

## Micro Static Cinema | The Cinematic Nature of the Micro Static

*“...The most important place where my work exists is not in the museum gallery, or in the screening room, or on the television, and not even on the video screen itself, but in the mind of the viewer who has seen it.”*

Bill Viola, Statement 1989

In its over half-a-century long presence in contemporary art practice, video installation has become one of the dominant forms of artistic expression. In the context of its increasing representation and growing numbers of artists who resort to video from other mediums or who have used it as a dominant or “supplementary” medium at a certain point of their career, the prophetic words by artist Nam June Paik that “the cathode-ray tube will replace the canvas” uttered long ago, turn out to be truthful. In formal terms, this is the case with Igor Bošnjak, painter by education, who, in his own words, “having had enough of painting”, turned to photography and video, but also to art theory and curatorial work. Can thus his art be also treated as Gesamtkunstwerk – total work of art, which may be seen through several layers of perception (as suggested in his work *Four in One*), and he himself as entirely responsible for its creation and interpretation – as an artist, theoretician and curator? Isn't the artist with his choice of themes in a specific way close to a shaman with his visionary, prophetic, anticipatory view of life, as Bill Viola maintains, whose work makes us “aware of our mortality which defines the nature of a human being”<sup>1</sup> and whose artistic concepts and manner of perceiving life issues are close to Bošnjak, too?

Micro Static Cinema is a compilation of video works created over the past five years in which the artist employs an untypical treatment of video as a medium, interpreting it in direct relation to photography from which it came. “The static nature of a moving image devoid of movements (conditionally speaking), inaction and contemplation appearing as themes themselves or a leitmotif, is aimed at prompting the viewer (in this case stopping them) to discussion and reflection on multiple meanings and consequences this metaphor may have today” (I.B.). Avoiding the common technical procedures and using still shots, he examines the relations between the stillness and the mobility of the image which questions our perception and tests to what extent it is possible to understand the relation. Thus, “keeping the visual realism typical of the photographic process, the film gains plasticity formerly possible only in painting or animation.”<sup>2</sup> Minimalism in the application of technical means most often implies omitting the sound, or reducing it only to accidentally captured voices or noise apparently serving the purpose of breaking the dilemma if it is a photo or a still shot.

The best example of such a procedure is the work “13 photographs” (2008) – a film which is a direct product of photography and which was “brought back” to photography in the way the scenes are experienced. The alternation of similar film frames with subjects posing “in the point of non-moving fixed in time” lasting for several tens of seconds, creates an impression of watching a slideshow. It is only the happenings in the background: the passage of passersby, street noise, undisturbed life, that “disturb” our perception. The way the meanings of the notion of time are rotated indirectly suggests how thin the line between these two mediums is, and what is of importance for their understanding is the context they are placed in. Time as a constant stands against time as a stopped moment in “double reality” – one in the background which is unstoppable and the other in the forefront which is frozen and which we view as a picture.

In Bošnjak's works, art serves the purpose of aestheticising the bleak (Balkan) reality strongly defined by religion, wars, politics and various media manipulations, whose intoxicating effect, sometime benign but more often malignant, frequently hypnotizes us, but not in the manner of great hypnotists but by “bombarding” us with information and worthless oiliness usually passively absorbed by masses. “The hypnotic session of each film or video author turns out to be a beneficial act with which this universe, at least for some time, becomes a better / harder place to live in.” (I.B.)

