

## **Dejan Grba**

### ***Making Fiction More Relevant***

An interview with József Tasnádi (edit).

*What is your relationship to art?*

I got really serious about art at the moment I was about to give it up and leave it all behind. Art bears a minuscule influence on life's great processes, or it has no influence on them. Art has no appropriate answers to extreme situations given that life, in itself is a perpetually extreme state. Therefore, art isn't a problem-solving profession. Ultimately, art can solve nothing whatsoever; therefore it has and cannot have bigger significance than anything else. Moreover, there are no questions within art, as well as art is not the ultimate aesthetic question. The crucial questions always enter art from beyond, that is to say, the future of art doesn't lie in art, but out of it.

*What do you think about the position of art within contemporary global trends?*

Classical art was an adopted kind of art. It served a universal ideology's universal propaganda written in a universal language, more or less free of conflicts and breaks, while God was alive. The forms of expression could cover the 'customer's' needs. It took a long time for that relationship's inner tensions to emerge, which led to the necessary break. A so-called insurmountable abyss is gaping between 'avant-garde' art and the society. To a certain while, it seemed reconciled to its own, well-deserved independence, although its interaction with the outside world stayed constant. Art, despite its independence, has never remained untouched by the worldly affairs. Returning to the world, getting re-acquainted with the world, and each other's rediscovery has always been important, and the more important it has got, the more obvious it has become that each other's rediscovery has become pointless.

As a matter of fact, a new kind of context seems to be developing, and it seems to be universal enough so that the possibility for restoring the communication between art and the outside world loom up. The world and the artist have started using a different syntax, but the same language, though. Everyone wants to be part of the hypertext, which has a consistent language, even if it is not exquisite, and in many aspects, criticizable and arguable. The net is not free of contradictions either, especially from the point of view of the feelings it has provoked.

Art's existence is always dependent upon certain power – religious, ideological or financial, so the total independence of art is equivalent with its own termination, which is 'worth considering'. The net is the consequence of necessities, looming over art, and art will never be in a position to terminate a context which is stronger than it. It won't be able to do more than what it has been its job so far: to reflect on its relationship with the world.

All in all, art has got to a new position – thanks to the new media. Art is present in a different way. Art is obtaining more and more supporters, as more and more people need it. And it always has its price.

*I think that your technical emancipation is a result of a highly articulate but free conceptual thinking. What do you think?*

Thinking is independent from any sort of media. There is no remarkable difference between, say, a renaissance painting and a multimedia work, or an interactive piece of art. In both of them, everything is related in one way or another and the bits presuppose and determine one another. In both cases, the balance among the bits and pieces is indispensable. In either of them, the presence of abstraction is intense. A realist painting requires as much ability to abstract, as a piece of art based on algorithms. Nevertheless, a realist depiction also possesses a specific algorithm, which is, by no means, less abstract than the most abstract formula.

The virtual reality also endeavours to create a true-to-life reproduction of reality, as much as a realist painting. The old and the new media are alike in their essence. This is mimesis. Paradoxically, the more virtual reality resembles reality, the more virtual it will get through. Artificial intelligence, itself is a mimesis. In the development of new media, the heightening of realism is an important factor (perhaps, the most important one). The focus should be on the perfection of the imitation, as well as a higher (more lifelike) resolution. It appears that mimesis and its refinement remain the most powerful ambitions and drives. Even if it becomes eclipsed now and then, it is always revived, sooner or later. To a certain extent and in certain shapes, the compulsion of mimesis has obstinately followed through the entire Western cultural history. Thus, it is an illusion to think that the introduction of new media has resulted in some kind of radical discontinuity in our way of thinking and in the depiction of things. As long as we consider a picture as a traditional genre product, we will be embedding other forms of self-expression into the tradition. There are only traditional genres. The illusion, in which they don't seem traditional, is only transient.

*A highly disciplined conceptualization is the key factor in your work. How do you see the role of the concept in art?*

Conceptual art has always been a disciplined art. Conspicuous is the planned composition of a contemporary artwork, and this planned composition is an obvious consequence of conceptual art. It is no accident, since planning requires discipline. In a contemporary piece of art, conceptuality is more 'conspicuous'. The sensuality of today's art is mingled with conceptuality. Today, even in an obtuse artwork, conceptuality is distinctive. Duchamp's 'dream' has come true. The concept made the context become significant. An entity can only be defined in a certain context, and nearly all your questions are contextual. Not only has the contextualization of artworks become significant, but the creator's contextualization as well. The consequence is that a contemporary artist is more self-reflexive, more conscious and self-conscious.

Self-reflexion, the context, the text, the conceptual orientation, the composition and the disciplines that derive from the discipline of the concept are all the products of conceptualism. The next step is when software is displayed in multimedia festivals and labeled as a work of art.

*What is, in your opinion, the value of the intellectual component in contemporary art?*

Classical intellectualism is equivalent with a kind of lexical, knowledge- or education-based, combinatorial and associative interpretation. It appears that this dimension is losing its audience, since it appeals to a certain range of information and a type of sensitivity, besides being nurtured from a database, the pieces of which are completely useless for the new generations, as they don't know them.

The new kind of 'intellectualism' is reminiscent of the old one only in its allusions. Likewise, it is fraught with backward references, only these references, contrary to what they seem, are not informative, but tautological. The new way of communication inevitably becomes tautological in an environment abounding in information. The only chance of survival is a selective behaviour, the basis of which is tautology. We are bound (and able) to provide a bunch of information that is intelligible to everyone, and that can be done only if the message becomes quasi-void and relies on clichés, on standards and on the secure feeling of regularity. The new context is less philosophical than the old was. It is much too burdened to take more implicit content. The philosophy of the new context is tautology. Metaphors will be wiped out. Directness, the absence of roundabout ways, aptness will replace them.

*What are the ideas behind your project Utopia?*

Facing the unacceptable, getting close to the abstractions, feeling comfortable in the absurdity, that is, in the situation that has nothing in common with the 'natural' experience. Making fiction more relevant.

Danas, Com\_medi@ No. 35, 17 January, Belgrade, 2001.