

Milos Vujanovic

Solo exhibition "The Magnetic Field of Drawing",

MSUV (Museum of Contemporary Art of Vojvodina), Novi Sad, March 2010 Text:

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There is Nothing outside Magnet?

This text about the exhibition 'The Magnetic Field of Drawing' assumes several contradictory positions. For a spectator untrained in contemplating a concrete theory, the exhibition could be entertaining, attractive, the best so far... but the text will surely be 'horrifying, inappropriate, scandalous, dilettantish...', for people from the world of museums, curators and theoreticians? This text possesses all the elements that texts by curators have - primarily, an intertextual structure, modestly imported from the immediate 'Internet' literature about art. Its structure is yet another mark of cultural exhaustion of all the actors in the system of art which has led the curatorial practices of the 1990s to face the moral and political collapse of a utopia.

Now, what can one expect from the author of the text about the exhibition when he gives up the privileged position of the General Manager for a position of a Curator-Artist and addresses the conceptual processes he sees in the work of Miloš Vujanovic? Nothing; nothing can be achieved if we, for example, reach for the words of Michael Fried, who was of the opinion that artists of minimalism were mere literalists relying on the human self-awareness as viewers of art production, while the internal modernist tradition believes that a man can get lost when he is immersed in a work of art. The 'theatricality' produced by this text is contradictory to modernism. To simplify, we (I) enjoy exploring the internal relations in the work of Milos Vujanovic, and observe the exhibition outside the modernist discourse.

What kind of work is it? It is a typically postmodernist piece or a group of objects using magnet as the basic theme, that is, the notion of magnetism is used in the title as its primary element. In some postmodernist theories, the questions that have to be repeated are 'What does this piece represent?' or 'Why is it exhibited in a museum?' 'The postmodernist theory works the mechanisms of providing a seemingly incomprehensible pile of magnet with a form of drawing, reading these shapes as samples of 'galactic energies', creating an interesting theory from magnetic dust. For about thirty years now, the pieces displayed in museums and galleries have not been raising the question of 'is this truly art or just some coincidence created by magnet and its effect of metal chips, which mimics art?' It is museum as an institution that, de facto, creates a 'work of art.'

Artist Miloš Vujanovic suggests that emotional qualities of the previous, modernist art, which used drawing as its basic epistemological tool, should be forgotten, that we should, instead, follow the development of another idea growing in front of us. Magnet takes a similar position to that of drawing - it too rejects the emotionally expressive qualities it would undoubtedly be given by the modernist theory of art. Vujanovic says, similarly to Andre, that he 'seeks to find groups of particles and rules by which they connect in the simplest way, where each piece's shape and their relations are equally easy for people to accept.' If we reject this explanation, then we have to navigate through Vujanović's exhibition by use of skepticism, taking it as a thing of postmodernism and nothing else, which, in this case, challenges all totalitarian,

scientific or comprehensive explanations.

To avoid getting caught into certain notional systems offered by the exhibition, perhaps it would be better to look into the artist's position, that is, into the function performed by Milos Vujanovic in conceptualizing images or instruments for demonstrating not the magnetic forces materialized in metal chips or drawings produced by use of magnetic forces, but how he defies these forces. Defying, indifference, skepticism - these notions would provide a key for understanding this exhibition. Whatever we say, we are caught in a linguistic system whose attitude towards scientific and artistic reality is not the one normally expected. If, however, we place Vujanovic within coordinates drawn by conceptual art, or a segment of thought belonging to the practices of primary and analytical painting, each term or group of notions: magnet, drawing, energy, chip, electric energy, science, art, narration, emotion... gain a new meaning, growing into a tautological line and as such providing a code for reading this exhibition. Namely, once we have signified the terms in this way, from the position of Derrida - who would relativize the wide notional capacity of this exhibition - then we must criticize the linguistic potential of each of the notions; they must be forbidden from burdening the images and objects in the show with their own meaning.

Here I insist upon the Derridian digression stating that 'there is nothing outside text' literally and intentionally, because the exhibition apparently creates a language of the established artistic narration, which must undergo a process of self-construction within the framework of the very language of art, such that it mirrors the reality of the exhibition itself - thus, we no longer have to live the reality, but exist in our own imagery of it.

'The Magnetic Field of Drawing' does not refer to magnet and drawing as such, but actually deconstructs their visible (hidden) interrelations. This is where the truth about drawing and magnet is challenged, and the artist as such reaffirms his conviction that he has become a postcolonial subject, a 'social sign', and the main player in the linguistic game.

