

Should art be poked?

“I can only say to the well intentioned polite viewer the same thing I sometimes do when I stand like a sheep in front of a painting or a text: art should be poked, and whatever happens, happens. And art will start dancing so gladly, colorful and humane. Like every abandoned message which by the mere fact that it is a message can't fade even though no one is listening to it.” Instead of a distanced approach towards art that is full of awe, and treats works of art as something that is excluded from everyday life, and is sustainable by presence which is always mediated by an institutional frame, this fragment of text by Dusan Makavejev, which is inspired by spontaneous relation some ordinary visitors of the exhibition of contemporary American art had towards two Calder's mobiles that were exhibited, suggested a need for unambiguous and active stance towards pieces of art in general. And although he called upon an opinion that every piece of art has a message, and by that at least implicitly shown a need for its deciphering, he didn't make rules on how a single artwork should be activated, but has let every individual find their own way. In which way would anybody poke art was not specified by the text, it was only important to advise people to do it.

Makavejev's text was published in the “Act” magazine in long past 1958 under the title “Art should be poked”, this article has announced not only the relation its author had towards documentary and acted material that will be included in his films later on, but it has announced theories of the reception of art that became well known in the following decades. These theories emphasized interactivity and relationism as well as the actions of internalizing and recreating art. Exemplary way of using artwork without caring about its primary purpose was shown by Makavejev in his short film from the same year that was called “Monuments shouldn't be trusted”. In the following half of century that has passed since the article and film were published, poking of art has become customary. The public has gradually become more daring and willing to use artwork that is outside museums and galleries as props for setting up a scene that would make them protagonists and bearers of the message and meaning.

Photographs displayed in this exhibition were collected from diverse sources by the authors, and showcased without stressing the context in which they were taken, or the personal stories of people who were in the photos or those taking the shot. They were interested mainly in the typology or the way that bodies of the people in photographs were set up in relation to areas volumes and masses of publicly placed sculptures, sculptural units or monuments they were posing next to. Like in many of their previous work Vladimir and Milica Peric have just collected photo positives of unknown authors, amateurs unweighted by photographic techniques, that were obviously using the photographs as a mean to mechanically record those scenes from their personal lives that they wanted to save for private reasons. Photo positives were classified in entities according to visual content, scanned and printed in increased dimensions so that details in them could be seen more clearly, but they were not manipulated in any other way during the preparation for printing. Things we see in them are typical forms of that kind of behavior in interaction with pieces of art in public spaces that were not aimed to recognize their inherent attributes, but to make them into scenery for shooting fun sights from their personal lives, but with that we also see examples of typical vernacular forms of their shooting.

Relation of people and objects in these photographs is shown as a direct activation that is emphasizing the objectivity of artefacts, not their status in the world of art or general history of culture. It is happening independent of normative institutional framework, as a completely

external relation that is ignoring the intent of the author and all artistic and esthetic qualities of objects that are not relevant for the image that is being created between the bodies of the people and forms and material properties of objects. This exhibition is not about trying to discover their meaning, it is its complete destabilization through the hybridization of its use in modeling the assemblage of human bodies and material elements of heritage of monuments. In this exhibition Milica and Vladimir Peric are not just registering the position of the sculpture in the broader societal field beyond the world of art, but the relation of the sculpture as medium instead of the boyce social sculpture. So sculpture as a medium in these photographs seems like just one of the elements that are activated in modeling of the world we live in.

Stevan Vukovic

Vladimir & Milica Peric

Vladimir Peric (1962) is a multimedial artist and a docent on Photography module on the Faculty of Applied Arts in Belgrade. He has been a part of the visual art scene for more than three decades, and his works can be divided into three periods: when he displayed under the pseudonym Talent (1986-1996), than as a founder and a member of art group called Talent Factory (1996-2006) after which he started exhibiting under his own name as a part of the ten year project Museum of Childhood. He had more than 70 solo and more than 200 group exhibitions. Milica Peric (1984) has joined the Museum of Childhood project and continued to develop it with Vladimir as a fusion of contemporary collecting, visual art and museum practice. Milica is an art historian, and a curator and development and presentation of the Museum of Childhood through lectures and publications is in the centre of her work. Vladimir and Milica have been working as an art tandem since 2013 on projects that are outside the framework of the Museum of Childhood as well.