

PERFORMATIVNOST POLITIKE U UMJETNIČKOM KONTEKSTU

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THE PERFORMATIVITY OF POLITICS IN AN ARTISTIC CONTEXT

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SAŽETAK: Analiza radova iz serije *Umjetnost, vlasništvo politike I; II; (Art, Property of Politics I; II;)* nizozemskog kontekstualnog umjetnika Jonasa Staala prikazuje složenost odnosa politike i umjetnosti. Rubnost umjetničke prakse Jonasa Staala očrta je djelovanjem na granici između umjetnosti i politike, gdje umjetnički rad u participaciji političara iznova konstruira njihovu ulogu unutar umjetničkog konteksta. Konstrukcija uloge političara ima performativan karakter, ali radovi *Umjetnost, vlasništvo politike I; II;* nisu izvedeni kao performansi, niti mogu biti tako čitani u cijelosti. Stoga analiza radova temu *rubnosti* propituje s obzirom na sadržaj, ali i medij. *Umjetnost, vlasništvo politike I* obuhvaća istraživanje umjetnina u vlasništvu političkih stranaka roterdamskog gradskog vijeća (2010.). K tome, Jonas Staal uključuje političare kao medijatore koji objašnjavaju značenje pojedinog umjetničkog rada, ali i odnos politike prema umjetnosti. Tako radovi, već uobičajeni za stranačke uredske prostore gradske vijećnice, na zidovima roterdamske galerije Tent djeluju poput stranog tijela, a njihovo prvotno značenje odražava ideje političke stranke u čijem su vlasništvu. *Umjetnost, vlasništvo politike II* (2010.) nastaje kao reprodukcija tzv. *Freethinkers spacea*, otvorenog 2008. na inicijativu nizozemske liberalno-konzervativne *Narodne stranke za slobodu i demokraciju* i ekstremne nacionalističke *Stranke slobode* s ciljem izlaganja radova cenzuriranih iz političkih ili religijskih razloga. No, izlagani su jedino radovi cenzurirani zbog kritiziranja islama. Reproduciranjem *Freethinkers spacea* u muzeju Van Abbe ulogu kustosa izvode populistički političari.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: Jonas Staal, međutnost politike i umjetnosti, performativnost političara, reprodukcija, Nizozemska

Umjetničku praksu nizozemskog kontekstualnog umjetnika Jonasa Staala moguće je odrediti kao djelovanje na granici između umjetnosti i politike. Pritom se ne radi samo o kritičkom komentaru društvenopolitičkog okruženja unutar kojeg djeluje, nego Staal svojim radovima uspijeva izazvati javnu diskusiju izvan granica umjetničkog polja. Možda razlog treba tražiti i u činjenici što su njegovi radovi redovito izvedeni u javnom prostoru, kao što je bio slučaj sa serijom *Geert Wilders Works* (2005.–2008.), kada u Rotterdamu anonimno postavlja memorijalnu instalaciju posvećenu nizozemskom populističkom političaru Geertu Wildersu. Vizualno instalacija prisvaja jezik memorijala sastavljenih od slika, medvjedića, cvijeća i sl. kakve su spontano podizali građani radi obilježavanja smrti neke poznate osobe, primjerice britanske princeze Diane, ili pak, u nizozemskom slučaju, populističkog političara Pima Fortuyna. U političkoj klimi u kojoj je sjećanje na ubojstva Pima Fortuyna (2002.) i filmskog režisera Thea Van Gogha (2004.) bilo vrlo osjetljiva tema, Geert Wilders, kao pristalica i nastavljač njihovih antiislamističkih ideja, memorijalnu instalaciju je shvatio osobno, doživio ju je kao prijetnju smrću te je tužio umjetnika. Odlaskom na suđenje Staal prihvaća političnost vlastite pozicije, ali istovremeno prisvaja suđenje i prateću javnu raspravu kao nastavak umjetničkog rada *Geert Wilders Works*. Ako se kontekst sudnice shvati kao konstruirani umjetnički

SUMMARY: An analysis of artworks from the series called *Art, Property of Politics I and II* by the Dutch contextual artist Jonas Staal reveals the complexity of relations between politics and art. The borderline character of Staal's art practice is marked by actions on the borderline between art and politics, where the role of politicians is constructed anew within the context of art. Constructing a politician's role has a performative character, but *Art, Property of Politics I and II* were not conceived as performances, and cannot be fully interpreted as such. Therefore, this analysis explores the issue of *margin/ality* with regard to both the content and the medium.

