



VIEW FROM ABOVE / City lights / photo: Ervin Husedžinović

SHE 2_ ACO / Zagreb / July 1 – October 1, 2021

The exhibition SHE 2 in Zagreb was opened separately on July 1, 2021 at the ACO showroom and presents the architectural project Poljana Square in Šibenik as a layered process of creating this central urban area through the presentation of numerous artistic and technical collaborations during its design and realization /square as a diagram_between_past and future; _abstraction and reality; _life and art/.

Here, elements added from Stanislav Habjan's original exhibition *Identities* at ARL /Dubrovnik/ create a natural framework for collaborations on the Šibenik project, same as the introductory art performance *Car je gol na kiši* (Tsar is Naked in the Rain) /Mary May, Stanislav Habjan, Ante Perković, Sreten Mokrović/.

Stanislav is a multidisciplinary artist who uses the energy of words/text and images, and he has been involved in the Poljana project as a graphic designer /the *Air Mail Twins* concept/ as well as a poet and performer on the new stage in the *Amphitheatre of Thyme* next to the library, where he had an art performance and performed songs written specifically for the opening of Šibenik's new square. We are all aware of the value of public space for identity and community, the character of the city, especially in the Mediterranean, I would say. In Poljana, it has been achieved, that the space acts like a *tinel*, as we say in Dubrovnik, the living room of a large family: it is a lively, dynamic place, fully functional and accepted by the people of Šibenik. How this space looks today, when the project has been completed, is illustrated through the exhibited photographs of Marko Mihaljević and Ervin Husedžinović. Everything seems almost unreal, because that space is like that, but also very material, because architecture is so, and at the same time magical. The photos testify to a timeless, dynamic, humane, and very daring intervention – daring because it is always demanding to design such landmark spaces. In the *She* newsletter, one of the project's authors, architect Pavla Šimetin, says: *Our architecture is people-oriented, it seeks to bring people back to the centre of everything... we included the designer group Numen/ForUse in the project, and they produced a floating dynamic artefact functioning as a sun screen, reminiscent of sails in the wind, at the Mediterranean sea... To me personally, the canopy acts like a kinetic sculpture, creating a certain tension, like a moment stopped in time, sharply cutting through space and at the same time floating like clouds, it is both force and immateriality.*

The exhibition includes three series of works by architects Ivana Tutek and Bernarda Lukač: collages – process, diagrams – space and time, drawings. It is a ubiquitous and essential element of research on space and time in a more or less layered, overlapping way. What is impressive is the transparency, the intertwining of moments, the continuity of outer and inner space, the past and the present, abstract and figurative. The collages, diagrams, and drawings by Ivana and Bernarda stimulate the thinking process. I would say that this research of theirs is not some kind of self-discovery, but a reflection mirroring the world around us, or the parallel worlds around us, of things that have happened as well as the many possibilities. To conclude, I would like to refer to a contemporary artist: Julie Mehretu is an Ethiopian and American who is currently exhibiting at the *Whitney Museum of American Art*. Her paintings, drawings, and graphic sheets are aesthetically close to the works of Ivana and Bernarda, and they also resonate with their process of creation and layering, the way they communicate with the viewer and express the contemporary state of the individual and society. I would like to conclude with Ivana's words from the *She* newsletter: *We hope that the citizens of Šibenik will accept the new square, because it has been arranged just for them, as a meeting place of life and art. A great effort has been invested in this project – to create a space for the citizens, with many open potentials and possible silent transformations. That is our greatest wish.*

