physical space for emotionality, for letting loose, for calling out, or jumping to one's feet, for dancing, or marching, or raising one's fist. The chairs and the stage wouldn't allow for raucous response and the tight social atmosphere of propriety that characterized the event was such that even foot tapping, once the show got going, was minimal.

224 Impact, in these circumstances, while perhaps really expected and perhaps, in some cases, really achieved, could not possibly have been loosed from the body. For the rules of proper, civilized behavior were literally built into the setting, orchestration, and elitism of the event itself. One was stuck there in one's cushy chair, surrounded by other silent and immobile concert-goers, and the verbal or physical expression of feeling was entirely foreclosed both socially and circumstantially. In the process, all of Laibach's pomp and circumstance, bread and circuses, provocative lyrics and mechanistic rhythms became little more than a "formal" quality, a symbolically necessary but inherently meaningless aesthetic. Only the truly naive could misinterpret the event as something actually designed to produce emotional response rather than as a delivery system for a certain, culturally specific, comfort found in the pattern of demanding an emotional response. And this is precisely what the concert did do, it provided comfort through the ritual repetition of known elements and from this, an overwhelming sense of good cheer.

### **Evil of Banality**

Perhaps one of the best characterizations of Laibach that I have ever heard is that they "preserve the need to struggle against the evil of banality".<sup>23</sup> This does not mean that they are necessarily, or even often, successful in this struggle, but their tactics are notable in that they are the opposite of those taken by Kariž. Rather than repeating the banality of terror as a means of exemplifying it, they are pointed in their eschewal of the banal, choosing to embrace instead, in both form and content, all the evils that spring there from. Laibach simply will not let go of the ferocity of being what other people imagine as hateful. Like maggots they both cleanse and appall, finding a spot of anxiety – Amfortas' wound if you will – and inserting themselves willfully into it. Even the soft-sided Trbovlje show, pleasant as it was, had repercussions. And the next time Laibach took the public stage – at the WAT CD release press conference in September of 03 - they had once again been demonized, or more precisely, vampirized. A role they accepted with much gusto, arriving with a glass coffin qua display case and providing heaping bowls of garlic, onions, and turnips for the reporters in attendance to feast upon (along with more Laibach wine, of course). It is interestingly unimportant how they came once more, and via the eagerness of the press, to be the most stereotypical of bad guys – in this case royally pissing off the Catholic Church; what astounds is

<sup>23</sup> I believe that Aleksej Monroe said this, though it may have been Jani Novak; regardless who, it was uttered at the official WAT CD release/press conference in Bled on Sept. 7th, 2003.

that they continue to push at Slovene society in ways that it can almost not help but respond to, even though everyone knows that it is just Laibach, still the press grasps a hold of every potential for scandal – which Laibach supplies in spades – and minor irritants and infractions are magnified to the point of absurdity. This is where Laibach really shines, not so much in that they succeed in disrupting the peace and well-being of the social sphere, but that they continue to rub at it so effectively. Exposing, in this one singular instance, the everyday banality of a rock concert (and the audience thereto), the press corps, the Catholic Church, and most importantly (and with a new found sense of irony) Laibach themselves.

European Civilization more Generally

225

“BARBARIANS ARE COMING/ FROM THE EAST/ THEY’LL COME OUT OF NOWHERE/ THEY’LL ENTER YOUR STATE/ THE NATION OF LOSERS/ THE TRIBE FULL OF HATE/ WITH KNIVES IN THEIR POCKETS/ AND BOMBS IN THEIR HANDS/ THEY’LL BURN DOWN YOUR CITIES/ AND YOUR DISNEYLANDS”(Laibach)<sup>24</sup>

*»The western countries were historically the most barbaric and conquering and they are now judging others through their own historical experience and their own barbarism. Of course they fear that sooner or later they will have to pay for their old (and new) crimes against humanity. And, quite rightfully so, they probably will » (Laibach)<sup>25</sup>*

In the spring of 2003 a large exhibition on masochism was held in Graz, Austria, the former home of both Arnold Schwarzenegger and Leopold van Sacher-Masoch and just a stone’s throw to the north of the Slovene border. Parts of it were pure kitsch (a white fur room), others blatantly educational (19<sup>th</sup> century sex toys) and upstairs, on the third floor, brutal. Circulating amidst pictures of men strung up in the most astounding of ways, subject to every torture/pleasure easily photographable (from being urinated upon to penetrated by needles or dildos or stainless steel hooks) the audience of adult, presumably Austrians, held themselves tightly and moved with a certain silent deliberation. Taking everything in, each picture in turn, systematic, and silent as the tomb. I too moved in this way, jaw clenched slightly, anthropologist’s notebook at the ready, taking in each set of images and apparatuses in silent, studious consideration. And what a relief to me when a group of four Croatians, in their mid-20s, arrived and as they approached each image howled in disgust or awe or shock and loosed a hurl of words through the echoing vault of the white walled gallery space. Every image, indeed merited such a response and every image got one. Only with the undeniable, vociferous,

---

<sup>24</sup> From “Now You will Pay,” Laibach. *WAT*, 2003.