Art, Property of Politics I was a research on artworks owned by the political parties of the City Council in Rotterdam (2010). Jonas Staal involved the politicians as mediators who explained the meaning of each particular artwork, as well as the attitude of politics towards art. As common as these artworks were for the party offices in the town hall, they seemed like foreign bodies on the walls of Rotterdam's Tent gallery, since their primary meaning reflected the ideas of the political party that owned them. *Art, Property of Politics II* (2010) was conceived as a reproduction of the so-called *Freethinkers' Space*, which was inaugurated in 2008 at the initiative of the Dutch liberal-conservative People's Party for Freedom and Democracy and the extreme nationalist Freedom Party with the aim of exhibiting artworks that had been censored for political or religious reasons. However, eventually they exhibited only artworks censored for criticizing Islam. By reproducing *Freethinkers' Space* at Van Abbe museum, the populist politicians performed the role of curators.

KEYWORDS: Jonas Staal, *in-betweenness of art and politics*, performativity of politicians, reproduction, the Netherlands

The art practice of Dutch contextual artist Jonas Staal can be considered as an act on the borderline between art and politics. It is not only a critical commentary on the socio-political setting in which he is active, since he manages to provoke a public discussion with his artworks that reaches beyond the field of art. His art is regularly performed in public space, as was the case with the series *Geert Wilders Works* (2005-2008), when he anonymously set up a memorial installation dedicated to the Dutch populist politician Geert Wilders. Visually, this installation appropriated the language of memorials that abound in pictures, teddy-bears, flowers, etc. and are usually established by people to commemorate the death of a celebrity, for example Princess Diana, or to name a Dutch case, the populist politician Pim Fortuyn. In the political climate in which reminiscences of the murders of Pim Fortuyn (2002) and film director Theo Van Gogh (2004) were a very sensitive topic, Geert Wilders, as a partisan and continuator of their anti-Islamic ideas, took the memorial installation very personally, proclaiming it a death threat, and raised charges against the artist. By appearing before the court, Staal accepted the political character of his position, at the same time appropriating the process and the ensuing public debate as a continuation of his *Geert Wilders Works*. If the context of the courtroom is understood as a construed artistic context, we may say that Staal took on the director's role by using the courtroom

kontekst, Staal preuzima ulogu režisera koristeći sudnicu za raspravu o svom radu, ali i o političkoj ulozi umjetnika u društvu. Dakle, umjetnikov nastup predstavlja drugi pristup stvarnosti, ali opet jednako legitiman kao pristup politike zakona. Međutost umjetnosti i politike, gdje umjetnik djeluje kao umjetnik, a političar/ka kao političar/ka, dok se kontekst unutar kojeg djeluju mijenja, određujući time iznova njihovu ulogu, karakteristična je i za seriju *Umjetnost, vlasništvo politike*¹ (*Art, Property of Politics*). Riječ je o radu u nastanku osmišljenom 2009., a umjetnik se vodi tezom da umjetnost nije neovisna o aktualnoj politici i "politika uvijek već unaprijed ima ideološki interes u odnosu na ulogu umjetnosti u društvu".²

Umjetnost, vlasništvo politike I

Staal je projekt započeo istraživanjem *umjetničkih* radova u vlasništvu svih političkih stranaka tada kandidiranih za rotterdamsko gradsko vijeće, pri čemu je surađivao s predstavnicima/cama stranki, a ne autorima/cama radova. Suradnja je ostvarena dokumentiranjem razgovora s političarima/kama o značenju pojedinog rada i odnosu umjetnosti i politike te posudbom radova za potrebe izložbe. Nadalje, u pamfletnoj knjižici, osim opisa radova, svaka stranka je predstavljena malenom "biografijom", što nije slučaj s umjetnicima/cama. Dokumentacija u obliku videointervju

