


invisible architecture body resulted, even in the convulsed 1960s and 1970s, an incomprehensible heterodoxy. The Escuela de Valparaíso had (and still has) the courage to expose itself constantly to the risk and experimental chaos of the collective. The policy of its architecture consists in its ludic mood, open to improvisation, maintaining that strong – somewhat delirious – belief with irreverence, and some stubbornness, that the world must and can be changed. 

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NOTES

(1) “Active vanishings” is a concept proposed by Peggy Phelan, which she defines as “the deliberate and conscious refusal to take the payoff of visibility” (Phelan, 1997, page 19).

(2) Godofredo Iommi, Francisco Méndez, Miguel Eyquem, Fabio Cruz, José Vial y Jaime Bellalta. A few years later, the Argentine sculptor Claudio Girola joined the group.

(3) That city may be recognized in the short documentary “A Valparaíso” (1962) done by Joris Ivens, with a script by Chris Marker, together with his students, when both of them travelled to teach at Universidad de Chile.

(4) For the phalène, see: Iommi, 1963.

(5) The first works built by the group were almost exclusively for members of their extended families, one of the first ones was Casa Cruz, 1958-1960.

(6) Participants in the journey were: Jonathan Boulting, Alberto Cruz, Fabio Cruz, Michel Deguy, François Fédiér, Claudio Girola, Godofredo Iommi, Jorge Pérez Román, Edison Simmons and Henri Tronquoy.

(7) The manifesto, which appeared published the following day in the main newspaper of the port, concludes announcing the beginning of the taking of the school “by common agreement” by professors and students, thus starting the process of university reform that soon would take place at national level.

(8) The solutions proposed by the school to the problems of connectivity included the building of an exclusive way for pedestrians and bicycles, besides an exclusive way for automobiles that wanted to drive along the coast. Thus, the people with or without a car could observe peacefully – for example – a sunset on the sea. There would also be another highway, away from the coast, that would take transport lorries and “functional” cars, whose purpose was just getting from one place to another.

(9) This phrase is attributed to Sergio Larrain García-Moreno, the former Dean of the Faculty of Architecture of the Universidad Católica de Chile in Santiago. It referred to the fact that the architects of Valparaíso liked Rimbaud’s poetry. I owe this anecdote – which probably took place at the beginning of the 1960s at a meeting at the National Museum of Fine Arts – to the poet and open citizen Carlos Covarrubias.

(10) It is well known that some neighbours of the now nonexistent Casa Cruz (1958-1961), located in the then upper borough of Santiago, Las Condes, complained to the Municipality about the appearance of the building. Apparently some even wanted it to be demolished.

De/Re-Construct

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ideology, video*

ABSTRACT:

In the context of 55th Venice Art Biennale, Jasmina Cibic transformed the interior of the Slovenian pavilion in a series of “wallpapered” ambiances in which she exhibited still lifes from the Parliament’s art collection and two videos. She used architecture as program of her work by carefully selecting ideologically charged architectures as settings for her videos, by drawing the content of videos on architectural research and by using the architecture of the pavilion as an orientation device that guides the viewer and allows him/her to construct new perspectives on art and architecture. The article attempts to situate Cibic’s work through questioning the meaning of the setting in the context of today’s eroding ideological boundaries and shows how using architecture as program of a space installation may elucidate the context of art.

THE PAVILION

Production of art and architecture put on display at Venice Biennale remains to a large extent organized according to the categories of nation states. The gallery

space in the vicinity of Santo Stefano Square, used as the pavilion of Slovenia, has become a representational space for the country after it had lost the privilege to use the pavilion in Giardini due to the dissolution of Yugoslavia. The question of common property in such situations remains unresolved and is often an issue of political debate. Several Slovenian architects have tackled the question of the “lost pavilion” in imaginary projects; the Croatian floating pavilion in 2010 addressed the same dilemma. Revealing spatial and ideological constraints of national pavilions may seem an appealing theme for architectural considerations. However, the issue gains a new momentum if an artist is interested in the research of the ideological dimensions of the site as a constitutional part of her practice.

