

ana
dević

nazovi x radi umjetnosti

call x for art

▼ Tomo Savić Gecan umjetnik je koji gotovo nikad ništa ne izlaže. Njegovi radovi, koncipirani kao “*tabulae rase*”, prazna su mjesta ponovno ispunjena različitim nabojima, skrivenim tenzijama i referencijama. Konvencije muzejsko-galerijskog sustava preduvjet su i prostor realizacije umjetnikovih radova koje na prvi pogled često nije moguće jasno odčitati bez obzira postoji li materijalno očitovanje rada. Nemogućnost cjelovita iščitavanja posljedica je iniciranja određenih situacija koje se mogu sagledati tek sukcesivnim izmjenama nekoliko različitih gledišta. Pogled i njegov doseg, fizička ili virtualna prisutnost, prostorno-vremenska distanca, iskustva kolebanja, kretanja i boravka u prostoru, poznavanje konteksta - važne su odrednice koje će obojiti percepciju svakoga Gecanova rada. Umjetnik često inicira efemerna zbivanja na samom rubu pojavnosti, a zanimaju ga reakcije i odnos promatrača prema perifernim, dvoznačnim obilježjima rada. Pojedini rad stoga može biti “krivo odčitao” ili, u slučaju “ispravne percepcije”, postupno uklopljen u širu strukturu nenadano dobivajući nove značenjske aspekte. Proces percepcije pojedinog rada prizvat će u sjećanje i autorove realizirane projekte; radovi se međusobno dopunjavaju, nastavljaju, proizlaze jedan iz drugoga - njihova očita generička srodnost povezuje ih u niz tvoreći definiranu sintagmu.

Umjetnik često u svoj rad uvodi “okolne šumove” koji ometaju percepciju. Bez obzira jesu li “smetnje” izazvane nedostatkom informacija ili skučenom perspektivom, limitacije postaju nedjeljivom sastavnicom rada. Recentna serija radova realizirana unutar sustava automatskih govornih telefonskih poruka, utemeljena na autorovoj dosadašnjoj praksi radikalnog ukidanja objekta izlaganja, kao novi element uvodi višak informacija, a složene procese percepcije i interpretacije rada prepušta kustosima. Uloga medijatora uslijed neobičnog konteksta prezentacije poprima šire implikacije. Izvrćući uobičajenu galerijsku praksu umjetnik kustose izložbi uključuje kao realizatore projekta koji svojim stajalištima, angažmanom i posredovanjem otvaraju mnoštvo pitanja posredno propitujući postojanje umjetničkog djela, opravdanost njegove interpretacije, ali i pouzdanost teoretskog diskursa te općenito, efikasnost muzejsko-galerijskog sustava.

Razmotrimo kratko kako koncepcija tih projekata zamišljenim izjednačavanjem objekta izlaganja i njegova tumačenja afir-

● Tomo Savić Gecan is an artist who almost never exhibits anything. His works are conceived as *tabulae rasae* - empty places re-filled by various charges, hidden tensions and references. The conventions of the museum-gallery system are the precondition and the space of realization of the artist's works, which are often hard to read clearly, regardless of whether the material manifestation of the work existed or not. The impossibility of a complete reading is a consequence of initiating certain situations that can be viewed only by successively alternating several different viewpoints. The gaze and its scope, physical or virtual presence, spatial-temporal distance, experiences of uncertainty, of moving and inhabiting the space, knowing the context - these are important determinants that color the perception of every Gecan's work. The artist often initiates ephemeral events on the verge of phenomenality, and he is also interested in reactions and observers' relations to peripheral, ambiguous features of the work. Thus, a particular work could be “misread” or, in the case of “correct perception”, gradually incorporated in the larger structure, thus surprisingly gaining new aspects of significance. The process of perception of a particular work will evoke other realized projects of the same author; the works complement and continue each other, and issue from each other - their apparent generic similarity connects them to a series, creating a defined syntagma.