politički angažiranih kolekcionara/ki (snimio Rob Schröder) i pamfletne knjižice dio su rada *Umjetnost, vlasništvo politike I*. Rad je imao oblik klasične izložbe smještene unutar grupne izložbe *The People United Will Never Be Defeated* (*Ljudi ujedinjeni nikad neće biti poraženi*) u rotterdamskoj galeriji Tent u vrijeme izbora članova gradskog vijeća (2010.). Među ostalim, izložena je fotografija jednog od osnivača socijalizma u Nizozemskoj Ferdinanda Domela Nieuwenhuisa, fotografija grafitu „Iskrenost je trajala prekratko“, konzerve juhe s mesnim okruglicama, komad asfalta, uokvirena bejzbolska majica, odjeća sašivena od zimbabveanskih dolara, ostavljajući pritom začudan dojam izmještenosti. Stalnim posjetiteljima bilo je očito umjetničko odstupanje od programa galerije Tent, orijentirane na predstavljanje suvremene umjetnosti vezane za Rotterdam, smještene kat ispod čuvene galerije Witte de With. Doista, na prvi pogled izloženi radovi imaju zajednički jedino muzejski način izlaganja, odmjereno zauzimajući zidove i staklom zaštićene postamente. Premda ime autora ili vrijeme nastanka pojedinih radova gdje gdje ostaje nepoznato, ime „zbirke“ ne izostaje. Zbog toga što „zbirka“ kontekstualizira društvene, ekonomske, pa i političke uvjete prijenosa vlasništva rada, uočila bih povezanost rada *Umjetnost, vlasništvo politike I* s radom *Seuratove „Les Poseuses“ (mala verzija) 1888.–1975*. Hansa Haackea, jednog od pionira

to stage a debate on his work and the artist's political role in the society. Therefore, his artistic act became another approach to the reality, which is just as legitimate as the approach of the politics of law.

The in-betweenness of art and politics, where the artist acts as an artist, and the politician as a politician, while the context in which they are active changes, thus redefining their roles, is also characteristic for the series called *Art, Property of Politics*.¹ It was conceived in 2009 and guided by the hypothesis that art is not independent of the current political events and that "politics always already has an ideological interest in the role of art in society."²

Art, Property of Politics I

Staal started this project by exploring *artworks* owned by all the political parties that were at that time candidates for the City Council of Rotterdam, whereby he cooperated with the representatives of the parties rather than the authors of the artworks. The cooperation took the form of recording the interviews conducted with the politicians on the meaning of particular artworks and the relationship between art and politics, as well as regarding the loan of these artworks for the exhibition. Moreover, the exhibition booklet, besides describing the artworks, contained a description of each political party in the form of a small "biography", without doing the same for the artists. Documentation in the form of video interviews with politically engaged

art collectors (done by Rob Schröder) and the exhibition booklet were an integral part of the artwork *Art, Property of Politics I*. It was presented in the form of a classical exhibition within another exhibition called *The People United Will Never Be Defeated*, which took place at Rotterdam's Tent gallery at the time of elections for the members of the City Council (2010). Among other things, it featured a photograph of one of the founding fathers of socialism in Holland, Ferdinand Domel Nieuwenhuis, a photograph of the graffito saying "Honesty lasted too short," a can of soup with meatballs, a piece of asphalt, a framed baseball shirt, and a piece of clothing made out of Zimbabwean dollar bills, which left an estranging impression of displacement. The usual visitors of Tent gallery could easily notice artistic discrepancy with regard to its regular programme, which focuses on contemporary art related to Rotterdam and is located on the floor below the famous Witte de With gallery. Indeed, at the first glance the only thing that the exhibited artworks had in common was that they were exhibited in a gallery, occupying the walls and showcases in a well measured style. Even though their dates and the names of their authors were occasionally omitted, the name of the "collection" was always there. Since these "collections" contextualize the social, economic, and even political conditions of the transfer of property over the artwork, I would like to draw attention to the link between *Art, Property of Politics I* with *Seurat's "Les Poseuses" (small version) 1888-1975* by Hans Haackea,

