Društvo
likovnih
umetnikov
Ljubljana

Poštnina
plačana
pri pošti
1101
Ljubljana

NDP

Niki Oblak & Primož Novak, *Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going*?, 2019, kinetična videoinstalacija / kinetic video installation, soprodukcija / co-produced by: Aksioma, Ljubljana, Slovenia; ACC_R Asia Culture Center, Gwangju, South Korea; MMC Kibla, Maribor, Slovenia; KID KIBLA, Maribor

son:DA, *Selfi št.1 / Selfi No. 1*, 2020, foto / photo: arhiv / archive: EX-garaža

NIKA OBLAK & PRIMOŽ NOVAK kot tandem na področju sodobne umetnosti delujeta od leta 2003. Razstavljala sta na vidnih mednarodnih prizoriščih, kot so Sharjah Biennial (UAE), Japan Media Arts Festival, Tokio (JP), Istanbul Biennial (TR) in Transmediale Berlin (DE). Prejela sta številne štipendije in nagrade, med drugim CYNETART Award (DE), častno omembo na WRO Biennale (PL), Beli Aphroid, KIBLA MMC (SI) in priznanje Riharda Jakopiča (SI).

NIKA OBLAK & PRIMOŽ NOVAK have been working collectively since 2003. They have exhibited worldwide, in venues like the Sharjah Biennial (UAE), Japan Media Arts Festival, Tokyo (JP), Istanbul Biennial (TR) and Transmediale Berlin (DE). Oblak & Novak received numerous grants and awards, including the CYNETART Award (DE), an honorary mention at Biennale WRO (PL), White Aphroid Award by MMC KIBLA (SI) and Rihard Jakopic honorable mention (SI).

www.oblak-novak.org

Pri označitvah **son:DE** gre pripomniti, da izrazov, kot so umetniški tandem, umetniška skupina, duo, navezava, povezava ipd., ni pričela uporabljati sama son:DA, temveč drugi avtorji, kadar se nanašajo na son:DO; prav tako v različnih virih najdemo različne zapise imena son:DA, npr. son:da, sonDA, sonda, zonda, SON:DA, SON:da itd.

With regards to the designations of son:DA, it should be noted that terms such as artistic tandem, artistic group, duo, alliance, connection, etc., were not initially used by son:DA itself, but by other authors when referring to son:DA; also in different sources we find different ways of writing the name son:DA, e.g. son:da, sonDA, sonda, zonda, SON:DA, SON:da, etc.

sonda.kibla.org

Nika Oblak & Primož Novak + son:DA

KIBERNACIJA
CYBERNATION

Vabljeni na razstavo, ki bo na ogled od četrtka, 17. septembra 2020 v Galeriji DLUL, Breg 22, Ljubljana.

Razstava bo na ogled do 11. oktobra 2020.

Zdi se, da vse lahko počnemo virtualno; tehnologija nam je bližje od neposredne realnosti in njenih »takšnosti« (kvalij – vonja, okusa, tekstur, fizisa, materije). Naravo in življenje bolje dojemamo in doživljamo prek tehnološko posredovanih podob in informacij. Resničnost se ne odvija le pred našimi očmi, še bolj je posredovana s posnetki. Kaže, da šele s tem ko svet okrog nas snemamo, vstopamo vanj. Nanna Verhoeff je pisala o »navigacijskem obratu«, ki ga opredeljujejo naše raznovrstne interakcije z ekrani. Mobilnost bolj od fizične izkušnje doživljamo z navigiranjem, virtualnim premikanjem med informacijami, prostori, časovnimi etapami in veččutnimi izkušnjami. Tehnologija človeških zmožnosti ni samo razširila – računalniki med drugim danes na številnih delovnih mestih izpodrivajo ljudi, ampak je reorganizirala senzorij, zaznavo, um in okupirala celo telo. Medijska krajina kot njen kulturološki in sociološki fenomen na je z ideološkimi učinki preoblikovala načine, s katerimi se oblikujejo naše identitete in medosebna razmerja. Znašli smo se v kompleksni situaciji oziroma stanju kibernacije.

