

URBActions

Contents:

Intro URBActions <i>Azioni urbane</i>	pages 2 - 3
1. LANDSCAPE SCULPTURE <i>Sculpture interventions in old quarry of Drenov Grič</i> <i>Interventi scultorei nella cava di pietra</i>	page 4
2. PARK'N'PLAY <i>Functional sculpture with social impact in Fužine park</i> <i>Scultura funzionale con impatto sociale</i>	pages 5 - 6
3. WILLOWART & CONSTRUCTING <i>Functional sculpture with social impact in Fužine kindergarten</i> <i>Scultura funzionale con impatto sociale</i>	pages 7 - 8
4. UNDERGROUND CITY <i>Art in function of (re)vitalization</i> <i>L'arte con la funzione di far (ri)vivere lo spazio urbano</i>	pages 9 -11
5. MetroLjub (UNDERGROUND CITY) <i>Virtual Ljubljana Metro</i> <i>Metrò virtuale di Lubiana</i> http://freeweb.siol.net/famul/metroljub.htm	see Undergr. City
6. DISCONNECTED CITIES <i>Città separate</i>	page 12
7. THE STREET BELONGS TO US <i>La strada è nostra</i>	pages 13 - 14
8. ZONE D <i>Zona D - spazi abbandonati</i>	page 15
9. HOSTEL CELICA, LJUBLJANA <i>Da carceri militari ad ostello Celica</i>	page 16
10. NEW PASSENGER TERMINAL OF LJUBLJANA <i>Progetto per il nuovo terminale di passeggero di Lubiana</i>	pages 17 - 18
Contacts	page 19

All text are in English language.

URBActions

Azioni urbane

Commentary to the exhibition

The totality of social relationships is becoming ever harder to understand, perceive and comprehend.

The world of neoliberal mondialism, pauperisation, the transformation of everything into an object of sale and purchase, manipulates aspects, transforms reality into virtuality and virtuality into reality, reduces perception to economic valuation, intensifies and condenses social processes which start to seem as if petrified, or elusively fast.

The physical space that we live in is part of this game. One way or the other it is becoming a victim, prey and symbol of this process.

The presentations before you are a part of experiments to at least temporarily, perhaps even just momentarily, change the character of a specific space, to give it back its image of an environment that respects the individual, which is a space of freedom, social fantasy, the coexistence of diversity. There are also presentations of different, unusual, disideologised views of these same spaces.

The presentations may be fragmentary, but they are bold and unyielding. They construct space not for it to be used economically, not to instil it with and underline its profitability, but as something which resists that. It is unclear to what extent these experiments are successful, especially if the criterion for judging success coincides with the criterion of global social relationships. The aesthetics at work here is an attempt to understand and comprehend space from the vantage point of *other* and *different*. This is not an aesthetic that manifests social power or an aesthetic of spectacle, it is an aesthetic that at first seems naive, modest and unique, but that is exactly how it shows its different character.

The projects we are presenting are just like that. Not at all spectacular, for they refuse to be, not at all eternal, for they have neither the power nor the inner exaltation for that.

A project which explores the space of the stone quarry as an immanent and concealed space of possible anthropological and archaeological research and play; a project which, by placing artefacts into a depressed urban space examines whether art with its classical aesthetic function has any relevant social and political impact; a project where a literally living habitat structure is being built on the garden of a kindergarten, begging at least the question about a redefinition of the relationship between animate and inanimate nature; a project of underground train stations as artistic installations, which exposes the fakeness of street appearances and street life in covered underground complexes of modern cities; a project which year after year returns at least a small part of the streets to a underprivileged group such as playful children; a project of an unbundled city, which deals with the slow slide into oblivion of the own city and the very appearance of the city among youths living in large suburbs; a project which takes a building designed as a prison for control over human bodies and tries to symbolically reorganise the prison architecture to create a space of freedom, of respect for the individual's uniqueness and the right to live out and manifest this uniqueness – all these are projects that refuse to manipulate or ideologise, instead they expose the unilateral and narrow-minded constructions of the environment we live in.

text by Peter Pirk

LANDSCAPE SCULPTURE

*Sculpture interventions in old quarry
of Drenov Grič*

Interventi scultorei nella cava di pietra

More than *sculpture*, we like to call our work in the old quarry of Drenov Grič, *sculpture interventions*. We tended to make a difference between giving the sculpture the main role, and another view, sculpture as a part of a particular space, which should remain in its leading role. So, our first focus was to get to know the space of Drenov Grič and recognize its impulses, so that we could conceive our work in symbiosis with the environment as a whole.