In the context of 55th Venice Art Biennale, the artist Jasmina Cibic created a spatial installation entitled “For our Economy and Culture” by transforming the interior of the Slovenian pavilion in a series of “wallpapered” ambiances, exhibiting still lifes from the Parliament’s art collection in addition to two videos referring to the architectural oeuvre of Vinko Glanz, the leading architect of “protocol architecture” in post-WWII Slovenia, Yugoslavia. The dilemma of representation opened by Cibic’s work is shared by both art and architecture. The basic question “What architecture represents and how to make that clear?” within her work opened the interpretation of architecture beyond the established categories of space and time. Such attempts entail a strategic position that inevitably clash with the ideological constraints of the present.

It may as well seem as an intellectual game. But is it really? Can understanding/questioning the spatiality of a project be one of the key aspects of an artwork? What does it mean for the architecture of her work? Can an architectural reading of an artwork show new insights regarding the ideological constraints of past and present? How does the architecture in this spatial installation work? It is my claim that Cibic used architecture as program in her work by carefully selecting ideologically charged architectures as settings for her videos, by drawing the content of her videos on architectural research and by using the architecture of the pavilion as an orientation device that guides the viewer and allows him/her to construct new perspectives on art and architecture. In the way the collage of artifacts, research and ambiances work together, the installation puts under question the meaning of today’s national iconographies as well as the meaning of a national pavilion.

THE OPENING

“For our Economy and Culture”, a sign designed as a fence in front of the gallery window (Fig. 1), welcomed the visitors on the street on the night of the opening. Bright light was shining indoors and performers were hanging the still lifes on the wall. It seemed a peaceful gesture, as if a shop window was under construction. Finding a way for the paintings that are routinely selected to decorate the current government offices, to be hung on the gallery wall in Venice was naturally not a simple task. Nor was shooting the two videos in the Parliament and in Villa Bled a visitor encountered

later on. The sign/fence (“culture” visually supporting “economy”), produced by traditional craftsmen in Kropa, written by Makalonca font⁽¹⁾ reminded one of the inevitable frame, in this case the gallery window, that defined the spatial dimension of this artwork.

The other element that made the paintings shine was the wallpaper, a light background with a black “texture.” (Fig. 2) A closer look revealed drawings of armored insects that continued to spread across the clothes of the performers. The beetle illustrated on the wallpaper, *Anophthalmus hitleri*, is an endemic insect, which Cibic has researched and included in a few of her projects. The beetle with the “wrong name” still causes embarrassment for Slovenian entomologists marking an ideologically charged point of reference in Slovenian history. In one and the same location one could thus see paintings from the Parliament, while the wallpaper was covered with imaginary drawings of the *Anophthalmus hitleri* beetle. With this peculiar situation, combining still lifes and the sign complemented by the wallpaper, Cibic created a monumental image, an image with a flaw that makes one wonder: could it be that the still lifes are the representation of a national art production in 2013?

Continuing on the path through the gallery, revealing the next ambiance behind the curtain, a new situation arose. (Fig. 3) A room designed for watching a video, representing a discussion constructed from the transcripts of “Committee for the Review of Artistic

Works and Sculptures" from 1958 that originally happened around an artwork with the title "Fruits of Our Land", proposed for the Parliament interior. Unlike the frame of the gallery that reminded one of the present ideologies, the frame of the video took the visitor to a different place and time. The interior design visually related the gallery to the interior of the Slovenian Parliament, where the video was shot. There and then full of heavy remarks the committee of politicians, art historians, and the architect were unable to form an unanimous opinion about the artworks to be put on display in the legislative body.

A pathway to the next floor (Fig. 4) lead the visitor to a more intimate space with a new frame/video – a window to yet a different place. Villa Bled had been for many years an enigma, a hidden place used by the Yugoslav political elite. The video put on display a luxurious ambiance of decorated interiors accompanied with an imaginary discussion on ornament between the architect and a journalist. Drawing on research and reading the architectural oeuvre of Glanz, Cibic put forward dilemmas of his work in words and images. (Figs. 5 and 6)

The last ambiance was the interior that visually connected the top floor to the first room of the gallery, to the wall of paintings. A wallpapered chamber reminded the visitor of the scale of the gallery – it used to be a private house, a fact that deserved another introspection bringing one to the beginning of this text. It is where the visitor could rest and read the catalogue, where only the beetles and an overview of the first room remained.