/K. Ivanišin/ translation: M. Schumann

Ladder to the Sun at Poljana Square

The Orchestra that Thinks Vertically and Giraffes that Like Humour

Bernarda Lukač / Florence Hartmann: The conversation with Stanislav Habjan



There is a lot to talk about with Stanislav Habjan, the writer, designer, and multimedia artist. Whatever the topic, it usually serves only as a pretext to form a dialogue space wherein everything known and unknown to us immediately becomes equally significant, alive, and existing. Everything has a soul and breathes, speaks or sings there. The estrangement of reality (or its accurate recognition; Shklovsky's Russian formalist theory) is something that art has always dealt with. According to his achievements in more than thirty years and to whatever he continues to do while conquering 'new territories', Stanislav very much fits the idea of a total artist. Although he works with fiction and uses imagination, he does not fabricate anything but simply lives intensively. His work and behaviour represent precisely what he writes or sings, what he believes in, and his designs. In the ongoing professional designer episode, he is the author of *Air Mail Twins* graphic concept, presented recently in Šibenik, within the new Poljana Square architectural project. The visual solution is absurd at first glance (two identical red and blue giraffes in a non-stop conversation). However, this design mysteriously works and attracts. It would not be a surprise if these 'endemic' giraffes indeed become a new brand of Šibenik. This conversation was inspired by The Ladder to the Sun Orchestra, the group of artists with Stanislav as a member. At high noon, a day after the "big party" on the opening of the new Square, they played a set of their *Songs for New Poljana*, a programme prepared exclusively for Šibenik.

B. Lukač: Unfortunately, partly because people were resting after the nightly fireworks at the opening of the new edition of Šibenik's Square the night before, partly due to the restriction in the public gatherings promotion the organisers were noticed about the last moment, a small number of people saw your performance in Poljana Square in Šibenik, on June 28, 2020, at noon.

You've said it all. But despite scorching conditions, random passers-by paused, sat, and bore witness to our noon torture hour. Therefore, the applause at the end was even sweeter. And precisely for this reason, it went both ways.

B. Lukač: You opened the concert with the presentation of your graphic design dedicated to Šibenik, mentioning that it is a gift to be used "if liked". Together with the performance of this artwork, the song *She/benik loves you* was played... This is not exactly a conventional approach.

Possibly. But we are, after all, the Ladder to the Sun Orchestra, and we think more vertically than horizontally. And the dazzle can be beneficial in creation. We came as guests to a beautiful old town, invited to perform as first

artists on the new stage in *the Amphitheatre of Thyme* and the least we can do is bring a present. It is good manners, if anything.

B. Lukač: One of your songs was introduced as *The New Hymn of Dalmatia*. Its lyrics were published in the first number of *She*, the brand-new newsletter of Poljana Square. To what extent such a pretension can be serious?

We were to play this song for the first time in the hometown of Vice Vukov, Arsen Dedić and Mišo Kovač. It means we are not entirely frivolous; luckily, we are not quite serious as well. This song is a metaphor for freedom, in general. It is a bait in the wind. We do not know whose ear or heart it will touch. It is independent regardless of what we assign to it. Its lyrics say enough for and about themselves. It goes with an excellent musical theme by our guitar player Ante Perković. This song celebrates love, and it is a pleasure to play it because it is full of joy and talks of falling in love. That can happen in a flash, tomorrow morning, and it immediately changes absolutely everything. In fact, the title of the song is, *Because of you, I become someone else*. We are particularly delighted that the poet Miroslav Mićanović read the poem and talked about it to participants at the literary workshop in Šibenik. It is not a little compliment.

F. Hartmann: The world, apparently, has not become just a reality show. It remained only a show, only an illusion (because of general relativisation of reality and truth)... In your experience, what influence does this have on artistic creation? Can art successfully liberate people's emotions and contribute to their free-thinking? Today, when spin doctors rule our emotional lives and everywhere around us, even in democracies, nonsensical speeches prevail. It is the murder of respect for the truth since the truth is not truthful in consistence with facts. It is truthful at someone's will.

That fate of truth is, in fact, not true. The phenomenon of straight lying is just a reward for the philosophy of values measured by money. Thirty years ago, we encountered the efficiency of that strategy literally turned upside down, the machinery of war preparations on the side of our neighbours. So, things may not bode well, probably. On the other hand, opposed, the new or young art, as much as I can follow, has never been so liberated and in its own right. Croatian literature now has at least ten writers of both genders, who belong to the world top, and this is the authentic phenomenon. I don't know what we should thank it to, but it would be worth building our identity on something like that. There is a young music scene in Zagreb today. And a dance scene too, I can say. Both being amazingly diverse, full of solid and authorial personalities unencumbered by trends or careers. I don't think the scene of the eighties can be compared to that, either. If Mary May's album were released last year on the so-called world market, it would have been a planetary fact. This way, it is still our exclusive, which may be better, although I'm not missing the opportunity here...