kritike institucija (*institutional critique*). Razotkrivanjem povijesti vlasništva Seuratove skice za *Le Grand Jatte* Haacke pokušava dokučiti shvaćanje umjetničkog rada kao entiteta neovisnog o društvenim, političkim i ekonomskim uvjetima unutar kojih je prodan, darovan ili kupljen. A jednakim uokvirivanjem Seuratove skice i dokumenata, koji sadrže podatke o vlasnicima i uvjetima prijenosa vlasništva, vizualno izjednačava umjetnički rad i njegov kontekst. No, Haacke kontekstualizira sliku umjetnika svjetske reputacije prateći promjenu njene ekonomske vrijednosti kroz vrijeme, dok Staal koristi radove kako bi uputio na njihovu političku uvjetovanost. Štoviše, većina radova izmještenih u umjetnički kontekst galerije Tent gubi simboličku vrijednost umjetničkog djela kakvu im pojedina stranka pridaje unutar uredskih prostorija. Oni su većinom postali umjetnički zahvaljujući njihovoj kontekstualizaciji, nije ih mnogo unaprijed mišljeno kao umjetnički rad. Primjerice, bijela glinena figurica zagrljenog para anonimnog autora pripada „zbirci“ stranke Kršćansko-demokratskog apela (CDA), a simbolizira ljubav i potencijal obitelji utjelovljujući ideološke stavove stranke. Još bizarniji je komad asfalta iz „zbirke“ Laburističke stranke (PVDA) koji je tamo dospio nakon predstavljanja nove tehnike asfalta tvrtke Arcadis Heidemij, a za stranku asfalt simbolizira „demokratizaciju“ slobode kretanja.³ Sličan je primjer i

uokvirena bejzbolska majica iz „zbirke“ Kršćanske unije koja podržava bejzbolsku momčad *Artillan Spring Camp* sastavljenu od problematične mladeži porijeklom s Antila, ne bi li ih timski sport naučio vrijednostima i odgovornostima koje će im pomoći u boljem snalaženju u nizozemskom društvu. S druge strane, čak i kada se radi o umjetničkim radovima poput *Zim Style* – odjeće načinjene od zimbabveanskih dolara koji su u odnosu na jedan euro vrijedili 80.000 te se više isplatilo od novčanica sašiti odjeću nego ih upotrijebiti kao platežno sredstvo – oni također odražavaju ideološke stavove stranke, u ovom slučaju stranke Zelene ljevice (GroenLinks). Naime, naslov rada *Zim Style* referira se i na Zimbabve i na računalnu igricu *Sim City* gdje je jedna od ključnih premisa pravedna raspodjela sredstava, što je jedno od temeljnih načela Zelene ljevice.

Ako rad *Umjetnost, vlasništvo politike I* sagledamo u cjelini, videosnimka razgovora s političarima/kama o radovima i njihovoj političkoj i ideološkoj pozadini ne funkcionira kao zaseban videorad, nego kao ključ čitanja izložbe. Iako je njihov nastup posredovan snimkom, upravo ovdje se konstruira nova uloga političara u kontekstu izložbe gdje izvode svojevrsne medijatore (predmeta iz vlastitih zbirki). Kao i radovi u stranačkim „zbirdkama“, iskazani stavovi o odnosu politike i umjetnosti također odražavaju ideološka polazišta stranke.

PERFORMATIVNOST
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JONAS STAAL, „UMJETNOST, VLASNIŠTVO POLITIKE I“,
2010, FOTOGRAFIJA LOTTE STEKELENBURG

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JONAS STAAL, „ART, PROPERTY OF POLITICS I“,
2010, PHOTO CREDIT LOTTE STEKELENBURG

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Tako za stranku Kršćanskog demokratskog apela „umjetnost i kultura vode boljem međusobnom razumijevanju, odnosno boljoj društvenoj koheziji“,⁴ dok je stav desne konzervativno-liberalne stranke *Leefbaar Rotterdam* „da politiku nije briga za umjetnost. (...) Ali još od šezdesetih umjetnost se financira javnim novcem. Stoga je važno mišljenje građana Rotterdama, kao i političkih predstavnika.“⁵ Nadalje, za Narodnu stranku za slobodu i demokraciju „značenje kulture treba podržati ostavljajući njen sadržaj neograničenim“⁶, a suprotno tom stajalištu za Kršćansku uniju prilikom dodjeljivanja sredstava trebaju postojati kriteriji o nasilju, diskriminaciji, blasfemiji i nemoralu.⁷ Stav Zelene ljevice je da u nizozemskom društvu „postoji snažna potreba za umjetnošću, umjetnost može iznenaditi, stimulirati i inspirirati. Umjetnost je istovremeno izazov društvu i njegov odraz“.⁸ Izgovoreno postaje ključno za razumijevanje ove neobične izložbe, a uloga politike i umjetnosti, suprotno onome što tvrde o nezadiranju jedne u sadržaj druge, izokrenuta je, jer političari/ke u kontekstu izložbe djeluju kao tjelesno odsutni medijatori čije izjave nose značenje čitavog rada. Za razliku od *Geert Wilders Works* gdje umjetnik unutar političkog konteksta prisvaja ulogu političara kao performativnu, kod rada *Umjetnost, vlasništvo politike II* uloga političara je uvjetovana umjetničkim kontekstom te je kao takva isključivo

