

machine project

“Budućnost će pripasti probuđenim strojevima.”

Peter Sloterdijk



Norveški umjetnici Thomas Kvam i Frode Oldereid gostovali su, u organizaciji *KONTEJNERA* - biroa za suvremenu umjetničku praksu koji vode Sunčica Ostoić i Olga Majcen, u riječkoj galeriji *O.K.* (25. veljače 2003.) i zagrebačkoj *Gliptoteci* (1. ožujka 2003.). Ondje su predstavili robotički video i zvučni performans *Machine-Project*.

Zatvorivši i zamračivši dio prizemnog prostora zagrebačke *Gliptoteke* Thomas Kvam i Frode Oldereid simulirali su situaciju kino dvorane što je jedan od važnih preduvjeta izvedbe *Machine-Projecta*. Sudeći prema množini zainteresiranih, rad bi vjerojatno dobio na kompleksnosti da su mu prilagodili cijelu dvoranu jer bi to osiguralo lakši protok publike od jedne do druge ključne točke performansa - dva stroja ili, uvjetno rečeno, robota koji su, jedan kontroliran putem kompjutorskog sučelja, a drugi uživo - uz glazbu i filmske zapise, nositelji moćne *Gesamstkunstwerk* strukture. Istraživanjem suodnosa zvuka, videa i strojnih instalacija kroz tehnološki zahtjevan i nadasve sofisticirani performans, Thomas Kvam i Frode Oldereid nastoje isprovocirati, rekli smo, filmski doživljaj u stvarnom prostoru i vremenu. Šokantni audio-vizualni *Machine Project* doista se može shvatiti kao najava novog, izravnog načina komunikacije s umjetničkim radom, a jedan od načina jest i taj da svojim prisustvom i ponašanjem izvedbu dodatno doživljajno i značenjski oblikujemo. Dakle, udio publike je važan. Ona u Zagrebu - da li zbog nedostatka prostora, dobno-socijalne strukture ili temperamenta - nije odgovorila na poziv stvaranja *party* ugodaja na što su glazba i kretnje, naročito velikog stroja, poticali. Iako bi se moglo ustvrditi da je projekt zbog toga zakinut, takav bi suprotni model ponašanja ovdašnje publike, za razliku od, primjerice, publike u Švedskoj, kada je ona bila zaključana u mračnom kontejneru i izbežumljeno tražila izlaz, mogao otvoriti raspravu o nepredvidljivosti reakcija na agresivnost izvedbe i utjecaja njezinih apokaliptičnih predviđanja na pojedince.

Dvojica Norvežana na projektima sa strojevima zajednički rade od 1997. godine

“Future belongs to the awakened machines”

Peter Sloterdijk



Norwegian artists Thomas Kvam and Frode Oldereid featured as guests at the *O.K.* gallery in Rijeka (25 February 2003) and *Gliptoteka* in Zagreb (1 March 2003), in an event organized by *KONTEJNER* - office for contemporary artistic practice, managed by Sunčica Ostoić and Olga Majcen. The artists presented a robotic video and audio performance entitled *Machine Project*.

By enclosing and darkening a part of the ground-floor area in Zagreb gallery *Gliptoteka*, Thomas Kvam and Frode Oldereid simulated the atmosphere of a cinema, which is among the important preconditions for the *Machine Project* performance. Judging by the multitude of the interested visitors, this work of art would have probably gained on complexity had the authors adapted the entire hall, since that would have facilitated the flow of visitors from one crucial point of performance to another - the two machines or, shall we say, two robots, which are the carriers of the powerful structure of *Gesamstkunstwerk* - one controlled through the computer interface, another live, together with music and video recordings. By investigating the correlation of sound, video, and machine installations through a technologically demanding and extremely sophisticated performance, Thomas Kvam and Frode Oldereid have sought to provoke, as we said, the video experience in real space and time. The shocking audio-visual *Machine Project* can indeed be understood as heralding a new, direct mode of communication with a work of art, one of such modes being the additional shaping of experience and meaning through one's own presence and behaviour. Thus, the participation of spectators is significant. Those in Zagreb - be it for the lack of space, the age and social structure, or the temperament - did not respond to the invitation for the creation of party feeling, which was suggested by the music and the movements, especially of the larger machine. Although it might be stated that the project was at loss for this fact, such a behaviour pattern of Croatian audience as opposed to, for example, the Swedish case, in which the audience was