B. Lukač: At the beginning, you introduced your *Orchestra* as the summer incarnation of the *Tsar is Naked* band, a relatively new attraction on the Zagrebian scene, a supergroup as it is called since its members are reputable musicians and artists from other bands and media... With Ante Perković and you, the *Orchestra* in Šibenik included the singer and violinist Mary May, the actor and musician Sreten Mokrović and a young bass player and composer Jack de Shaw, the alias of Jakša Perković.

Shebenik
loves
you
yeah! da!
yeah! da!
yeah! da!

ti misliš da si sam
da te ljubav napustila
al ja sam tu jer znam
da to nije istina

ona te voli
i ona to ne skriva
ona te voli
to je njena poruka

ti misliš da je kraj
da te sreća ostavila
al ja sam zato tu
da pišem bolja pravila

ona te voli
i ona to ne skriva
ona te voli
to je njena poruka

Our urban name *Tsar is Naked* partly loses its meaning during summer because we are all naked and barefooted. We are all tsars, and we are all crickets, while things get more complex in winter. However, more important is that we, as a group, are the representatives of the building site of the Ladder to the Sun, a great friendly project with the "happycentre" in Stara Novalja on the island of Pag. There we had our first gig last summer, and you see where it leads. Now we are the citizens of Stara Novalja regardless of where we play and where our members come from.

B. Lukač: I have the information you had seven "public apparitions", as you like to call your gigs in unexpected places and on random occasions. The first two songs for your first single, you promoted in a tram...

Yes, this gig in Šibenik was the seventh or the eighth, if we count as a gig the public rehearsal for artists and friends at Žitnjak Ateliers in Zagreb. It's high time to decide whether we shall add this Žitnjak case to our gigs or call all our gigs public rehearsals, which is the truth as well. Our performance format is usually three or four new songs with a kind of intro and an encore possibly. It is objectively enough to have three rehearsals with the whole band. Since it still has never happened, the actual performance usually is our second or third rehearsal. It turns out now that this amount of uncertainty and improvisation contributes to the excitement and happiness when the show does happen and works exactly how it works. So, I think we'll stick to that concept. At least until we release the first album of these recorded rehearsals, which could be called *Life is a Rehearsal*. And it is also the title of our only song that is not in Croatian, so it's a little out of the concept. We only perform it at the rehearsal's rehearsal - as I previously said.

F. Hartmann: How can art survive in the context of illusion? Should we define art as a medium that seeks to reveal reality through illusion? But firstly, I should ask you whether you agree with this potential definition of art.

Famous question - *Was ist Kunst?* Once or twice, I used one found object as a minor detail within the exhibition in my attempt to answer it. That was an outdoor iron muddy shoe scraper, which could be seen built into the ground at the entrance to townhouses. Its symmetry reminded me of the body of a small dog, a terrier, for example, whose neck and tail are of the same size. So I drew the profile of his head, in one line, on the wall against which I put it. Besides that, I wrote as the signature *Dog ist Kunst*. This answer may work only in Croatian when paraphrased in German (the idea itself comes again from the language). But let's say, just knowing about Dr Kafka's note confirms such a personal experience. Here I think of the sentence in which Franz says literally: *All knowledge, the totality of all questions and answers, is contained in the dog.*

I believe that the survival of art is equally questionable and unquestionable in the context of current general illusion as it would be in any other, earlier, or later context. Provided our thoughts and hands are at least slightly free, as long as there is any hope in our souls, these flowers will exist. They are the answer to breathing, the Sun and rain, to the very existence. Art uses boldly and impudently absolutely everything, and illusion is just one of the tools to grasp the truth and express it. But art itself is not an illusion at all. It is the most authentic evidence of our existence. *Guernica* or Tatlin's tower or Shakespeare's, the Beatles' or Wisława Szymborska's opuses talk more about us than the political consciousness of the world. One theatrical play like Rene Medvešek's *Hamper* or one



two-minute folk song *Mississippi* by John Hurt tracks our trail more accurately than all historical or economic studies. And it is not easy to explain what renews this hope in the soul, so necessary to the art, and pass it around so constantly and despite everything. Is it the so-called nation, which is a totally abstract category today, or is it a man one and alone, or it is really spread around on the legs of doves? For instance, Camus thought art is constantly supported by lonely millions. Those whose efforts every day deny existence even of the cruellest illusion of history so that the truth would light up in a moment. It is the truth everyone drains from their own sufferings and joys for themselves and for all others. And I believe Camus. I use the *Par pigeon* post stamp.