(Fig. 7) After encountering the two videos the paintings seemed very much different. (Fig. 8)

FRAMING MIRRORING IMAGES

In 1940 Milan Dular published the article "For Our Economy and Culture" in *The Chronicle of Slovene Cities*.⁽²⁾ In 2013 Cibic used the title to name her project. Dular presented the idea of the first organized exhibition of national production in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Ljubljana Fair. The architect Glanz designed an open space for the fair grounds and won the competition to construct the space for commerce, but it was never completed according to his plans and was in 1940 occupied for the use by the Italian Fascist army. The story of the fair grounds can thus remind one of the contexts in which also the beetle *Anophthalmus hitleri* was discovered and named, and served as the starting point of Cibic's project. Her research on architecture, on space, was an invisible layer conceptually connecting the pavilion for international commerce with the Venice pavilion, previously a private house.

Cibic created a series of causal relationships by putting in the same location artworks, architecture and words. In doing so she managed to knit together an ambiance of different places and times mirroring production and reception of one another. (Fig. 9) Her reconstruction of mental sites that she linked to the present through the architecture of the pavilion enlightened the artist-work of art-spectator

relationship. The connections she revealed with the project could be read as an attempt to peek into the "official art-world" of the past and intervene in it at the same time with an ironic distance – the scene in the Parliament is a partial reconstruction of the committee discussion with new female characters and omitted names of people, bringing the themes discussed on to a more general level.

It is worth pointing out, however, that her work challenges at least two more interesting aspects: the physical aspect of architecture/space as well as the simultaneity of actions in different places. (Fig. 10) In the project both aspects are implied by the videos, each representing a frame through which the visitor could enter a different context. They are used to enhance the metaphor for the "art-world of the State," the first being the Parliament.

The word parliament originally meant "a speaking, talk," from *parler* "to speak." The art of the Slovenian Parliament in 1958 was supposed to represent an image of collective memory in a modern socialist community. It was not determined by the context of white cube, it needed to be placed on the walls of the Parliament that had, in addition to its ideological aura, a definite height and width. This is what the character playing the architect stressed repeatedly in the video. The artworks, according to him, needed to be located on a specific wall to achieve the appropriate monumental representation as a part of its architecture. The discussion between art historians, politicians, and the architect took place within the framework

of the State apparatus. It seemed real, and this was the experience of the video. The discussion about the works of art was a serious one, determined by committees and decrees. The fact that it was played out in English and that the artist introduced female characters in the scene gives the work an ironic twist.

The video brought to the present tense of the pavilion the question of the border of the site of Cibic's installation. The artworks created for the Parliament were not self-referential, enclosed in the aesthetic systems of modernism. The social agreement of their time and place was set. However, the system collapsed in the nineties and a new era emerged introducing independence and capitalism with a new set of values, accompanied by a new language. The borders and the architecture of the State changed, the art of the Parliament, the art displayed by Cibic, stayed the same. The discussion, "a speaking, talk," has today proven obsolete. The border Cibic confronted the visitor with was the border of history and territory metaphorically illustrated by the walls of the Slovenian Parliament, in the video presented also as a rotating white model. (Fig. 11)

The second aspect of her work mentioned above, is the simultaneous presence of a different place in the pavilion. A different context displayed – Villa Bled – was nationalized and renovated in 1949 by the same architect in the video in dialogue with a journalist. (Fig. 12) This space of the former bourgeoisie that had fallen into the domain of the party after WWII was the other side of the coin and represented for the context of socialism a contradictory truth: exclusive locations

designed as being representative of the Yugoslav political elite. How could the architect create a monumental frame? Was there a place for ornament?

International trade, American loans, negotiating the position between the East and West by establishing the Non-Aligned within Cold War politics in the time of industrialization made it possible for socialist Yugoslavia to survive. This context made it also possible to talk about "The Fruits of our Land." The economy, on the other hand, was determined in and outside the Parliament. The guests were from both Blocs, visiting places like Villa Bled hidden from the eyes of the public. If the first video was posing the metaphoric dilemma –how to produce a work of art for the architecture of the Parliament– the second video confronted the visitor with the inconvenient fact that the architecture of the Parliament/ State itself was determined by "hidden global bargains," again metaphorically represented by the context of the reconstructed bourgeois villa with rich interiors in a picturesque setting, (Fig. 13) thus the intimate space alluding to the boudoir at the end of Cibic's installation. (Fig. 14)


ARCHAEOLOGY AND MEMORIES

"It is my job to create universes, as the basis of one novel after another. And I have to build them in such a way that they do not fall apart two days later. Or at least that is what my editors hope. However, I will reveal a secret to you: I like to build universes which do fall apart. I like to see them some unglued, and I like to see how the characters in

the novels cope with this problem. I have a secret love of chaos. There should be more of it" (Dick, 1995, p. 181).