Udomačitev tehnologije in vzporedna tehnizacija življenjskih praks sta vitalni predmet sodobne umetnosti, še posebej tiste, ki eksperimentalno uporablja nove medije in dejavno vstopa v najbolj nevralgične aspekte sočasnosti. Za umetniška tandema, ki ju povezuje razstava *Kibernacija*, je značilno, da tehnologije prvenstveno ne uporabljata v vlogi povezovalnega člena aktualnih družbenih tem, ki jih problematizirata, pač pa kot vmesnik za njihovo posredovanje, ki s formo predstavitve implicira natanko tisto, kar tematizira. Dela Nike Oblak in Primoža Novaka ter tandema son:DA so uspešna predvsem v načinu, kako sintetizirano vizualizirajo simptome družbene realnosti ter s humorjem in samoironijo – pri čemer se ne izvzemajo iz pogojev in običajev praktičnega uma sodobne realnosti – predstavljajo stanje duha.

V raznovrstni umetniški produkciji, ki zajema kinetične videoinstalacije, postkonceptualno fotografijo in videe, tandem Oblak & Novak obravnava vrsto tem, ki jih lansirajo medijske vsebine, popularna kultura in moderna postindustrijska družbena razmerja. V nizu projektov sta naslavljala umetniški in zvezdniški sistem, imperativ samopromocije, kolateralne učinke množičnih medijev in tehnološkega upravljanja naših življenj, pri čemer sta v prvi plan večkrat postavila vedno bolj problematiziran odnos med realnostjo in fikcijo. Tehnologija je ključni agens te relacije. Vzdržuje rizomski medijski prostor, ki je osrednja platforma za širjenje in utrjevanje »naturaliziranih« vrednot, pričakovanj in prioritet, ki jih postavlja sodobna družba. Razstavljena projekta sta vključujeta v kontekst več (kinetičnih) videoinstalacij, s katerimi se lotevata učinkov vseprisotnih elektronskih naprav na vsakdanje življenje in v premislek dajeta ambivalentno interakcijo med uporabnikom in tehnologijo. V delu *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?* (premierno predstavljenem junija 2019 v projektnem prostoru Aksioma) opazujemo gibajočo figuro umetnika, ki v kontinuiranem ritmu lovi ravnovesje znotraj rotirajočega klavstrofobičnega ekrana. Prav ta predstavlja emblem digitalne ekranske resničnosti, za katero je značilna asimilacija med intuitivno tehnologijo in robotiziranim človekom, ki je socialno in fizično vedno bolj potisnjen v virtualni svet. Ontološka vprašanja človeške eksistence, ki si jih je leta 1897 na istoimenski sliki zastavljal francoski slikar Paul Gauguin, so iz okolja idilične in divje narave prenesena v baudrillardovsko simulakersko območje tehno sfere, ki ne posnema več narave/zunanje resničnosti, temveč iz abstrahiranih enot ustvarja avtonomno okolje njene popolne simulacije. Tako svet na zaslonu postaja simulaker realnosti, ta pa se – podobno kot avtomatizirani ritual figure na posnetku – vzajemno vedno bolj prilega svoji ekranski konstrukciji. Nasproti samopogonski virtualni škatli je postavljena krožna šestekranska videoinstalacija *Infinity (Digital)*, na kateri gledamo umetnico, ki teče brez prekinitev. Figura kroži v zanki in se »razteza« čez zaslon oziroma virtualno izstopa iz enega in vstopa v drugega, pri čemer je dejansko navzoča v »vmesnem prostoru«, ki ni ne eno ne drugo, pač pa se v njem virtualno in realno nerazpoznavno pretakata. Prostrani beli prostor ozadja, abstrahirani »kontekst« akcije na *Infinity (Digital)*, postulira digitalno kot brezmejno, dematerializirano območje, v katerem digitalizacija družbe obstaja kot edini zamisljivi metafizični princip. Če ponavljanje sistematičnih, mehanskih gibov ob ritmičnih udarcih zvočne kulise na prvem delu aludira na monotonost avtomatiziranih operacij in vsakdanjih rutin, ki človeka vedno bolj enačijo s proizvodnimi protokoli in usklajujejo z intuitivno tehnologijo, je tek na *Infinity (Digital)* mogoče videti kot prispodobo »praznega teka« progresivno naravnane družbe. Gibajoča telesa postajajo utelešenje informacijskih procesov in mehanizmov, ki jih zapoveduje ponotranjeni imperativ konstantne storilnosti, operativnosti in mobilnosti. S te perspektive video reprezentaciji vzpostavita distančno redukcijo, s katero simulirata abstrakten pogonski proces, ki pa se izkaže za docela samonanašalnega, sizifovskega in zato iluzornega.

