

Universal Objects

Tanja Vujinović interviewed by Ivona Fregl

Published in the exhibition catalogue from the Lucida Gallery, Belgrade, Serbia, September 2017.

This year marks the 20 year anniversary since you have appeared on the contemporary art scene. Would you please describe the genesis of your interest in the various issues that you have been researching in your artwork and also what led you to get interested in these particular topics?

Artworks that I have created in the past consist of interventions within the physical infrastructure of electronic carriers of media as well as the material infrastructure of the digital by using software applications, custom electronics and physical and digital objects. Works used to either take the form of specific situations or dynamic environments, which are brought to existence with the help of virtual machines. The interest in all aspects of underlying currents of tools and materials that I often use creates some sort of web of poetical and technical elements at play, leading to the analysis of "sub-consciousness" of technology. Elements of my works relate to questions of media and information technologies - their data bases and carriers - and are an invitation towards rethinking of development, analysis, learning of new but also discarded technologies, and their deconstruction. The works also used to accent ideological aspects already built into media and gadgets. The attractiveness of new technologies, dependence upon them, our fetishizing of closeness among us and our gadgets are some of the themes that I continually pay attention to. Works that belong to the Discrete Events in Noisy Domains cycle, as generative temporary probes and as transformative structures, dissect some of the hidden layers of technology. The questions that these works open are, in my opinion, important and relevant questions regarding tweaking, networking, and sampling of contemporary media tools and information technologies with all of their data-flows and channels. On the other hand, through Universal Objects series I deal with the material base of the digital and problems of transference of the self into the social spaces of virtual domains that are slowly becoming our merged realities.

What were the circumstances that led to the creation of the series Universal Objects?

The name of this cycle arrives from ideas related to what archetypal objects that are readily available within databases of objects are, how users approach them, how they change and fill them with projected consciousness, and what roles they are assigned within digital worlds, and then how those objects perform within these constellations. Environments from the Universal Objects series are non-narrative, vibrational, living surroundings filled with elements that are either inanimate or executing simple behavioural patterns through which the situations themselves become like an organism. The

majority of 3D objects, like suspended automata, perform minimal ritualistic gestures. They create zones of minimal action that never transcend into something else but rather exist in a state of non-narrative endlessness. As dynamic monuments of contemporary times where we represent ourselves through digital performative artefacts, the series takes universal elements present in generic avatars and their typical surroundings and then translates it all into dynamic monumental yet fragmented bits of information floating in infinite space. Digital humanoids are symptomatic, simultaneously actual, real, present and absent through ethereal existence.

To what extent is your work affected by a human factor and how much by technical innovations? Could you draw a parallel between the technological and primordial cultural context in your artwork?

Elements of collective unconscious, as C.G. Jung would put it, are omnipresent within the field of technology and could be located within a wide range of phenomena, starting from directly shaped, anthropomorphic, physical, digital or imaginary objects, to more abstract, background processes of machines and algorithms. The relationship between consciousness and technology through digital animism and anthropomorphisation is a subject that I explore regularly within my practice of art. Anthropomorphisation has always been present in art and culture. Human physiognomy and behaviour, have always been assigned to objects - from deity statuettes to immaterial imaginary entities to toys, dolls and automatas. Whether it is art, religion, play or the latest technological discovery or entertainment, these projections of ourselves toward the outside world and shaping these projections into definite or fleeting humanoid forms have helped us move forward through history as part of the process of the humanisation of our surroundings.

To what extent do techniques promote the freedom of artistic expression, and how much (if at all) it limits it?

Media art offers a platform for critique and the humanisation of technology. Locations of art should be locations of poetic content, of rethinking society, and places of critique. If questions regarding technologies in daily use open up and if we are generally more open to discussion regarding the multitude of directions the future development of digital and information technologies are heading, that might be a good position. Generating alternative content in opposition to mainstream data-flows should be an invitation for everybody to participate in the discussion of our technological advancement, learning and influencing future directions of our technological development, and opening up these tools to experimentation, and creation of art. Activity regarding opening up of latest technologies for experiments and creative use is very important, just as interdisciplinary development of new collaborations.

What issues are currently in the focus of your artistic practice and why?

Through my own interdisciplinary art practice, I use various software programs, electronic components, conceptual development of ideas, research of media theory, as well as exploration of cultural phenomena viewed through the lens of visual culture theory. One of the central interests is the exploration and generation of the poetry of noise. Noise might be seen as a vehicle towards mutations and poetics within the digital and electro-acoustic world, where it enables new discoveries. Within my works I also explore the culture of play, which enables phenomenological experience of artwork through its sensorial aspects and emotional impact. The culture of play and ritual are closely related subjects in my work. They are always ritual in character, based on the creation of special structures within the frame of the ordinary, they include gestures, objects with assigned meaning, repetition. Spaces inspired by games and ritual create small, temporary oases for contemplation and rethinking the world.