performativna. Takva režija ujedno ukida shvaćanje, ako je ono prethodno postojalo, o politici kao štitičnici slobode i nezavisnosti umjetnosti.

Umjetnost, vlasništvo politike II

Dok je u prvom djelu, *Umjetnost, vlasništvo politike*, uloga političara unutar umjetničkog konteksta bila kolekcionarska, pa i medijskijska, kod rada *Umjetnost, vlasništvo politike II* uloga političara je kustoska. Temeljno polazište rada je takozvani *Freethinkers' Space*, osmišljen kao utočište cenzuriranih radova, a njegovo su osnivanje inicirale liberalno-konzervativna Narodna stranka za slobodu i demokraciju (VVD) i ekstremni nacionalisti, Stranka slobode (PVV). Spomenute stranke osposobile su izložbeni prostor u vlastitom radnom okruženju (za tu prigodu oslobodile su knjižnicu i hodnik) u srpnju 2008., nakon što im je odbijen zahtjev za korištenjem javnog prostora u zgradi parlamenta. *Freethinkers' Space* idejno je osmislio kontroverzni Geert Wilders, osnivač Stranke slobode, a Mark Rutte, čelnik Narodne stranke za slobodu i demokraciju, ideju je organizacijski podržao. Do osnivanja ovakvog izložbenog prostora došlo je zbog snažne želje spomenutih političara za suprotstavljanjem cenzuri u nizozemskom društvu u kojem je jedna od temeljnih vrijednosti otvorenog društva – sloboda izražavanja – ugrožena.⁹ K tome, njihova namjera nije bila

a pioneer of institutional critique. By disclosing the history of property over Seurat's sketch for *Le Grand Jatte*, Haacke tried to abolish the understanding of artwork as an entity independent of all social, political, and economic circumstances in which it had been sold, donated, or acquired. By equalizing frames of Seurat's sketch and various documents that contained information on its owners and the circumstances of property transfer, Haacke visually identified the artwork with its context. However, Haacke contextualized paintings made by globally renowned artists by tracking the change in their economic value over time, whereas Staal used the artworks to draw attention to their political framework. Moreover, most of the artworks transposed into the artistic context of Tent gallery had lost the symbolic value of an artwork attributed to them by the individual parties within the office walls. Most of them became artworks owing to their contextualization, and not many of them had been understood as such from the outset. Thus, a white clay figurine presenting an embracing couple by an anonymous author belongs to the "collection" of the party called Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA), and symbolizes family love and its potential, thus embodying the party's ideological stance. An even more bizarre case is the piece of asphalt from the "collection" of the Labour Party (PVDA), a remnant of the presentation of a new technique in asphalt production by the company Arcadis Heidemij. For the party,

the asphalt symbolizes the "democratization" of the freedom of movement of citizens.³ A similar example is that of the framed baseball shirt from the "collection" of the ChristianUnion, which supports the baseball team *Artillian Spring Camp*, composed of problematic young people of Antillean origins with the aim of using team sport to teach them to adopt values and responsibilities that will help them integrate better into the Dutch society. On the other hand, even if the objects are genuine artworks, like *Zim Style* – clothes made of banknotes from Zimbabwe at the time when one euro was worth 80000 Zimbabwean dollars, so it was more profitable to make clothing out of them than use them as a means of payment – they also reflect the ideological position of the party, in this case the GreenLeft (GroenLinks). The title *Zim Style* refers, namely, both to Zimbabwe and to the computer game *Sim City*, where one of the key premises is a fair distribution of property, which is one of the basic principles of the GreenLeft. If *Art, Property of Politics I* is viewed as a whole, the video recording of interviews with politicians about the artworks and their political or ideological background does not function as a separate video artwork, but as a key for interpreting the exhibition. Even though their performance is mediated by the recording, it is precisely there that the new role of politicians is construed in the exhibition context, where they play a sort of mediators (for objects from their collections). Same as with the artworks from

davati vrijednosni sud o izloženim radovima, već su se pozivali isključivo na ustavno pravo slobode govora. Međutim, nekim umjetnicima su odbili izlaganje, a kada je Tofik Dibi, predstavnik Zelene ljevice, predložio uključivanje radova koji kritiziraju Wildersa, došlo je do spora između Stranke slobode i Narodne stranke za slobodu i demokraciju, nakon čega je Stranka slobode odustala od sudjelovanja.