Son:DA, najprej v sestavi Metke Golec in Mihe Horvata, zadnje čase pa že arbitrarno formiran kolektiv, ki povezuje različne akterje in prakse, svoje umetniško delovanje gradi na transmedijskem povezovanju, eksperimentu in prostorskih ter situacijskih intervencijah, ki nastajajo v dialogu z danim kontekstom. Danes je son:DA aktivna kot platforma, ki povezuje organizacijo, infrastrukturo in produkcijo umetnosti s kreativnim in eksperimentalnim vidikom ter deluje predvsem med umetnostjo in gledališčem. Relacija med človekom in strojem, načini, kako komuniciramo s tehnologijo in z njeno pomočjo, utopične (in še bolj distopične) prognoze o tem, kako se virtualna resničnost poslužuje naših življenj, so bili bistveni za »sondiranje« aktualnih družbenih praks. »Kabelske instalacije«, s katerimi je son:DA prepredla galerijske in javne prostore, so materializirale nevidna vezja vseprisotnega kibernetičnega prostora in razkrivale njegovo virtualno infrastrukturo, medtem ko so računalniške risbe, narejene z miško v Photoshopu, na drug način portretirale naša absurdna razmerja s tehnologijo. Te podobe niso učinkovale samo zaradi udarne ironije, pač pa zaradi eksplicitne identifikacije tehnologije in vsebine. Z uvedbo *reskillinga* je postduchampovsko demontažo in reciklažo kulturnih znakov ter *ready-made* strategij dobesedno zamenjala »kreativnost« tehnologije. To je bil prvi korak na poti tehnološkega prevzema identitete kolektiva son:DA in zabrisovanja meje med živim in umetnim, med biologijo in tehnologijo, ne nazadnje tudi med fiktivno konstrukcijo in realno projekcijo. Če se znanost ukvarja z dekodiranjem človeškega uma kot informacijskega zapisa, si lahko zamišljamo tudi obratno pot: umetno inteligenco, ki ne le da bo ustvarila dvojnik človeških možganov, ampak se bo od njih tudi osamosvojila ali si jih v mračnejši različici celo podredila.

V tem duhu je projekt umetniškega kolektiva son:DA za razstavo *Kibernacija* zasnovala umetna inteligenca, ki je v celoti prevzela identiteto kolektiva. Z metodo strojnega učenja (danes se ta široko uporablja za analiziranje podatkovnih baz in prepoznavanje njihovih značilnosti) je računalniški algoritem preučil in na podlagi statističnih podatkov organiziral dosedanja dela skupine, tekstualno gradivo, dokumente in geolokacijsko kartografijo razstav v obdobju 2010–2015 ter na podlagi vnesenih spremenljivk podal njeno najnovejšo manifestacijo. Ta je, s skrajno ironično in minimalistično gesto, prevzela novo fizično pojavnost v obliki aparata z imenom *Električni aparat na insekticidne tablete proti navadnim in tigrastim komarjem*, prek katerega se udejanja prisotnost kolektiva son:DA v času trajanja razstave. Delo, ki ga izvaja umetna inteligenca z njegovo identiteto, je tako paradoksalno istočasno retrospektivna sinteza predhodnih projektov kot projekcija oziroma predikcija potencialnih pojavitev, saj se virtualno nenehno procesira in skozi imaginarno performativnost komunicira z obiskovalci. Z antropocentrične perspektive se tako zastavlja vprašanje, kdo oziroma kaj je son:DA, kako se v tehničnem smislu generira in abstrahira ustvarjalno dejanje, njegova recepcija in interpretacija – ob dejstvu, da tehnologija ne predstavlja zgolj razširjenih možnosti, ampak se je (kakor je opozarjal že medijski teoretik Friedrich Kittler) sama razširila v človeka. Medtem ko je pri Niki Oblak & Primožu Novaku subjekt še ujeti deležnik znotraj vezij, ki so sicer omrežila njegov um in senzorij, se v futuristični projekciji kolektiva son:DA vrši njena popolna tehnološka okupacija, v kateri je človeška zavest raztelešena in prestavljena v kibernetsko metafiziko električnega toka. Kaže, da bo čas za resetiranje.