This year marks the 20 year anniversary since you have appeared on the contemporary art scene. Would you please describe the genesis of your interest in the various issues that you have been researching in your artwork and also what led you to get interested in these particular topics?

Artworks that I have created in the past consist of interventions within the physical infrastructure of electronic carriers of media as well as the material infrastructure of the digital by using software applications, custom electronics and physical and digital objects. Works used to either take the form of specific situations or dynamic environments, which are brought to existence with the help of virtual machines. The interest in all aspects of underlying currents of tools and materials that I often use creates some sort of web of poetical and technical elements at play, leading to the analysis of "sub-consciousness" of technology. Elements of my works relate to questions of media and information technologies - their data bases and carriers - and are an invitation towards rethinking of development, analysis, learning of new but also discarded technologies, and their deconstruction. The works also used to accent ideological aspects already built into media and gadgets. The attractiveness of new technologies, dependence upon them, our fetishizing of closeness among us and our gadgets are some of the themes that I continually pay attention to. Works that belong to the *Discrete Events in Noisy Domains* cycle, as generative temporary probes and as transformative structures, dissect some of the hidden layers of technology. The questions that these works open are, in my opinion, important and relevant questions regarding tweaking, networking, and sampling of contemporary media tools and information technologies with all of their data-flows and channels. On the other hand, through *Universal Objects* series I deal with the material base of the digital and problems of transference of the self into the social spaces of virtual domains that are slowly becoming our merged realities.

What were the circumstances that led to the creation of the series Universal Objects?

The name of this cycle arrives from ideas related to what archetypical objects that are readily available within databases of objects are, how users approach them, how they change and fill them with projected consciousness, and what roles they are assigned within digital worlds, and then how those objects perform within these constellations. Environments from the *Universal Objects* series are non-narrative, vibrational, living surroundings filled with elements that are either inanimate or executing simple behavioural patterns through which the situations themselves become like an organism. The majority of 3D objects, like suspended automata, perform minimal ritualistic gestures. They create zones of minimal action that never transcend into something else but rather exist in a state of non-narrative endlessness. As dynamic monuments of contemporary times where we represent ourselves through digital performative artefacts, the series takes universal elements present in generic avatars and their typical surroundings and then translates it all into dynamic monumental yet fragmented bits of information floating in infinite space. Digital humanoids are symptomatic, simultaneously actual, real, present and absent through ethereal existence.

To what extent is your work affected by a human factor and how much by technical innovations? Could you draw a parallel between the technological and primordial cultural context in your artwork?

Elements of collective unconscious, as C.G. Jung would put it, are omnipresent within the field of technology and could be located within a wide range of phenomena, starting from directly shaped, anthropomorphic, physical, digital or imaginary objects, to more abstract, background processes of machines and algorithms. The relationship between consciousness and technology through digital animism and anthropomorphisation is a subject that I explore regularly within my practice of art. Anthropomorphisation has always been present in art and culture. Human physiognomy and behaviour, have always been assigned to objects – from deity statuettes to immaterial imaginary entities to toys, dolls and automatas. Whether it is art, religion, play or the latest technological discovery or entertainment, these projections of ourselves toward the outside world and shaping these projections into definite or fleeting humanoid forms have helped us move forward through history as part of the process of the humanisation of our surroundings.

To what extent do techniques promote the freedom of artistic expression, and how much (if at all) it limits it?

Media art offers a platform for critique and the humanisation of technology. Locations of art should be locations of poetic content, of rethinking society, and places of critique. If questions regarding technologies in daily use open up and if we are generally more open to discussion regarding the multitude of directions the future development of digital and information technologies are heading, that might be a good position. Generating alternative content in opposition to mainstream data-flows should be an invitation for everybody to participate in the discussion of our technological advancement, learning and influencing future directions of our technological development, and opening up these tools to experimentation, and creation of art. Activity regarding opening up of latest

technologies for experiments and creative use is very important, just as interdisciplinary development of new collaborations.

What issues are currently in the focus of your artistic practice and why?

Through my own interdisciplinary art practice, I use various software programs, electronic components, conceptual development of ideas, research of media theory, as well as exploration of cultural phenomena viewed through the lens of visual culture theory. One of the central interests is the exploration and generation of the poetry of noise. Noise might be seen as a vehicle towards mutations and poetics within the digital and electro-acoustic world, where it enables new discoveries. Within my works I also explore the culture of play, which enables phenomenological experience of artwork through its sensorial aspects and emotional impact. The culture of play and ritual are closely related subjects in my work. They are always ritual in character, based on the creation of special structures within the frame of the ordinary, they include gestures, objects with assigned meaning, repetition. Spaces inspired by games and ritual create small, temporary oases for contemplation and rethinking the the world.