Nowadays, a visitor of Drenov Grič will first see the sculptures that were made in a sculpture symposium, which also took place there. But to recognize our interventions, he or she will need to step in and take a walk through the area. One will recognize some of them only on the second look: maybe not before he will already sit on one, use it to climb to another level of the quarry or want to cross a water hole.

What has Drenov Grič project to do with 'urban actions'? Already a quarry itself can be seen as a kind of urbanized nature, if we understand 'urbanized' in its wider sense. Our perception of space, understanding and methods of dealing with the space/people/time topics, were no different from our city ones. Drenov Grič project was the initial action that influenced our future projects, some of them showed in this exhibition.

text by Rene Rusjan, Famul Stuart 2006

PARK'N'PLAY

*Functional sculpture with social impact
in Fužine park*

Scultura funzionale con impatto sociale

*A sculpture that entices you to sit on it, lie down, jump over it,
To rest on any by it, to think, meditate,
To play with it, communicate with the 'fellow user'...*

One of our main ideas has been to establish the park as a field of communication with the neighbourhood. To invite people, young people, old people, children, to use it and take it as their own. To activate the park with new content. And to step out of the castle to the neighbourhood, a common field, in order to cooperate.

Facts: Fužine is a big neighbourhood on the eastern fringe of Ljubljana. It has long been known as problematic due to its high concentration of people.

Fužine Castle, the home of the Architecture Museum of Ljubljana, is located on the edge of the neighbourhood, where the river Ljubljanica leaves the city. The Famul Stuart School had been based in the castle from its inception in 1994 until it moved to new premises in 2004.

The neighbourhood and the castle are *connected*, and often *separated*, by a big park that is managed by the museum and whose users are mostly the people of the outer part of Fužine.

Intervention: The park by Fužine Castle interested us from various vantage points. For students of sculpture it was an opportunity to think and work in a particular spatial context. But, of course, a public park is not an enclosed testing ground. Therefore, its social context had been considered from the very start. We conceived our artistic interventions as a tool for creating relations: between people, the users of the park, and with space and time.

Impact: The project Igraj se park / Park'n'play and similar undertakings such as Sezam summer workshops, tore down most of the wall between the neighbourhood and the park. The park no longer divides, it connects. It is no longer untouchable, it entices. The sculptures in it are not foreign bodies that suddenly appeared at the edge of the neighbourhood, the park users have taken them as their own and live with them, for they were there when the sculptures were created.

text by Rene Rusjan, Famul Stuart 2006

WILLOWART & CONSTRUCTING

*Functional sculpture with social impact
in Fužine kindergarten
Scultura funzionale con impatto sociale*

The project is actually a part, or continuation of the Park'n'play project. We conceived it together with our guest artist, Jan Deicke, from Dresden, Germany. Beside the technique of building willow tree constructions, Deicke brought his rich experience with social aspects of such actions. Park'n'play project had to grow to another level: in searching partners in this rather big project, in searching more support from the local community, even voluntary help from the neighbourhood, rising funds from diverse sources... And, very important, we had to find a host for the willow-art constructions. A host with appropriate location, who would help in building, but mainly, the one who would use and take the care of growing willows.

Together with Sezam association, who was immediately willing to become our partner again, we found the perfect host, Fužine kindergarten.

Few months before the actual building, we had a short workshop in the kindergarten, to get to know the place, the kindergarten dynamics and their wishes about their future playing ground. Our students, the kindergarten children and staff built 'dwarf huts' from small willow branches that we used in conceiving the future objects. Together with Deicke we decided to build willow pavilions for kindergarten theatre and lower tunnels for playing.