The artist often introduces “ambient noise” into his works, which interfere with the perception; regardless of whether this interference is caused by lack of information or by limited perspective, the limitations become an inseparable component of the work. The recent series of works, realized in a system of automatic voice mail, founded on the author's earlier practice of radical annihilation of the exhibited object, introduces a new element - the surplus of information, and he leaves the complex processes of perception and interpretation to the curators. Due to the unusual context of the presentation, the role of the mediator acquires wider implications. Inverting the usual gallery practice, the artist includes the curators as producers of the project, who, by their viewpoints, engagement and mediation, open a lot of questions, indirectly examining the existence of the work of art, the justification of its interpretation, but also the reliability of theoretic discourse, and generally, the efficiency of the museum-gallery system.



mira načelo ambivalencije kao *lajtmotiv* same strukture rada i pratećeg kustoskog diskursa.

Na skupnoj međunarodnoj izložbi *Što, kako i za koga* koja je prošle godine održana u Domu Hrvatskog društva likovnih umjetnika Tomo Savić Gecan otpočeo je seriju radova s govornim porukama.

Iako ga nije bilo u fizičkom obliku, rad se za trajanja izložbe mogao inicirati i ostvariti pozivom na besplatni telefonski broj. Tim su putem zainteresirani mogli preslušavati automatske govorne poruke kojima kustosice izložbe u trajanju od jedne minute interpretiraju umjetnikov "rad". Na ulazu u galeriju, uz ostale obavijesti o izložbi, jedva zamjetan informativni letak pozivao je posjetitelje da besplatno, biranjem telefonskog broja saznaju nešto više o umjetnikovu radu na izložbi. Time Savić Gecan posredno upozorava da djelo počinje postojati unutar umjetničkog sustava "osvajanjem diskurzivnog polja" u trenutku kada se o njemu počinje govoriti. Kroz "tudi" glas umjetnikov se rad realizira u diskursu parazitirajući galerijski sustav, a utilizacija zahvaća i usporedne komunikacijske sustave. Preslušavanjem i ponavljanjem poruke rad se uzastopno realizira. Djelo je stvoreno isključivo činom interpretacije. Budući da umjetnik ne izlaže ništa s čime bi posjetitelj mogao uspostaviti odnos, takva je interpretacija u svojoj biti diskutabilna.

Neizravno, inicijacijom i re-animacijom takva rada potvrđena je moć kustosa i umjetničkog sustava, ali je istodobno i duhovito relativizirana njihova opravdanost.

Pri tome se čini, kao što je mjesto umjetničkog djela zauzela njegova interpretacija, da su kustos i umjetnik zamijenili uloge. I ovaj se put Tomo Savić Gecan poigrao mimikrijom, paradoksom, vidljivošću i jasnoćom svojega rada.

Ishodište radova bez izložaka i s kustosima koji postaju subjekti interpretacije možemo detektirati već na izložbi *Izazov prostora* koja se godine 1998. održala u Galeriji proširenih medija u HDLU-u. Izložba je bila završna faza radionice za mlade kustose i izložbenom timu od čak sedam kustosa umjetnik je predložio da za trajanja izložbe u prostoru galerije s posjetiteljima razgovaraju o činjenici da rad zapravo ne postoji. Kustosi pritom nisu trebali preuzeti ulogu eksponata, nego je bilo važno da, unatoč nelagodi i neiskustvu, pristanu interpretirati rad s posjetiteljima. Tim je projekti-

Let us briefly consider how the conception of these projects, by deliberately equalizing the exhibited object and its interpretation, affirms the principle of ambivalence as a leitmotiv of the structure of the work itself and of the accompanying curators' discourse.

On the collective international exhibition *What, How and For Whom* last year in the Croatian Association of Artists (HDLU), Tomo Savić Gecan started a series of voice mail works.

Although he was not physically present, his work could be initiated and realized during the exhibition by dialing a free telephone number. In this way the visitor could listen to the automatic voice mail messages, lasting one minute, in which the curators interpreted the artist's "work". At the gallery entrance, with other information about the exhibition, a barely noticeable informative leaflet advised visitors to dial a free number and learn more about the artist's work at the exhibition. In that manner, Savić Gecan indirectly warns that the work begins to exist within the art system by "conquering a discourse field" in the moment when one starts to talk about it. Through the voice of "other", the artist's work realizes itself in a discourse, as a parasite in the gallery system, and the utilization also includes parallel communication systems. By listening and repeating the message, the work is repeatedly being realized. The work is being created by the very act of interpretation. Since the artist does not exhibit anything for a visitor to establish a relation, such interpretation is fundamentally questionable.

Indirectly, by initiating and re-animating the work, the power of the curator and the art system is being confirmed, but at the same time, their justification is relativized.