F. Hartmann: Language occupies the central place in your creative work (prose, poetry, design). Words can be a deadly weapon, as it was proved in former Yugoslavia. You see the words as the means for courage. Is the Croatian language an obstacle or a bridge when you perform outside Croatia?

If there were no pandemics, we would have had a performance in Montpellier in spring as part of the presentation of Croatian culture in France. What was written for that performance, and it is a dialogue poem *Youth and Death*, would be performed in English, which is not a foreign language anywhere anymore. Also, in Croatia, most young authors use the English language in music, partly because it makes them visible on a broader plan. And it was naturally adopted in childhood as the medium for such communication. It is not so interesting anymore to me, although I also grew up in the culture of English songs. The Croatian language is my identity. It makes me and defines me at least as much as gender, genes or dropping out of school as a youth protest do. In this life, it is my instrument. When I was thirty, I realised this in America, and I returned to it regardless of what was planned then. Today, when I write these 'electric-powered songs' to be performed by this imagined Orchestra, I enjoy it more than ever because it is pure playing with the language. It is very often free from me, as well. The song in English can happen to me when it addresses someone personally like John Lennon in the mentioned song *Life is a rehearsal*.

B. Lukač: As a part of your literary, stage and music project, you travel with a stage set, and there is also an exhibition as a possible integral part of the package.

Yes, that's right. Each performance is modified according to the place, time, ours and production abilities. Art, poetry, design, dance, cabaret, all this tells a story and sings if there is something to say and if there's a will to say it. We are now preparing such a more complex variant for a performance in Novigrad, Istria, as a part of the Arterija Festival on August 21. Come!

B. Lukač: Can we expect a new apparition of the Ladder to the Sun Orchestra - or, well, the Tsar is Naked band - in the remaining three seasons?

Naturally, provided we get an invitation. As the final verse of one of our songs puts it - *I'm here for this*.

B. Lukač: If we mention giraffes from Šibenik as a frame added to this conversation, what would you tell about this design - to the citizens of Šibenik, for instance?

Perhaps, it would be precisely what I put in the first *She*-newsletter. The first default feature was related to the Poljana toponym. It is the place of the design task the architect Ivana Tutek entrusted me with. The square was the stage of many childhoods, friendships, love and, as such, woven in the long memory of citizens. So, it is like you're standing on the theatre stage where there is no one and nothing at the moment. Still, in the air, there are thousands of faces, touches, games, feelings, laughter, craziness, all the beauty that we remember life for, particularly youth. Secondly, automatically included, this solution cannot relate to any kind of sentiments or nostalgia. It has to open for new conversations and relations, for new youngsters, and for all people of every age who live here and come to this square. When I first looked around and saw what surrounds it, I saw a large, impressive glass wall full of books, then an older theatre building. As a third landmark, there is a church bell tower - it was clear that space was determined by art and spirituality. The fact is liberating, and as far as I am concerned, encouraging indeed. Then, the only thing I asked the architect who otherwise allowed complete freedom of creation was - what's the first thing I should relate to? Where do I start thinking regarding motif? Is it the word itself - Poljana (a field), which can be sufficient, or is there something else?

Ivana replied: take the height. Everything is vertical. It is a structure of an underground garage that goes to the ground approximately 13 metres to sea level. And from there, it comes out to the light of day. The three points the design will stand on. This picture is precisely the connection between the underground and the surface. It goes even higher, to a large chunk of the sky that can be seen over this surface and defines it. That was enough. It was the shortcut to the appearance of the tallest animal in the world. A thesis in the literature says this creature stands between the wake and dream, between imagined and tangible things. In its appearance, it is fascinating because it is surreal. In front of it, one remains speechless. It is a connection to prehistoric because it is giant, and design-wise it is incredibly modern, spectacular, and aesthetically brave.

Eventually, this led to the *Air Mail Twins* concept, a couple in dialogue coloured in the colours of the town, the colours of airmail, too. The couple suggesting a poetic or intimate discussion offers insight into a viewpoint and experience. These giraffes are not a distant art. They are there to socialise with every day, be close and domestic in other future applications. These two ordinary Šibenik giraffes love humour. Everything they say relates to their need to entertain and cheer others. /translation: *J. Kovačević*