Polazeći od kustoske uloge političara, unatoč tome što načelno umjetnost smatraju neovisnom od politike, Staal reproducira *Freethinkers' Space* unutar izložbe *Tricksters Tricked* u muzeju Van Abbe u Eindhovenu. I ovdje je pamfletna knjižica bila bitan dio rada, sadržavajući političku pozadinu svakog rada, kratke biografije kustosa Geerta Wildersa (PVV), Marka Ruttea (VVD), Fleur Ageme (PVV) i Tofika Dibija (GL), govore Marka Ruttea i Fleur Ageme i fotodokumentaciju izvornog otvorenja. Većina izloženih radova, predloženih od Stranke slobode i Narodne stranke za slobodu i demokraciju, cenzurirana je zbog kritike islamskog fundamentalizma, kao što je slučaj s posterom za naslovnice eseja filmskog režisera Thea van Gogha koja prikazuje njegov portret s palestinskom maramom na glavi i naslov "Alah zna bolje", ili pak s crtežima Gregoriusa Nekschota, eksplicitno desnog antiislamističkog orijentiranog karikaturista, zbog kojih je već bio uhićen. Iako su kustosi izložbe tvrdili da ne žele donositi nikakav vrijednosni sud o radovima, pokazani

radovi vidljivo propagiraju ideološke stavove stranke za koju je islamski fundamentalizam glavni čimbenik ugrožavanja slobode govora u nizozemskom demokratskom društvu. Također, izloženi radovi Thea van Gogha nikad nisu bili izlagani kao umjetnički. Nadalje, osim izrazito propagandnih, izloženi su i radovi cenzurirani zbog negativnih primjedbi muslimana na njihov sadržaj, npr. slika *Egzotične plesačice* Ellen Vroegh. Iznimku od navedenog čini serija fotografija *Tattoos and Piercings* Gerrita van Kralingena koja je iz javnog prostora staračkog doma maknuta zbog anonimnih zahtjeva koji nisu imali veze s religijskim ili nacionalnim razlozima. Ipak, Staal u muzeju Van Abbe čini odmak od originalne postavke osmišljene od Stranke slobode i Narodne stranke za slobodu i demokraciju uključivanjem radova koje je predložio Tofik Dibi te reproduciranu izložbu režira kao mjesto gdje se različiti ideološki stavovi nalaze suprotstavljeni, ali opet glasno izgovoreni. Stoga, pored antiislamističkih radova prikazani su i antipopulistički; primjerice, *Extremist*, plakat koji su dizajnirali Međunarodni socijalisti, a prikazuje lik Geerta Wildersa na kutiji cigareta gdje umjesto natpisa Marlboro stoji "Ekstremist, šteti ti tebi i društvu" ili pak slika, prvo izvedena kao grafit, *Zabranjena Frank I T. I.*, koja prikazuje lik Anne Frank s palestinskom maramom oko vrata, izjednačavajući položaj Židova u Drugom svjetskom ratu s položajem Palestinaca danas.

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party "collections", their opinions on the relationship between politics and art also reflect their parties' ideological positions. Thus, for the party of Christian Democratic Appeal, "Art and culture lead to a better mutual understanding, and therefore to a better social cohesion,"⁴ while the attitude of the right-wing, conservative-liberal party Leefbaar Rotterdam is that "In principle, politics doesn't care about art. (...) But ever since the 60s, art is being acquired with public money. This makes the opinion of the population of Rotterdam and its representatives actually relevant."⁵ For the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy, "the meaning of culture can be best supported by leaving its content unconstrained,"⁶ whereas for the ChristianUnion it is quite the contrary: when considering municipal funding, one should include criteria concerning violence and discrimination, blasphemy and morality.⁷ The position of the GreenLeft is that, in the Dutch society, "there is a strong and present need for art. Art can surprise, stimulate, and inspire. Art challenges society and is its mirror."⁸ The spoken word became crucial for understanding this unusual exhibition, while the role of politics and art, contrary to what was said about the non-encroachment of one upon the other, was actually reversed, since the politicians functioned in this context as physically absent mediators whose statements carried the meaning of the entire artwork. Unlike *Geert Wilders Works*, where the artist appropriated the role of the politician as