*Neo-cross* (2007) is part of the complex project *Messiah* bringing together works created in different mediums, from photography to video, in the period 2006-2008. Employing diverse means, Bošnjak examines the attitude towards religious representations in modern times. The time of rapid consumption turns everything into consumables. “Consumable pseudocyclic time is spectacular time, both in the narrow sense as time spent consuming images and in the broader sense as image of the consumption of time.”<sup>3</sup> And the reality of time has been replaced by the “publicity of time.”<sup>4</sup> The defragmented picture of Christ's body represents a specific ethical discourse on the theme of the manipulation of everything and with everything including religion, which might be among the spheres of

life where abuse is the easiest to achieve and less visible at first glance. By showing separate parts of his body on separate screens, the artist indirectly brings up the issue of (ab)use of the idea of Christ's sacrifice. He offers a view departing from the common interpretation of death for the sake of redemption, understood "as temporality" and new life which is seen as the only finiteness: "Life and death (here) are not polarities, contrasting opposites within the all-inclusive Whole (the field of reality), but rather the same thing viewed from different UNIVERSAL standpoints."<sup>5</sup> Introducing the story in the sphere of the media topical today, the author compares the meaning of the picture examining its role in relation to the previous epochs. "Can a photo or a work realized in a contemporary medium have the same power as a Renaissance painting in their expressiveness and description of a certain spiritual state?" (I.B.)

*We undoubtedly live in a society of the screen* - Lev Manovich, which we are exposed to at every turn, whether in that we perceive the world through the screen or in that we ourselves become viewing objects. And no matter how accustomed we may seem to the conditions imposed by society implying the possibilities of adjustment to growing demands, "the capitalistic ethic of trading" and living, "we, as human subjects who happen to live in this new space, have not kept pace with evolution.... We still do not possess the perceptive apparatus which would suit the new hyperspace...partly because our perceptual habits were formed in the former kind of space, (...) with the space of high modernity."<sup>6</sup> This brings us to a discrepancy between the imposed demands and real possibilities and wishes, leading us to "Schizophrenia", not as an illness but as a reflection of a continual state of pressure individuals are exposed to and the need for a split personality in order to fulfil our own ambitions.

In the 1990s, the interest of Western curators for the Eastern-European and Balkan art scene suddenly grew. For younger generations of artists, at that time burdened by a war environment, crossing the narrow local borders was of exceptional value. However, some of them built their careers on the world scene by exploiting war themes, offering what "sells well". In a series of works, with the sensibility of an engaged and analytical artist/critic, Bošnjak explores the media exploitation of victims in Bosnia (*Contemporary Graveyards*, 2010), reliving events from his own history (*Re-construction*, 2009); then the consequences of war (*Dictionary*, 2011); relations between the art market and the gallery system from the position of power in relation to the Eastern-European artist (*Smoking and Rolling Tobacco*, 2010); and finally the attitude of Western curators towards artists and scenes formed over the past decades in Eastern European countries characterised by a significantly different socio – economic context. *Four in One* (2010) and *Smoking and Rolling Tobacco* (2010) shift the border in the criticism of the global systems of art and the market. In order to become "competitive" and rise up "against the so-called natural principles or against capitalist society" (Felix Guattari), the artist "designs" the artist / critic / theoretician / curator concept. All in one. He splits his personality with the aim of fulfilling all demands imposed on him as his own by the contemporary market and the need to cross the local borders, simultaneously striving to demystify the established norms in the functioning of the world of art.

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1 Otto Neumaier, *Space, time, video, Viola*; u: *The Art of Bill Viola*, Thames&Hudson, London, 2004, 47

2 Lev Manović, *Metamediji, izbor tekstova*, priredio Dejan Sretenović, Edicija VIR co/No 2, CSU Beograd, 2001, 90

3 Guy Debord, *Društvo spektakla: Spektakularno vreme*; paragraf 153. u: [www.crsn.com/debord/drustvospektakla/drustvo.htm](http://www.crsn.com/debord/drustvospektakla/drustvo.htm)

4 Ibid, 154

5 Slavoj Žižek, *Āudovišnost Hrista, Teologija i revolucija, Otkrovenje*, Beograd, 2008. 138

6 Frederik Džejmson, *Valter Benjamin i presedan doba mehaniĀke reprodukcije*; u: *Fotografija, kritiĀki uvod*, priredila Liz Vels, CLIO, 2006, 425