Although we can admire and enjoy bursting leafy willow pavilions without knowing the backgrounds, the background is important in this context. The willow pavilions are not ours anymore. They belong to the children who watered the willow constructions every day, they belong to the kindergarten staff who helped building them, who live with them every day, play with children in willow shade and they belong to the parents who were voluntarily helping in building and maintaining the willow constructions.

The project was, and still is, particularly successful in connecting people in mutual collaboration and spending quality time together in their piece of nature in concrete/ asphalt surroundings.

text by Rene Rusjan, Famul Stuart 2006

UNDERGROUND CITY

Art in function of (re)vitalization

*L'arte con la funzione di far (ri)vivere
lo spazio urbano*

In September 2004, Famul Stuart School moved to its new premises, near the city centre. From the castle with a park, we moved to a concrete / glass area of Bežigranski dvor. To make an even bigger difference, our premises are now mostly under the ground. The complex is relatively new; therefore a lot of neighbouring spaces are still empty, waiting for new owners to activate them.

The new situation gave us new impulses: together with artist Miha Vipotnik, we conceived the interdisciplinary 'Underground City' project. After months of preparations and a month of intensive workshops, we showed how the underground corridors could be turned into a vivid street, at least from time to time. Further smaller events, occasional shows, exhibitions, projections, sound installations and many sculpture objects that remained in the place afterwards, keep the place alive. The huge photo layout (covering almost 250m² and with strong Miha Vipotnik 'touch') with virtual entrance to a virtual metro station (MetroLjub), placed in the corridor connecting Bežigranski dvor with Plava Laguna, invites visitors that didn't even know that the place existed in their vicinity.

The Underground City project is not over, it is work in progress, getting new dimensions also with MetroLjub, the virtual Ljubljana Metro, which is growing out of the borders of Ljubljana and Slovenia. It already has a station in Austria and is building its way as far as Kirgistan.

text by Rene Rusjan, Famul Stuart 2006

Peter Pirk, our collaborator, has written his reflection to the Underground City opening event (published on web portal Krtača). Here is his interesting view:

"City under the city is an unusual and unexpected exhibition. It seems like an exhibition that relates to nothing and that suddenly disappears.

According to its creators (Famul Stuart School of Applied Arts) and its signification this exhibition is not an exhibition, nor installation, nor artistic intervention in its classical signification.

It is, in a way, a critical space decoration, a hip-hop architecture, a teenage urbanism. It is a protest over the space where school exists.

The space defined by it is a modern underground walk-through gallery, mainly in order and operating.

The purpose of this exhibition is not the presentation of a degraded space, nor the presentation of some destructive shanty scene. All of this has already been seen and already presented with unbearable critical pain.

No, the exhibition portrays a mythological space of trade and shopping centre, with its marble and glass as degraded space. A space of cool alienation, loneliness, tiredness, drudgery, impersonality. A space that presents, just like the BTC city (Ljubljana shopping city), especially anonymous exploitation and dehumanisation in the coldness of marble and glass.

All of a sudden we are no longer dealing with dichotomy of a dreadful life on the city edge and paradise in neuralgic city cores like shopping malls. No, here we are dealing with one and the same. The dehumanisation here and there.

Following the rhythm of a brisk walk, just like when running errands, the exhibition threads collages of large photos reminding you that you are in the underground. That you are in a technologically perfected space, but in technologically completely enclosed space, since there is no sky. The winds you can feel are the winds of artificially created air currents. The temperature you feel is the temperature of technology; the light is the light of neon, the new sun. The floor on which you walk

does not advance in any greenery but to marble and glass walls. Video projections penetrate this urban world of the last generation as something that belongs to it in itself. Just like the decoration of disco clubs in empty spaces. They constantly remind us that we are in the underground, namely in an environment which is in the epicenter of a modern technological development and social importance. This is the residential future, which has already started.

There are also the necessary services, shops, places, hairdresser's saloons, which are not an exhibition itself, but are open for the exhibition's sake. They respond to the steps of the crowd. They come alive when they hear them, and they benumb when the steps quiet down.

And finally, there are also children, an underground playground, recycled cars and theatre shadows.

The exhibition revives the space of underground. Directly and critically. It responds to the technological character of the space and thus reveals its social character. It seems that an individual can only live here and now. That he must live only here and now. It even seems that he wants to live only here and now.