Then it seems, as the place of the work of art is taken by its interpretation, that the curator and the artist had swapped their places. This time too, Tomo Savić Gecan played with the mimicry, with the paradox and the clarity of his work.

The origin of the works without exhibited items, with the curators as the subjects of interpretation, we had detected at *The Challenge of the Space*, which took place at the Gallery of Extended Media within HDLU. The exhibition was a final phase of a workshop for young curators, and the artist suggested to the exhibition team, consisting of as much as seven curators, to talk to the visitors during the exhibition about the fact that

ma zajednička interpretacija kao čin posredovanja - u oba se slučaja radi o posredovanju umjetničkog koncepta. No, projektima s telefonskim porukama dodana je nova razina - posredovanje samog medija. Naime, fizičkim boravkom u prostoru kustosi su s posjeteljima inicirali dvosmjernu, i u osnovi nepredvidljivu, komunikaciju, a u slučaju telefonskih radova javlja se određeni ironični prizvuk prema potrošačkom mentalitetu i *instantnosti* suvremena života koji u kratko vrijeme pokušava sabiti što više informacija.

Iako se oba projekta bave različitim razinama pojavnosti, performativnom ulogom govora i njegovom aktualizacijskom snagom, telefonski radovi upućuju na repetitivnost i automatizam kojima se uspostavljaju obrasci značenja. Proces zahvaća produkciju takva označavanja koja će rad realizirati izvan forme i sadržaja, a pomoću automatizma svojstvenog reklamnim strategijama. Označitelj neprestano referira prazno mjesto, a autorski se čin sastoji od nastojanja da se to "ništa" interpretacijski ispuni. Bez obzira na to hoće li kustos podržati takvu situaciju ili će se u njoj osjećati krajnje neugodno - umjetnik mu ostavlja izbor kako da tu situaciju definira. Kustosi prihvaćaju igru i gotovo uvijek govore jezikom svoje struke, no ipak u govor nose i elemente vlastite osobnosti i igre.

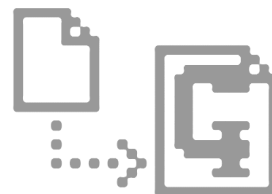
Ambivalentni elementi osobine su mnogih projekata Tome Savića Gecana. U seriji projekata s telefonskim porukama očituju se uspostavljanjem nekoliko oprečnih parova čija se sučeljena značenja i tenzije postupno poništavaju sve do ukinuća jasne granice razdvajanja i uspostave fluidnog, oscilirajućeg identiteta kojim će obje komponente biti istodobno prisutne. Općenito govoreći, ambivalenciju definiramo kao istodobnu prisutnost suprotnih tendencija. Pozivajući se na terminološku klasifikaciju ambivalentnosti koju je unutar psihoanalize utemeljio Bleuler, tip *intelektualne ambivalentnosti* izdvaja se kao simptom važan za analizu telefonske serije radova koja "počiva na stalnoj suprotnosti da - ne, gdje su afirmacija i negacija istodobne i nerazdružive" a pri tome subjekt "istodobno izriče tvrdnju i njezinu suprotnost"¹.

U tom je kontekstu ambivalentna priroda odnosa aktivnog i pasivnog vidljiva kroz izmjenu uloga: umjetnik isprva aktivno inicira rad, da bi se pasivizirao i realizaciju prepustio kustosu. Finalni akt preslušavanja poruke u osnovi se također pokazuje kao

the work did not really exist. The curators were not meant to take the role of an exhibition item but to interpret the work with the visitors, despite their unease and inexperience. These projects share the interpretation as an act of mediation - in both cases, mediation of an artistic concept. But, a new level was added to the phone messages projects - the mediation of the medium itself. That is, by their physical presence in the gallery space, the curators initiated a two-way and basically unpredictable communication with the visitors, and the phone works have a certain ironic resonance, aimed at consumer mentality and instantaneousness of contemporary life that tries to compress as much information as possible in a short time.

Although both projects are concerned with different levels of phenomenality, with performative role of speech and its force of actualization, the phone works suggest repetition and automatism by which the patterns of meaning are being established. The process encompasses production of a signification that will actualize the work beyond form and content, using an automatism that is characteristic of marketing strategies. The signifier constantly refers an empty place, and the author's action is equal to trying to fill this "nothingness" by way of interpretation. Regardless of whether a curator supports such a situation or experiences extreme uneasiness - the artist allows him to choose how to define it. The curators accept to play and almost always speak the language of their training, but they also add some elements of their own personality and play.