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kada nastaje *Stroj 3.0* temeljen na prijašnjim Kvamovim projektima. Umjetnik školovan na oslovsjoj *Umjetničkoj akademiji* i londonskom *Goldsmithsu* prvu je videorobotsku instalaciju izveo godine 1996., koristeći za lice robota projekciju vlastitog. Ono je zamuckivalo proizvođači zvuk nalik govoru. Tom je stroju Kvam bio sučelio kompjutorski program koji je proizvodio

locked in a dark container, desperately trying to find an exit, might start a debate on the unpredictability of reactions to the aggressiveness of performance and the influence of its apocalyptic predictions upon individuals.

The two Norwegians have cooperated on projects with machines since 1997, the year of the creation of *Machine 3.0*, based

crno-bijele linije, u konačnici neku vrst crteža. Kako umjetnik ističe, u tom su ga projektu zaintrigirale upravo mogućnosti stroja, na čemu će poslije raditi s Oldereidom. Iskustvo tog umjetnika koji iza sebe, nakon studija na oslovskom Institutu za zvuk i dramu te izučavanja dokumentarne i TV reportaže i produkcije, medija i sociologije na Sveučilištu u Bergenu, ima zavidno iskustvo rada sa zvukom, videom i svjetlom, pregnantno je nadopunilo Kvamove zamisli sve do verzije velikog *Stroja 5.0* i manjeg *Stroja 6.0*, objedinjenih u riječkom i zagrebačkom performansu.

Oba stroja sugeriraju stanje svijeta u vrijeme smrti civilizacije kakvu poznajemo - kako raspravlja Paul Virilio, u vrijeme konačne pobjede protetike nad našim tijelom. Kvam i Oldereid provokativno sugeriraju kako ne treba čekati na dolazak nekog budućeg informatičkog svijeta kiborga jer on već sada jest. Zbog toga njihov projekt nudi i više od razine pretpostavljene interaktivne predstave s dva robota, glazbom i filmskim projekcijama na kojima se izmjenjuju prikazi mase ljudi koja mehanički korača, glo-

upon Kvam's earlier projects. This artist, trained at the *Art Academy* in Oslo and *Goldsmiths* in London, created his first video-robotic installation in 1996, using a projection of his own face for that of the robot. It stammered, emitting a speech-like sound. Kvam had interfaced into this machine a computer programme that created black and white lines, which eventually resulted in some sort of drawing. He pointed out that the project had first intrigued him precisely because of the capacities of the machine, which he continued exploring together with Oldereid. The latter artist had studied at the Oslo Institute for Sound and Drama and researched on documentary and TV report and production, media, and sociology at the University of Bergen, acquiring a remarkable experience while working with sound, video, and light. The fertile fusion of his and Kvam's ideas resulted in a first version of both the larger *Machine 5.0* and the smaller *Machine 6.0*, which were united in the performances of Rijeka and Zagreb.

Both machines suggest a state of the world at the time of the death of civilization

2/3. T. Kvam, F. Oldereid, *Machine Project, Machine 6.0*, 2002.



