

Božica Dea Matasić: "In-Version"



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Ready for the Future?

It seems that we are witnessing the realization of the avant-garde utopia of the early 20th century, a futuristic fantasy about the total construction of the world and achieving the evolutionary ideal of a superior *Homo sapiens*—as a cyborg, man/machine. The impersonation of the sensory and affective potential of mankind enables synchronisation of technologically simulated stimuli and actions with an organic human system, with a high level of possible interactivity and sophisticated manipulation of human emotions. Research in the field of extended and virtual reality is currently a focus of development strategies of many of the most powerful companies in the world (Sony, Valve, HTC). Their achievements are of immense importance for many professions and disciplines, as well as for artistic production, even though (for now) they are most widely used in the escapist world of the mass entertainment industry and digital games. A prerequisite for an *order of cultural disembodiment in cyberspace*, enabling a transition to full digital presence, is the willingness of users to accept the phenomenal revelation of the body reduced to a biological basis for mounting technological add-ons that improve our ability to experience and participate in the virtual sphere.

Audience Beyond the Interface

At the level of global distribution, the virtual state is a necessary extension of reality. Digitalisation processes are enthusiastically accepted as an outstanding tool in musealisation and museological processing, thus enabling the linking of data of national or institutional bases and creation of repositories of international and transnational thematic virtual collections. In this way, museums actively participate in creating new digital identities. Considering the fact that the process of *transmission*—the transfer of objects from one context to another context—is a primordial museological principle, a virtual museum seems to be a very potent medium for structuring and preserving the memory of heritage and communication (i.e., updating its value). However, modern technological trends, introducing new forms of communication and reproduction, change expectations of the audience as well as their interests, thus becoming a major challenge for museum practice.

Reality and Fiction of Museum Exhibitions

Academic sculptor Božica Dea Matasić—like other artists who have participated so



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Fig. 1. Božica Dea Matasić, *In-version*, permanent exhibition in Museum of Arts and Crafts in Zagreb

far in the project *Contemporary Artists in MUO Permanent Exhibition* (Dalibor Martinis, Dubravka Rakoci, Željko Badurina, Slaven Tolj, Ida Blažičko and Nika Radić) in constructing different relations within the museum protocols and meaning of exhibits in the museum halls—creates a dialogue with the spatial and semantic context. However, she does not do it through formally recognizable works. At first, it even seems that she challenges the very understanding of a *site-specific* work, or visitors' patience. In several halls featuring museum segments from the

art historical timeline (*Gothic, Baroque, Classicism, Art Deco, and Design*), technological sections are provided for visitors, with seats equipped with virtual reality headsets. This is not merely a manifestation of technological attraction, but an exhibition in the centre of whose artistic focus is a problem set we encounter in the demarcation of the real and the virtual museum. The very aspect of materiality is tested, and the question is whether by losing the indispensable conditions for interaction, it also loses the qualitative character for the audience. The author's



intention is that through the appropriation of the digital system apparatus, which relativizes materiality or abolishes the need for being present, the quality of reality is presented whose characteristics we are called to re-discover and explore.

Visibility and Invisibility of Reality

Through a series of 3D virtual alternations the author has, by amending the exposed content of museum halls, created not only a new concept of the virtual exhibition, but also partially deconstructed the actual exhibition and changed the code of its original message. The original message of the *MUO Permanent Exhibition's* structural diversity of art and craft collections was compiled in a historiographical review of artistic styles, and technological aspects without direct explication are overshadowed by the emphasis on formal characteristics.

According to the understanding of Božica Dea Matasić, it is precisely different technological aspects of craft, art and design in approaching design as manual processes, manufacture or industrial work, that determine the level of spiritual memory of an object, the potential from which we gain awareness of the continuity of human efforts to shape the environment, to

improve reality, and to dignify matter. This sedimented time and physical energy consumed in the production process is stored in each museum object, which, mirrored in the minds of visitors, becomes a link for transferring messages.

The Visitor and His/Her Place in the Museum

Božica Dea Matasić understands space as a medium for people's interaction, objects and concepts, which is why in many works the visitor and his/her experience is placed at the heart of events, providing him/her with a possibility for a complete physical participation through activation of spatial, visual, tactile, and auditory perception. In her work intended for the *MUO Permanent Exhibition*, the individual participation of a visitor presents the only requirement in order to achieve the intervention because the authorial view within the public space is identified with the subjective viewpoint of visitors, a perspective which frames the very possibility of experience. Although perhaps they most clearly evoke associations with serial overproduction and a sense of overload with uniform ambient trade fairs, scenography arrangements of alternate authorial setups correspond to the totality of the environment outside the museum. They are built on the generative



principle and the principles close to the biomedical methodology of genetic engineering, such as strict selection of samples, by enhancing identical reproduction with the elimination of differences.

Generic repetition of a single exhibit in selected halls enhanced the subordination to multiplication trends affecting technological and biological levels of social productivity and reproducibility. Through the virtual character of her process, Božica Dea Matasić carried out cultural engineering,

by breaking the compact historic fabric of the museum exhibition with occasional nuclei of metastases that the visitor sporadically reveals. Degenerative samples—devoid of history and humanity, spiritual potential with which one could connect—are the symptom of postmaterial status not only of art, but also of life and literally body, in which illusion instrumentalizes even the very essence of identity. After a physical examination through the oculus of art, every visitor can diagnose for themselves its current state.

Fig. 2. Božica Dea Matasić, *In-version*, permanent exhibition in Museum of Arts and Crafts in Zagreb