Ambivalent elements characterize many projects by Tomo Savić Gecan. In the series of phone work projects, they resurface by positing several pairs of opposites, whose meanings and tensions gradually neutralize each other, erase clear borderlines and establish a fluid, oscillating identity that will encompass both components. Generally speaking, we define ambivalence as simultaneous presence of opposite tendencies. In a terminological classification of ambivalence, founded by Bleuler within the realm of psychoanalysis, the *intellectual ambivalence* type emerges as a symptom that is important when analyzing the phone work series that "rests on permanent yes-no opposition, where affirmation and negation are simultaneous and inseparable" and the subject "simultaneously expresses an assertion and its opposite"¹.





¹ Klasifikacija Cf. Bleulera: *Vortrag über Ambivalenz*, 1910. u: J. Laplanche - J.-B. Pontalis, *Rječnik psihoanalize*, August Cesarac, Naprijed, Zagreb 1992.

¹ Bleuler's classification: *Vortrag über Ambivalenz*, 1910, in: J. Laplanche - J.-B. Pontalis, *Rječnik psihoanalize*, August Cesarac, Naprijed, Zagreb 1992.

dvojak: aktivan, zbog sudjelovanja u finalnoj aktualizaciji koncepta, a pasivan uslijed programirane prirode medija i onemogućavanja stvarnog utjecaja. Balansirajući na nekoliko perceptivnih razina, rad oscilira između ambivalentnog odnosa pojavnog i nepojavnog. Djelo fizički ne postoji u prostoru galerije, ali ga je moguće realizirati s različitim prostornih točki i u različito vrijeme.

Isto tako u toj seriji s telefonskim porukama svaki rad može imati beskonačno mnogo interpretacija, tako da se neprekidno ukida distinkcija ispravnog i neispravnog. Naime, isto kao što rad istodobno postoji i ne postoji, tako je i svaka interpretacija tako koncipirana rada koju će kustos ponuditi jednako valjana i ispravna. Iskaz stalno sâm sebe poništava, ali i potvrđuje vlastitu autentičnost. Iako je u korijenu takva propitivanja sumnja u vlastiti status i relativizacija vrijednosti sustava unutar kojeg nastaje, on je njegova ironična potvrda. To je umjetnost koja ništa konkretno ne izlaže, ne kritizira, ne zagovara otvoreno neko stajalište... no koja ipak, paradoksalno, sve to čini kontinuirano iznalažeći mogućnosti kreiranja različitih neobičnih situacija "izlaganja ničega" kako bi, negacijom, mogla potvrditi vitalne modalitete vlastita postojanja i daljnjeg opstanka. To su aktivnosti koje uzastopnim očitovanjem "nultog stanja" istražuju iregularna, neočitana, nestabilna, privremena međustanja koja minimalnim odmacima od uobičajenog produciraju višak značenja. To je umjetnost dvoznačnog predznaka i privremenog statusa koja balansira u procijepima jasnih, odvojivih kategorija. I što je pokušaj negacije vlastita postojanja (kao umjetnosti) biti radikalniji, time je i potvrda statusa (kao umjetnosti) izravnija, a referentno polje šire. ▼

In this context, the ambivalent nature of active/passive relation is visible through the exchange of roles: the artist actively initiates the work, and then becomes passive, leaving the realization to the curator. The final act of listening to the message also emerges in its ambiguity: it is active because of the participation in the final actualization of the concept, and it is passive due to the programmed nature of the medium that disables a real influence. Balancing on several perceptive levels, the work oscillates between the phenomenal and non-phenomenal. The work does not exist physically in the gallery, but it can be realized from different spatial points and at different times.