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busa koji postaje oko što promatra ili frenetične množine reklamnih panoa. Performans *Machine-Project* odvija se u kiberprostoru u koji smo uronjeni bez pomoći hardverske kacige i rukavice. Oslanjajući, međutim, izvedbu na dva različita stroja,

as we know it - as Paul Virilio has argued, at the time of the final triumph of protetics over our bodies. Kvam and Oldereid provocingly suggest that we should not wait for the advent of some future computerized world of cyborgs, since it has already hap-

umjetnici ne nude jednoobraznu kiber-situaciju nego uprizoruju jedan njezin specifičan trenutak dramatična rascijepa. Veliki stroj, neodređena rodnog identiteta - jer njegovo su lice i glas sad ženski, sad muški - stoji na pneumatskoj, paukolikoj konstrukciji, dakle, moglo bi se reći, svojevrsna je neestetizirana kopija *Robocopa* ili replikantna iz *Blade Runnera*. To je ogoljeli stroj s čijih je kostiju, kako sam izgovara, spaljeno svo meso i koji još jedino manipulira upisanim ljudskim sjećanjem. Drugi, manji stroj korak je dalje u evoluciji kiborga. Bijela, bezoblična masa iz koje se izdiže sugerira, naime, da jednako kao što je čovjek stvoren iz praha, on slično najavljuje svoje rođenje iz kiborga. Takav post-kiborg naslijediti će sjećanje predhodnika, ali umjesto da se propinje na robotičkoj strukturi koja pretpostavlja kretanje, on je zadovoljno statičan u svom biohibridnom obličju. Kako u vrijeme kiborga više nema "Boga koji je stvorio čovjeka na svoju sliku i priliku" bit će to klon izobličene glave, zarobljen u nikad identificiranom obličju mutanta. Od kiborga će u naslijeđe ponijeti jedino probrano sjećanje. Ako je Kvamov prvi stroj zamuckivao, sada su oba itekako rječita.

Thomas Kvam i Frode Oldereid insceniраli su dakle trenutak u kojem se gotovo simultano rađaju i kiborg i njegov nasljednik. Dok je prvi prošao pakao inicijacije, boreći se s ljudskim naslijeđem, drugi je reciklirajući suviše, mirno tragao i konačno usvojio sjećanje bez savjesti. Oba su stroja u polusatnoj epizodi, jedan agonijskog prihvaćanja sebe, a drugi strojno hladnog i strpljivog iščitavanja probrane memorije, potpunoma ovladali košmarnim vremenom cenzure drugog i drugačijeg, namjernog zaborava diktature uma i tijela. Veliki stroj koji nasljeđuje takvo potiskivano kolektivno sjećanje, muškim glasom zaglušujuće agresivno izgovara, primjerice, izvatke iz Marinettijeva *Futurističkog manifesta* ispisanog u slavu novog industrijskog doba, ali i u službi mračnih ideologija. Na trenutke je umoran i sjetan. On govori - "još uvijek je tiho, kao onog dana kada sam se rodio" da bi na zadovoljstvo malog stroja, koji šizoidno uživa u njegovu obračunu sa uspavanim sanjarima i prestrašenim masama, s olakšanjem spoznao konačno odsustvo straha. Poziv malog, dijabolično bezobzirnog klona, na barikade, na slavljenje moći i pohlepe, usutkao je i ženski glas koji je zadnjom snagom, grčevitim i vrištećim preispitivanjem spoznao svu tragediju rođenja u svijetu paranoje i potpunog nad-

pened. Therefore, their project presents a higher level than that of a patent interactive show with two robots, music, or video projections alternating images of masses of people marching mechanically, of a globe turning into an observing eye, or of a frenetic multitude from advertisement posters. The *Machine Project* performance takes place in cyberspace, in which we are plunged without the aid of a hardware helmet and gloves. However, by basing the performance on two different machines, the artists are able to avoid a one-sided cyber-situation, staging instead one of its specific moments of dramatic scission. The large machine - which is of undefined gender identity, for its face and voice are now female, now male - stands on a pneumatic, spider-like construction and is, one might say, some sort of a non-aestheticised copy of the *Robocop* or the replicants from the *Blade Runner*. It is a machine laid bare - in its own words, all meat has been burned from its bones - which can still operate only on the pre-inscribed human memory. The other, smaller machine is one step further in the evolution of cyborgs. The white, formless mass, out of which it rises, suggests that, just like the man had been created out of dust, it will announce its birth from a cyborg. Such a post-cyborg will inherit the memory of its predecessor but, instead of propping up on the robotic structure that presupposes movement, will be happily static in its bio-hybrid form. Since the era of cyborgs no longer knows a "god who made man in his likeness," it will be a clone with deformed head, captured in an unidentified shape of a mutant. It will inherit from cyborgs merely a selected memory. If Kvam's first machine stammered, now both of them are more than eloquent.