performative, in *Art, Property of Politics II* this role was determined by the artistic context and was as such exclusively performative. This arrangement abolished the understanding of politics as the protector of freedom and artistic autonomy, if there had ever been such an understanding.

Art, Property of Politics II

Whereas in the first part of *Art, Property of Politics*, the role of politicians in an artistic context was that of collectors or even mediators, in *Art, Property of Politics II* they functioned as curators. The basic starting point was the so-called *Freethinkers' Space*, conceived as a refuge for censored artworks, initiated by the liberal-conservative People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) and the extremely nationalistic Freedom Party (PVV). These parties created an exhibition venue in their own workspace (the library and a corridor) in July 2008, after their application for using public space in the parliament building was rejected. *Freethinkers' Space* was conceived by Geert Wilders, the controversial founder of the Freedom Party, and organizationally supported by Mark Rutte, head of the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy. The idea of establishing this type of an exhibition venue resulted from a desire of these politicians to counteract censorship in the Dutch society, in which, they felt, one of the basic values of open society – the freedom of expression – was in danger.⁹ Their intention was not to give value judgments on the

Reproduciranjem *Freethinkers' Spacea* Staal prvotno značenje tog prostora, kao propagandnog prostora političkih stranaka pod okriljem zalaganja za slobodu govora, dekonstruira tako da prostor koji se protivi cenzuri istovremeno funkcionira kao njena paradigma. Nadalje, izmještanjem političkog u umjetnički kontekst značenje radova postaje podložno manipulaciji i transformaciji, odnosno ono više nije konstantno, nego ovisi o kontekstu koji ga određuje. Prvotno smješteni u politički *Freethinkers' Space*, neki su radovi prvi put predstavljeni kao umjetnički, da bi izloženi u muzeju suvremene umjetnosti bili promatrani kao fragment znatno veće cjeline, unutar koje pojedini rad funkcionira kao citat koji s obzirom na kontekst mijenja značenje. Uostalom, u muzeju je rad *Umjetnost, vlasništvo politike II* moguće promatrati kao kompleksnu strukturu isprepletenih odnosa umjetnosti i politike. Utoliko izložbeni kontekst muzeja Van Abbe, koji zauzima jasan stav o političkom i društvenom angažmanu muzeja suvremene umjetnosti, postaje kontrapunkt shvaćanju da u demokratskom društvu politika omogućava slobodu umjetnosti.

¹ Serija *Art, Property of Politics* sastoji se od četiri rada: *Art, Property of Politics* (2010.), *Art, property of Politics II: Freethinkers' Space* (2010.), *Art, Property of Politics III: Closed Architecture* (2011.) i *Art, Property of Politics IV: Freethinkers' Space* (2012.).

² Jonas Staal, „Uvod“, u: *Politiek Kunstbezit. Art, Property of Politics. Jonas Staal*, 2010., 5.

³ *Politiek Kunstbezit. Art, Property of Politics. Jonas Staal*, 2010., 14.

⁴ Isto, 41.

⁵ Isto, 21.

⁶ Isto, 43.

⁷ Isto, 53.

⁸ Isto, 45.

⁹ Govor Mark Ruttea, u: *Politiek Kunstbezit II – vrijdenkersruimte. Art, Property of Politics II – Freethinkers' Space. Jonas Staal*. Van Abbemuseum, 2010., 65.

exhibited artworks; they referred exclusively on the constitutional right to the freedom of speech. Nevertheless, they did refuse some artists, and when Tofik Dibi, representative of the GreenLeft, suggested the inclusion of an artwork that criticized Wilders, it resulted in a conflict between the Freedom Party and the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy, after which the former decided not to participate in the project.