<sup>25</sup> Laibach from an interview by Pitchon, Avi. “Post Modern Post Mortem” first published in *Terrorizer* magazine (accessed at <http://www.nskstate.com/> on April 24, 2004)

appropriateness of their response was the absurdity of the project of self-containment (in which the rest of us were so thoroughly engaged) brought into sharp relief. It was the intense, painful, interiority (of the people) in the face of an explicit though anonymous exteriority (in the art) that I found most shocking about this extremely successful exhibit, one designed to provoke an emotional response and, unlike both Slovene examples here discussed, did.

226

If one is European, one needn't look so far to find the barbarian Other, Balkan Slavs will do nicely, as will Muslims, and Americans for that matter.<sup>26</sup> But the horror, the real horror, is of the evil which emerges from within, that unrecognizable evil which blooms in one's midst – the Nazi not the Jew, the masochist not the Croatian, civilization not barbarism – and both Kariž and Laibach exemplify this fear of civilization's black heart rather than its impassioned, baby-eating, Other. And though they are not perhaps as explicit or professional as Graz's three level tribute to the masochist, both capture something more delicate in the failure of self-expression which is, nevertheless, also an extremely accurate expression of self. Kariž struggles to rile up his audience and yet communicates most clearly his own alienation from a life world of living, breathing, sweating, non-mediated humans. An alienation which is nothing if not typical and yet remains so astoundingly difficult to communicate. Laibach makes extreme, though harmless, the pure evil which arises from within the civilized self; they exemplify self-control, self-limitation, self-alienation, and yet with such explicitness that they manage to simultaneously horrify and charm. In both cases, impotence is made visceral, and yet this is accomplished without reproducing itself in its audience as it was in the Graz show, where artistic, sexualized, brutality (and pleasure) exteriorized reproduced a stony, self-containment on the part of the European audience to it. That is to say, in Graz habits of correct behavior and perfect façade were reproduced and enforced by the encounter with art, rather than being ruptured by it. And while the two cases here discussed are almost as different from each other as they are from the Graz exhibit - in intent, means, and product - their relationship to the strictures of civilization, and their failure to communicate anything as soundly as the limitations of said strictures is what brings them together as expressive of a social bind - the Catch 22 of civilization - that one must be perfect but then if one is perfect the possibility of having real authentic experiences is itself foreclosed.

It may appear at times that there is no way out of the civilized noose of propriety except perhaps through violent rupture. A point Laibach toys with and Terror=Décor proves almost despite itself. And if terror - that is large-scale mass political violence - does, in fact, come to equal décor then truly all is lost. For at that moment – and this is Laibach's point - nothing raw, or bleak, or savage will ever be able to reach through the tough skin of civilization to bring us back our

<sup>26</sup>I was told once by a young college educated (philosophy and psychoanalysis) Slovene that Americans were savages, just like Serbs, because both sets of people were overtly and immediately friendly to people they did not know.

humanity. These are, by and large, European fears and the further one gets from all-night French gas stations piping in bubbly pop music and serving fresh croissants at 3 am, the further one gets from this strange individual terror that one might never feel anything real again, or alternately, might never have another authentic experience free of the sensation of being seen having it. For as Kariž has shown, authentic experience recorded and redeployed, even at light speed, has already been dampened, mediated, made unreal. It may well be that those people, in their living rooms being watched, filmed, and broadcast by their paintings are real, but not to us, not to the visitor in a gallery peering at fuzzy images of humans, or just their furniture, on a TV screen. What has been lost in the transmission is reality itself. And it is from this loss that provocation, in both cases, screams out its heart-felt message that one must continue to feel all the while declaring the battle against simulation already lost. For, should one, by some chance, actually be moved to feel, there is simply no space in which the open expression of these feelings might be expressed, for it is not just political or social outrage (at for example, ever-increasing public surveillance) that fails to be evoked or expressed here, even simple foot taping appears already to have been lost.

BIBLIOGRAPHY see page 206.

---

#### BESEDA O AVTORICI

Gretchen Bakke pripravlja doktorat iz kulturne antropologije na Univerzi v Chicagu. Ukvarja se predvsem z razmerjem med sodobno umetnostjo (ustvarjalnostjo) in normativno prakso (konformnostjo), zlasti v Sloveniji, vendar preučuje tudi postopke ustvarjanja mainstream kulture v Evropi in ZDA. V letih 2001–2003 je živela in raziskovala v Ljubljani. Pred tem je izvajala raziskave na Kubi (1999), v Rusiji (1992) in v Sovjetski zvezi (1988–91). V zadnjem času jo vse bolj zanima zavestna/premišljena anonimnost. Trenutno živi in dela v Washingtonu.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gretchen Bakke is a doctoral candidate in cultural anthropology at the University of Chicago. Her work focuses on the relationship between contemporary art (creativity) and normative practice (conformity), most specifically in Slovenia though she also works on processes of making mainstream culture in Europe and the U.S. The author lived and conducted research in Ljubljana during 2001–2003. Previous research was conducted in Cuba (1999), Russia (1992), and the Soviet Union (1988–91). In recent days she has become increasingly interested in willful anonymity. Bakke currently lives and works in Washington DC.