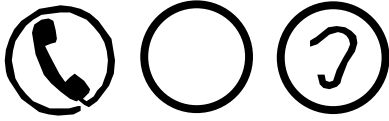
Also, in the phone work series, every work can have an infinite number of interpretations, and therefore the distinction between correct and incorrect ones is being continually erased. Namely, as the work simultaneously exists and does not exist, every interpretation of such a work by the curator will be equally valid and correct. The utterance constantly cancels itself, but also confirms its own authenticity. Although such questioning is based on a doubt in one's own status and in a relativization of values of the system within which it is founded, the questioning is also an ironic reaffirmation of the system. This art exhibits nothing, it does not criticize, it does not openly promote any viewpoint... but it still, paradoxically, does all this by continually enabling the possibilities to create different unusual situations of "exhibiting nothing", to affirm by negation the vital modalities of its own existence and survival. By repeated affirmation of "zero state", these activities examine the irregular, non-obvious, unstable, contemporary states that by minimal diversions from the conventional create a surplus of meaning. It is an ambiguous art, of a temporary status, which balances in the discontinuities of clear, separable categories. The more radical the attempt to negate its own existence (as art), the more direct is the confirmation of the (artistic) status, and the field of reference gets broader. ●

prijevod / translation: Goran Vujasinović

→ Ana Dević - povjesničarka umjetnosti i likovna kritičarka. Kustosica u Modernoj galeriji u Zagrebu.

Ana Dević - art historian and critic.

Curator at Moderna galerija - Museum of Modern Art, Zagreb.



Have you seen Gecan's work at the exhibition?

Gecan likes absence, emptiness, whiteness... He also likes to rearrange, move things from one place to another.

Let me explain - once he build a wall, identical in size to the one reserved for his work at an exhibition in a Zagreb gallery, in a park, another time he copied the groundplan of the gallery in which he was exhibiting onto a basketball court..

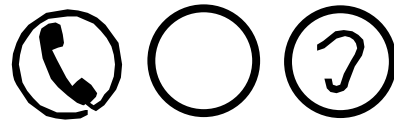
This time he decided to leave his spot at the Apex Art Centre empty. Instead of showing his work, he has delegated the curators who invited him to the exhibition to speak on his behalf.

His absence opens a space that allows others to be active in it, and this particular space is filled with possibilities, positive and negative alike. Interpretation may move in various, unpredictable directions. The silent artist has retreated in a show of confidence in the curators/critics that represent him "for better or worse" and the audience caught between them.

Won't curators interpreting his work tell their own story?
Won't the viewers, in the absence of the work, imagine their own work?
Won't this cause enough misunderstanding?

1.

Branka Stipančić
Chinese Whispers, Apex Art CP, New York



Tomo Savić Gecan again exhibits nothing. The situation is both intriguing and rather absurd the exhibition curators talking about a work the status of which is uncertain.

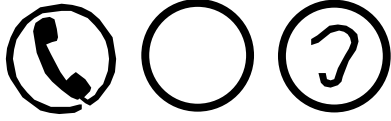
While there is definitely no work by Tomo in the gallery, this brief interpretation may initiate its presence. The work begins to exist when this message is listened to. When we begin to talk about it. It takes shape in language and communication systems. It consists of speech, listening, repetition and, again, silence.

As all Tomo's projects, this involves presence, distance and invisible borders. The artist's basic material is space in which there constantly occur unusual situations that are often elusive or misinterpreted.

Tomo Savić Gecan applies the strategies of both "estrangement" and total "opacity". Since his works are geared to the very edge of our perception, they play with mimicry, paradox, visibility, clarity and assertion. Each of his works is an experiment of sorts, attaining full realization only in the interaction with the viewers. If you want to, you can again initiate the non/existing work of art by listening to this message again.

2.

Ana Dević
Chinese Whispers, Apex Art CP, New York



En composant un numéro de téléphone, les visiteurs de l'exposition accèdent à un répondeur diffusant des interprétations à propos d'une œuvre d'art qui n'existe pas. Des interprétations qui ont été demandées par Tomo Savić-Gecan à différents acteurs du milieu artistique. Autrement dit, en écrivant ces lignes, je collabore à une œuvre. Non pas une œuvre littéraire ou critique, mais une œuvre artistique, grâce à Tomo Savić-Gecan.

Le "phone work" ici présenté est donc inséparable d'une non-œuvre, d'une œuvre supposée ne pas exister : mais une absence que vient combler une série de discours tenus sur elle. Or, c'est cette conjonction mouvante de discours qui fait exister l'œuvre et qui, simultanément, constitue la matière du "phone work". Non pas en tant que chose, mais en tant qu'événement. Une œuvre virtuelle en permanent devenir.