Starting from the curatorial role of the politicians, and despite the fact that they theoretically considered art as independent of politics, Staal reproduced *Freethinkers' Space* within the group exhibition *Tricksters Tricked* at Van Abbe museum in Eindhoven. The exhibition booklet was again a crucial part of the project, since it offered the political background of each particular piece, short biographies of curators Geert Wilders (PVV), Mark Rutte (VVD), Fleur Agema (PVV), and Tofik Dibi (GL), speeches by Mark Rutte and Fleur Agema, and photo-documentation of the original opening. Most of the exhibited objects, suggested by the Freedom Party and the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy, had been censored because of criticizing Islamic fundamentalism, which was also the case with the poster made for the cover page of an essay written by film director Theo van Gogh, which showed his portrait with the Palestinian headscarf and the inscription "Allah knows better," or with the drawings by Gregorius Nekschot, an explicitly right-wing and anti-Islamic caricaturist,

because of which he had been arrested before. Even though the exhibition's curators claimed that they did not wish to give any value judgments on the exhibited artworks, these clearly promoted ideological positions according to which Islamic fundamentalism was the main factor that threatened the freedom of speech in the Dutch democratic society. Moreover, the exhibited pieces by Theo van Gogh had never been presented as art. Eventually, besides overt propaganda, the exhibited artworks included those that had been censored because of negative reactions of Muslims on their content, e.g. the painting *Exotic Dancers* by Ellen Vroegh. An exception was a series of photographs called *Tattoos and Piercings* by Gerrit van Kralingen, which had been removed from a home for elderly people after a number of anonymous complaints that had nothing to do with religious or national concerns. Nevertheless, at Van Abbe museum Staal detached himself from the original exhibition created by the Freedom Party and the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy by including artworks suggested by Tofik Dibi, and he arranged the reproduced exhibition as a place where different ideological positions could be found in juxtaposition, yet also outspoken. Therefore, side by side with anti-Islamic pieces one could see the anti-populist ones, such as the *Extremist*, a poster designed by the International Socialists, which shows Geert Wilders on a cigarette package, where instead of "Marlboro" there is an inscription "Extremist: harmful to you



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JONAS STAAL, „UMJETNOST, VLASNIŠTVO POLITIKE II: PROSTOR
SLOBODOUMNIH“, 2010, ZBIRKA VAN ABBEMUSEUM

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JONAS STAAL, "ART, PROPERTY OF POLITICS II: FREETHINKERS' SPACE",
2010, COLLECTION VAN ABBEMUSEUM

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and to the society"; or the painting called *Forbidden Frank I T. I.*, first made in the graffiti form, which showed Anna Frank with a Palestinian headscarf around her neck, thus identifying the Jewish situation during World War II with that of today's Palestinians. By reproducing *Freethinkers' Space*, Staal deconstructed the original meaning of its space, which was a space of propaganda for political parties used under the mask of promoting the freedom of speech, in such a way that a space that defied censorship functioned simultaneously as its paradigm. Moreover, by displacing the political into the context of art, he subjected the meaning of artworks to manipulation and transformation: it was no longer constant, but depended on the context that determined it. Originally placed into the political *Freethinkers' Space*, some pieces were presented as art for the first time, but later, and when exhibited at the museum of contemporary art, they were viewed as fragments of a far larger whole, within which each individual artwork functioned as a quotation that changed its meaning with regard to the context. After all, in a museum it is possible to view *Art, Property of Politics II* as a complex structure of intertwined relationships between art and politics. Insofar, the exhibition context of Van Abbe museum, with its clear position regarding the political and social engagement of the museum of contemporary art, becomes a counterpoint to the opinion that, in a democratic society, politics grants freedom to art.

¹ *Art, Property of Politics* consists of four artworks: *Art, Property of Politics* (2010), *Art, Property of Politics II: Freethinkers' Space* (2010), *Art, Property of Politics III: Closed Architecture* (2011), and *Art, Property of Politics IV: Freethinkers' Space* (2012).

² Jonas Staal, "Inleiding / Preface", in: *Politiek Kunstbezit. Art, Property of Politics* (2010), 5.

³ *Politiek Kunstbezit. Art, Property of Politics. Jonas Staal* (2010), 14.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁹ Mark Rutte's speech in: *Politiek Kunstbezit II – vrijdenkersruimte. Art, Property of Politics II – Freethinkers' Space. Jonas Staal, Van Abbe Museum, 2010, 65.*