Philip K. Dick wrote these lines in 1978. Since then several universes have fallen apart, but traces of them remain hidden in space and language. They exist simultaneously waiting for thoughts that would link them in a meaningful fabric of the present. Freud had used the city of Rome as a metaphor to show how different layers of human psyche, experiences of the past exist in the mind of a person simultaneously, while the unconscious persists to influence our everyday.

Jane Rendell argues that in Interpretation between Determinism and Hermeneutics, Jean Laplanche suggests Freud's theory of memory involves both conscious memory, which is closer to history, and unconscious memory, which is closer to archaeology (2013). In the history of the unconscious of discontinuity, burial and resurgence, the turning points or moments of transformation are internal rather than external, described in terms of "scenes" (Rendell, 2013). The spatial installation of Jasmina Cibic is about negotiating the boundary between art and architecture, with scenes between yesterday and tomorrow. (Fig. 15) Her characters struggle between the scenes of the past ideologies and the present art-world offering a space for association, a possibility for an analysis. Today is the time to deconstruct and reconstruct, to analyze and to rethink the meaning of art and architecture in relation to society. This cannot happen

without having the time for reflection, discussion and creative process. Cibic's work in the context of the *Encyclopedic Palace* continues to speak precisely about that: her display of *Parliament art*, the discussion of the committee, the discussion about ornament, and finally the view at the end of the path. Her work is looking back, disclosing and reconstructing the position between the architecture of the State and the market economy that will determine the meaning of her art in the time of eroding boundaries of the present and maybe of an already forgotten history. (Fig. 16) 

PROJECT INFO:

Artist: Jasmina Cibic.
 Curator: Tev Logar, Galerija kuc
 Architecture Consultant: Mateja Setina
 Visual Art Consultant: Manca Bajec
 Visual Identity: Ajdin Bai
 Director of Photography: Mark Carey
 Art Media Consultant: Natasha Plowright
 Vinko Glanz Archive Consultant: Dr. Nika Grabar
 Opening Performance: Primo Bežjak, Gregor Lutek

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NOTES

(1) The typeface was designed by Lucijan Bratu. Its starting point is the type design from 1944 of Joe Plenik, Glanz's teacher.

(2) The original title is "Ljubljanski sejem za našo gospodarstvo in kulturo" [The Ljubljana Fair for our Economy and Culture]. It was published in *Kronika slovenskih mest*, vol. 7, n.º 2 (1940), 77-84.

Project or Product? A Critique of the Ideology of the Architectural Project

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Keywords: Commodity fetish, Crystal Palace, immaterial labor, author as producer, projective city

ABSTRACT

Architects speak about their work as projects, and it's an admirable form of optimism about the future. Projects are future-directed. They always look forward; they are an anticipation of victory over the forces of entropy in the world. But as such they demand the jettisoning of ballast and the rejection of whatever impedes their flow. To be "postcritical" – a term that was in vogue among architects just a few years ago – is to be without friction. In this sense the ideology of the architectural project is one of forgetting. To remind ourselves that architecture is produced, that architects are producers as well as authors, that buildings are not just finished forms but moments in a cycle of production, and that architecture strives to be beautiful in a world that is often and tragically ugly is to give the things we make a history and a conscience and to insist on the solidarity of our work with society at large.

Architects tend to speak about their work, whether built or unbuilt, as "projects." With its etymological meaning of throwing forth (and Heideggerian and Corbusian resonances⁽¹⁾), the word project suggests a sovereign act of creation or "immaterial labor" that envisions and plans the production of material substance. Yet the freedom and autonomy implicit in this conception of the design process – the image of a diver on a high board with waiting water below springs to mind – are, as every practicing architect knows, an illusion. The architect's imagination is always rooted in a specific historical context and material circumstances. Moreover, architecture is a social product, and architects are employed in producing not just buildable ideas but commodities that will enter a circuit of value and use. That is why Walter Benjamin, in his well-known essay "The Author as Producer" (1934), enjoins those who are engaged in artistic and intellectual forms of labor to ask not just what the position of their work is with regard to contemporary relations of production, but also what its position is within those relations (Benjamin, 1979).

From the standpoint of this injunction, the arc of modern architecture that extends 150 years from the erection of the Crystal Palace to the destruction of the World Trade Towers could be described as a continuous process of forgetting. By definition, the most "radical" architecture