The exhibition stresses the space as being artificial through and through. It stresses the space's alienation as its natural being. If the space is not alienated, if you do not pay rent for it, if you are not making money with it, if it is not anonymous, impersonal, if there is no marble and glass then this isn't space.

But, isn't every space seen on TV just like that, namely artificial and unreal? The life space of the future is therefore a TV studio, a video projection. It is a mixture of material world and production of images.

And trust me, there is no place more beautiful where these two can really coexist together than this city under the city."

text by Peter Pirk from a view of a visitor

DISCONNECTED CITIES

Città separate

The project studies the relation of juveniles to their own living space. It precisely emphasizes their problem of behaviour and consciousness of their environment. The project subjects the problem of identity of the youth to their own city. Do they recognize the city as the place they belong to or do they find it a hostile, foreign place, perhaps even something kind, where they feel comfortable, or do they have an opinion of their city at all?

All civilizations started with the occurrence of cities, which are generically inscribed in the civilization code of the people. Is this true of all people? Do people in favelas, slums and large urban aggregates of the world have the same feelings for their city as the people from regulated and friendly rich quarters? Do the young from large residential settlements at the outskirts even know what a city really is?

The presented project tried to define the relation of the young inhabitants of the large unprivileged suburb of Ljubljana to the city itself in a different, unique way. Originating in the thesis that youngsters lack not only the conscienceness but also the knowledge of the city, the project tried to show the expansion and the connectedness of the city tissue with its suburbs, its streets and blocks of flats.

Groups of photos below present three views of the city:

- from the air/by balloon
- surroundings of the city/from the expressway/the city limits
- under the ground/a tour of the city sewer and waterworks system channels

Complexity, metastating, dispersion, where does a modern city lead to, if leads anywhere at all? The project objectivises the image of the city as identity but unfortunately did nothing to stimulate or change the distinctive carelessness towards the urban space (Ljubljana) the young belong to.

text by Peter Pirk, Sezam 2006

THE STREET BELONGS TO US

La strada è nostra

The presented project deals with the process of disappearance of public places intended to children.

Before the occurrence of cars, the streets were the place, where children played freely, but now they are a hostile and dangerous place for children. The last two decades of the previous century witnessed the process of returning the streets to pedestrians. The so-called pedestrian zones occurred, where the streets again became public places intended to everyone.

The positive trend of supplanting cars from the city cores is positive at first sight but carries a very specific inner charge. There was a thorough connection with commercial activities, occurrence of shopping centres and restaurant chains.

Here, the children were welcome only as consumers along with everybody else. No more that instant children's playgrounds occurred in large shopping malls and around them, where parents could leave their children in order to be able to shop.

With the project before you, Sezam is trying to exceed this commercialised place. In a place, which is at a different time of the day a restaurant in the function of the production of profit, Sezam is organizing the place for playing and having fun. This place is intended to everyone not only to customers of goods offered by restaurants in this most attractive place in Ljubljana, but also to passers-by, casual visitors, children living in the vicinity, children visiting their friends or families, visitors of the city, etc. The playground is a combination of permanent furniture and momentary improvisation, it does not deal with esthetic issues of the city policy rather, it politicises the problem of the public places by means of appropriation. It may look like a gypsy camp, a circus arena or a sandbox.

In a symbolic way it frames up the space but at the same time it gives it the attribute of transparency. Its form and way of functioning speaks about its temporality, how it can be set up at any time anywhere in the city, where children want it to be, regardless of everything. Children are the minority with the least rights, particularly where they do not present a valuable investment for the future of their parents, when they carelessly play and do not learn, learn and obey.

The disappearance of playground places and children's games is a process that speaks not only about decreasing public places and the occurrence of child-hostile places, but mostly about a subtle process of supervision and control of the gentlest period of man's life.

We are witnessing the process of changing of children, the world of child's play, daydreaming and fantasies into a supervised process of capitalization, a process of long-term investments. And in this world, there is no place for playing and dreaming.

text by Nada Kirn Špolar, Sezam 2006

ZONE D

Zona D - spazi abbandonati

The ZONE-D (CONA-D) video work is exploring the relationship between public space and an individual, analysing temporary structures, self-construction and areas, recording and examine reactions.