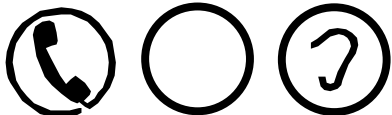
Le statut de l'œuvre et celui de l'artiste, ainsi que les conditions de réception, s'en trouvent radicalement bouleversés. L'artiste ne fabrique pas d'objet, ne produit pas directement d'œuvre au sens traditionnel du terme. Son action consiste à concevoir un protocole, un dispositif et une proposition : convier des commissaires à s'exprimer sur la notion d'une œuvre sans autre existence que discursive, et inviter le public à aller retrouver leurs réflexions enregistrées sur un répondeur téléphonique.

Fructueux paradoxe : le "phone work" se fait à mesure que l'on fait exister l'œuvre absente en parlant de sa non existence. L'œuvre est un produit discursif. Il ne faut pas croire qu'elle n'existe pas : elle existe, mais virtuellement, dès lors que Tomo Savić-Gecan en a posé le principe. Ce sont les commissaires, et non pas l'artiste lui-même, qui l'actualisent dans l'entrecroisement de leurs propos, verbaux (dans l'exposition) ou écrits (comme je le fais ici).

Le public n'est plus placé en face d'un produit fini, mais convié à accéder à un état transitoire d'une œuvre-événement. Une œuvre de matière verbale et textuelle, sans doute plus auditive que visuelle, dont chaque intervention contribue à modifier les contours, sinon l'apparence. Une œuvre sans forme et sans lieu définis. Une version épurée à l'extrême des devenirs.

3.

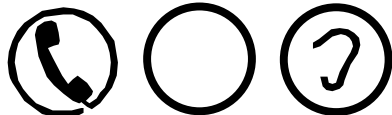
André Rouillé



"What, how and for whom" the exhibition dedicated to 152nd anniversary of Marx's Communist Manifesto basically deals with economy. In the country that ten years ago had managed to get out of one concrete realization of the great communist vision, country with devastated economy, extremely high rate of unemployment and pauperized population - these are the burning issues. So, these are the circumstances under which we worked with Tomo. He gave the great proposal on which Ana, Sabina and me worked for a whole month while he was away at some residency program in United States. We failed in funding the project, he was very disappointed. Therefore I think it's about failure, I also think it's about Tomo's usual tautologies but also about confronting Ana and me, curators of the show. He challenged us to work fast, he forced us to think and concentrate on his piece. Considering the spaces of galleries as places of given denotative codes of time, place and exhibiting the artist transposes the syntax of meaning. The curators of the exhibition themselves become the subject of happening. Taping of this message in an attempt to interpret Tomo's work that physically does not exist in the gallery space, which is slightly paradoxical situation. Physically, isn't in the space but at the same time through listening of this message we realize it together.

4.

Nataša Ilić
Što, kako i za koga / What, how and for whom, on the occasion of 152nd anniversary of Communist Manifesto, HDLU, Zagreb 2000.



Strategije dislokacije i odsutnosti u projektima Tome Savića Gecana koncentrirane su na prostor galerije kao fizički prostor te na specifičnosti galerijskih konvencija. Razmatrajući galerijske prostore kao mjesta zadanih kodova vremena i mjesta izlaganja umjetnik transponira značenja i radikalno izmijenjuje prostorne pozicije, vizure i granične zasebnosti. Ni u ovom radu Tome Savića Gecana ne postoje objekti izlaganja već se aktivnosti prebacuju na nas kustose izložbe kao subjekte. Snimanjem ove govorne poruke kustosice izložbe Nataša i ja interpretirajući Tomin rad zapadaju u pomalo paradoksalnu situaciju. Rad naime, istovremeno postoji i ne postoji. Kako je to moguće? Ukratko, Tominog rada u prostoru galerije fizički nema, ali ga preslušavanjem ove govorne istovremeno zajednički realiziramo. Mislim da se u ovom slučaju i dalje radi o Tominim uobičajenim tautološkim situacijama ali i o sučeljovanju nas kustosa sa umjetnikovim konceptom i njegovom realizacijom. Tomo Savić Gecan izazvao nas je da radimo brzo i razmišljamo o njegovom radu.

5.

Ana Dević
Što, kako i za koga / What, how and for whom, povodom 152 godišnjice Komunističkog manifesta, HDLU, Zagreb 2000.