The main value of the exhibition can be seen in the fact that the artist allows audiences to assume the role of an artist and become a 'social sign', to create 'artistic engineering' enabling us to manipulate molecular atoms of art, constitutive of the notion of drawing as well. The audience, like computer generated magnetic waves, work with magnets independently from the artist; he has ceded his privileged field of art to them. The audiences now create their own 'world' - continuing the process of Darwin's natural selection any work of art is subject to - seeking their own identity in the anarchic and neglected environment packed with electronic screen phantasms.

All the exhibition participants have become magnetic forcers, cellular devices replicating and getting perfected. Milos Vujanovic's exhibition uses discrete samples of art and science to create small patterns of sociality and to remind us of the new scientific and technical discoveries that intertwine, thus causing a change in the way of our perception of the very work of art. What is suggested here, out of ontological reasons, is that the reflection of metal chips on the screen is something outside magnetism, just a faint copy of the authentic beauty, and as such having no reason to function as 'great' art.

Albert Einstein defines magnetic field as the relative part of an electric field, where the electricity moves relative to the spectator when the spectator is unable to perceive the curvature of space as spherical-symmetrical or radial, and this, primarily, because of temporal dilatation. Scientific definitions just provide an explanation for the magnetic field lines depicted by metal chips; when a permanent magnet is brought close to metal, the chips shall take the direction following the magnetic field lines. The direction of the

magnet field vectors follows from the definition of magnetic field. It matches the direction of the magnetic dipole in a magnetic field such as, for example, a small magnet or small electric contour of the magnetic field, or a score of small particles of ferromagnetic material.

On the other hand, a drawing is a graphic picture of a shape on a surface. In a wider sense, it is an image of an object or phenomenon, produced by graphical instruments such as lines, signs and spots. The combination of pure lines, linking lines and spots, black and white contrast, the effects of light and shadow, etc. all contribute to the linearity and plasticity (three-dimensional appearance) of a drawing. Drawing is an expressive means older than the written word. Techniques applied when creating drawings are called drawing techniques. In the art of drawing a line can be used to express two basic dimensions: height and width. The illusion of the three-dimensional volume (spatial depth) is achieved by application of the rules of geometrical perspective. If a drawing is dominated by lines, as the basic element of fine art, such a drawing is called linear. If a drawing is mainly produced by use of light and shadow, that is tones, it is called a tonal drawing. Drawing is usually based on two colors, but it can be done in more. If a drawing is produced by application of small or large magnets, it can be called a magnetic drawing...

Therefore, postmodernism adopts a highly critical epistemology defying any higher philosophical or scientific doctrine, thus understanding magnet no longer as a force that keeps the universe in one piece, and drawing no longer as the supportive force of art. On the contrary, it introduces the status quo in this relation. Such a simplified opinion evokes Umberto Eco's suggestion that 'each new story retells a story already told'. However, the exhibition of Milos Vujanovic, without any pretensions of discussing great art, imposes an intended opposition to modernist narration which is always present within any work of art. If we substitute the notions of 'magnet or drawing' with the notion of 'engagement', we have imported a doubt in notions into the selective doctrine of postmodernism. Miloš Vujanovic rejects neither science nor art; he offers one of the seemingly contradictory possibilities for us to choose, and conduct an operation of finding our own orientation in the world of art. So, the exhibition viewer primarily thinks about orientation marks whose simple structure invites a re-examination of the nature of art, not the nature of magnet. The exhibition becomes an ontological model, where Miloš Vujanovic assumes the presence of others who are given an opportunity to find their own self. What unfolds in a seemingly low-force struggle is intercommunication aimed at a shared solidarity. As opposed to some imperatives coming from the history of modernism, Vujanovic states not that he 'creates like nature', but reaches for the dreams of Andy Warhol who used to say that he 'creates like a machine'. Here, the machine for the production of drawings before us is operated by audience. They take the place of oil paints, clay, pencil, canvas...

Artistic practices of the last decades are pregnant with dilemmas engendering collaboration between scientists and artists. A long time ago artists realized that the transistors led to the invention of computers which they can now use thanks to quantum mechanics; they occasionally remind us of the similarities with the theories of Dadaists who compared the notions of 'nothingness' with interests modern physics took in vacuum and dark matter; Duchamp is still enchanting; digitalization of our lives evolves in our own selves and in art; artificial life is delivered by computer programmers.

So, by his discrete drawings, magnetic energy fixed on the surface of canvas, and by metal chips, Miloš Vujanović's work is reminiscent of the sentences appearing in the introduction of each book on the relation between science and art:

Since the ancient crib, through the windows and mirrors of Renaissance and Baroque, the screens of modernism and maps of postmodernism, all the way to networking prosthetics of the Internet, art and science have been overlapping, joining forces and intertwining, opening gates for the new, the unknown and

the hybrid.