Thomas Kvam and Frode Oldereid have thus staged the moment in which both the cyborg and his successor are born almost simultaneously. Whereas the first has gone through the hell of initiation, fighting with human heritage, the second has been calmly investigating, recycling the superfluous, and has finally adopted memory without conscience. In this thirty-minutes long episode, which for one machine meant an agony of self-acceptance, and for the other a machine-like, cold, and patient reading of selected memory, both master fully the nightmare era of the other and the different, the intentional oblivion of the dictatorship of mind and body. The larger machine, which

zora te se konačno pomirio s nemogućnošću slobode.

Ono što je norveški umjetnički dvojac ponudio na određeni način jest apokaliptična vizija, ali ne budućnosti, nego stanja svijeta. Pri tomu umjetnici filmskim isječcima u pozadini čak žele zamutiti povijesni kontekst. Ekstatični dijalog dvaju strojeva nije nagovještaj Sudnjeg dana nego slika sumraka civilizacije, cinična i frustrirajuća šetnja Novim svjetskim poretom tehnologije i kapitala što nije privilegija trenutka nego i cijelog proteklog stoljeća. Nijeme mase koje promiču u pozadini i stroj ženskog identiteta, međufaza su prije nego što bez grižnje savjesti, nadvladaju prilagodljivi. Kojima će se, odustavši od arhetipske slike žene-majke, pridružiti i posljednji mogući unutarnji neprijatelj. Umjetnici se na taj način poigravaju rubnim stanjima u kojima nakon gubitka identiteta parazitski pristajemo na konformizam, postajemo, zašto ne, kiborzi nakon čega nas - da li doista uz pomoć digitalne tehnologije ili suptilno, iz ugone svakodnevnice - dijeli samo korak do vlastitog klona. Thomas Kvam veliki i mali stroj ironično uspoređuje sa Stanlijem i Olijem, pa nema razloga za zabrinutost. Uostalom, publika je to pljeskom i potvrdila. ■

has inherited such suppressed collective memory, utters with a male voice, in a deafeningly aggressive way, things like excerpts from Marinetti's Manifesto of Futurism, written in praise of the new industrial era, but also in service of dark ideologies. From time to time, the machine becomes weary and gloomy. It says: "It is still silent, just like the day when I was born," and then, to the great pleasure of the smaller machine, which psychotically enjoys the way in which the former settles scores with lethargic dreamers and frightened masses, apprehends with relief the final absence of fear. The invitation of the small, diabolically ruthless clone to the barricades, to the glorification of power and greed, silenced even the female voice, which experienced in its last breath, through desperate and screaming exploration, the entire tragedy of birth into the world of paranoia and complete supervision, ultimately acknowledging the impossibility of freedom.

What the Norwegian duo proposes is, in a way, an apocalyptic vision, though not of the future, but rather of the present state of the world. Indeed, the artists even seek to blur the historical context by means of video clips in the background. The ecstatic dialogue of the two machines does not announce the Judgment Day; rather, it is the image of the waning of civilization, the cynical and frustrating walk through the New World Order of technology and capital, which is not the privilege of our times only, but the mark of the entire past century. Mute masses passing in the background and the machine of female identity are an intermediate phase rather than one deprived of remorse, and the flexible will overcome. Having turned away from the archetypal image of woman and mother, they will be joined by the last possible enemy from within. In this way, the artists play with those marginal conditions in which, having lost our identity, we parasitically give way to conformism, we become, so to say, cyborgs, after which we are - be it indeed with the help of digital technology or subtly, out of everyday commodity - just one step away from our own clone. Thomas Kvam ironically compares his large and small machine with Laurel and Hardy, so there is no reason to worry. After all, the audience confirmed it with applause. ●

prijevod / translation: Marina Miladinov