Video ZONE-D (co-autors Robertina Šebjanič and Peter Košir - video and Luka Prinčič - audio) was created in 2005 as a project of TEMP: interdisciplinary network of organizations and individuals.

HOSTEL CELICA, LJUBLJANA

From military prison to Hostel Celica

Da carceri militari ad ostello Celica

The essence of the "Sestava" ASC is "work in progress" that is closely linked to a project transforming a former military imprisonment facility in Metelkova Street into a youth hostel called "Celica" (The Cell). A confined military space, reeking of repression, is transformed into an open and creative area of lively expression, simultaneously a piece of art and a haven of rest and peace. Former prison cells are transformed into lively niches, and suddenly, they pulsate in the multitude of life...

Our aim is to combine the skills and wisdom of architecture, painting, sculpture, philosophy and poetry. We build on the model of Medieval and Renaissance workshops, incorporating the most up-to-date developments in art and science. We are a team of creative makers and friends, closely interlinked by a clear vision of real space. We strive to create art that is not artificial or artful, and science, the significance whereof is not in signs only.

Nothing remains closed if we go far enough, or even, close enough. For a proper reason, even a prison can open up. And we know that it is only beyond the wall and border that we can find real order. Beyond virtual reality, the real space comes closer to human grace. In place of **virtuality** one needs **virtueality**. We harmonize outer **experiments** by inner **experience**. An equilibrium of **outside** and **inside** will open up the gates to **insight**.

text by KUD Sestava and Uvid.si

Project for the NEW PASSENGER TERMINAL OF LJUBLJANA

*Progetto per il nuovo terminale di passeggero
di Lubiana*

*City to be constructed on top of
an underground railway station*

PROBLEM

A burning urban-planning problem of the 21st-Century Ljubljana and an everlasting Gordian knot of urban transport as well as the entire urban structure is the Ljubljana Railway Station. In their nature, transport facilities should provide links between people and places. This is not the case with the Ljubljana Railway Station as it divides the city into two parts. In the very city centre, the railway lines between two subways blocks off 8 streets, thus rendering impossible the North-to-South communication within the city.

Railway line across the centre of Ljubljana is one of the most overloaded railway networks in Europe. An additional construction of a second railway line from the Port of Koper/Capodistria is just another cargo transport burden to Ljubljana. An envisaged railway bypass around Ljubljana would be an extremely hard task in particular due to crossovers above and/or underpasses beneath the highways to Ljubljana which would need to be constructed, and even more importantly, due to an additional sacrifice of great surfaces of good agricultural land, which could bring about major ecological problems.

By the envisaged construction of a rapid railway line a new European transport network will be put in place. It is of paramount importance for the development of Ljubljana that the rapid railway station be placed in the very city centre, in an intermodal transport intersection point. The only solution of the inner city passenger, cargo and rapid railway transport problem is to construct an underground railway corridor.

SOLUTION

By underground railway construction in the city centre, the cargo transport problem is resolved, a new rapid railway station is gained, and 10 adjoining streets become freely accessible, and thereby, the northern City part finally reunites with the Centre. As a consequence, largest rounded out surfaces become available for new construction in the very Centre of the Metropolis. Architectural superstructure would decrease to a great extent or even return the cost of underground construction.

Ljubljana would not be let to expand outwards at random anymore, as its quality urban structure could be developed inwardly for some decades. Pressure on the historic City Kernel would decrease and thus it could be restored in an integral process of reconstruction of the entire cultural heritage to serve as model on its reopening for new cultural, business and tourist events. On completion of the Slovenian highway programme, the opening of such a project would contribute to the development of the Slovenian construction industry and, moreover, of almost all segments of the economy, ranging from the real estate market, to banking, urbanism and architecture. The new City Pole with its administrative, business, training and educational and residential functions would transcend the dichotomy of the former old and new city centres, establishing positive synergy of the Metropolis and the State, the two poles of the same plane, finally rendering Ljubljana a proper Metropolis and Slovenia a country with a vision.

text by KUD Sestava and Uvid.si

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Detailed information on projects creators

is available in a separate document:

<http://www.galerijagt-famul.si/URBActions-credits-web.pdf>