Nadja Gnamuš

It seems that we can do everything virtually; technology is closer to us than the direct reality and its "suchness" (qualia – smell, taste, textures, physis, matter). We better perceive and experience nature and life through technologically mediated images and information. Reality occurs not only before our eyes, it is even more conveyed with the recordings. It seems that only by filming the world around us do we enter it. Nanna Verhoeff wrote about the "navigational turn" defined by our diverse interactions with screens. Rather than through a physical experience, we experience mobility through navigation, virtual movement between information, spaces, time stages and multi-sensory experiences. Technology has not only expanded human capabilities – among other things, computers are replacing people in many jobs today – but it has reorganized the sensorium, perception, mind and occupied the whole body. The media landscape, as its cultural and sociological phenomenon, has transformed, with ideological effects, the ways in which our identities and interpersonal relationships are shaped. We have found ourselves in a complex situation or the state of cybernation.

The domestication of technology and the parallel technization of life practices are the vital objects of contemporary art, especially the one that experimentally uses new media and actively enters into the most neuralgic aspects of simultaneity. The artistic tandems connected by the exhibition *Cybernation* are characterized by the fact that they do not primarily use technology as a connecting link of the current social topics that they problematize, but rather as an interface for their mediation, which with the form of presentation implies exactly what it thematizes. The works by Nika Oblak and Primož Novak and the son:DA group are successful mainly in the way how they, in a synthesized manner, visualise the symptoms of social reality and with humour and self-irony – without excluding themselves from the conditions and customs of the practical mind of modern reality – present the state of mind.

In a diverse artistic production that encompasses kinetic video installations, post-conceptual photography and videos, the Oblak & Novak tandem addresses a range of themes launched by media content, popular culture and modern post-industrial social relations. In a series of projects, they addressed the artistic and celebrity system, the imperative of self-promotion, the collateral effects of mass media and the technological management of our lives, repeatedly highlighting the increasingly problematized relationship between reality and fiction. Technology is the key agent of this relationship. It maintains the rhizome media space, which is the central platform for spreading and consolidating the "naturalized" values, expectations and priorities set by modern society. The exhibited projects are included in the context of several (kinetic) video installations, with which they address the effects of ubiquitous electronic devices on everyday life and give consideration to the ambivalent interaction between the user and technology. In the work *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?* (premiered in June 2019 at the Axioma Project Space), we observe a moving figure of the artist chasing balance, in a continuous rhythm, within a rotating claustrophobic screen. Precisely the latter represents an emblem of digital screen reality, which is characterized by the assimilation between intuitive technology and robotised man, who is socially and physically increasingly pushed into the virtual world. The ontological questions of the human existence posed by the French painter Paul Gauguin in 1897 on the eponymous painting are transferred from an environment of idyllic and wild nature to the Baudrillard-like simulacrum realm of the techno sphere, which no longer mimics nature/external reality but from the abstracted units creates an autonomous environment of its complete simulation. Thus, the world on the screen becomes a simulacrum of reality, which is – similarly as the automated ritual of the figure in the recording – increasingly fitting into its screen construction. Opposite the self-propelled virtual box is a circular six-screen video installation *Infinity (Digital)*, in which we watch the artist running without interruption. The figure circulates in a loop and "stretches" across the screen or virtually exits one and enters the other, actually being present in an "intermediate space" that is neither one nor the other, but in it, the virtual and the real are flowing unrecognizably. The vast white space of the background, the abstracted "context" of action in *Infinity (Digital)*, postulates the digital as a boundless, dematerialized realm in which the digitalization of society exists as the only conceivable metaphysical principle. If the repetition of systematic, mechanical movements along the rhythmic beats of the background noise in the first part alludes to the monotony of automated operations and daily routines, which increasingly equate man with production protocols and harmonize with intuitive technology, running featured in *Infinity (Digital)* can be seen as a metaphor of "empty running" of a progressively-oriented society. The moving bodies are becoming an embodiment of information processes and mechanisms commanded by the internal imperative of constant productivity, operativeness and mobility. From this perspective, the video presentations establish a distance reduction, with which they simulate an abstract drive process, which turns out to be completely self-referential, Sisyphean and therefore illusory.

Son:DA, first consisting of Metka Golec and Miha Horvat, while recently already an arbitrarily formed collective that connects different agents and practices, builds its artistic work on transmedia connections, experiment and spatial and situational interventions that arise in dialogue with a given context. Today, son:DA is active as a platform connecting the organization, infrastructure and production of art with a creative and experimental aspect, operating primarily between art and theatre. The relation between man and machine, the ways we communicate with technology and with the help of it, utopian (and even more dystopian) predictions about how virtual reality is taking over our lives have been essential for "sounding" the current social practices. The "cable installations" with which Son:DA filled the gallery and public spaces materialized the invisible circuits of ubiquitous cyberspace and revealed its virtual infrastructure, while computer drawings made with a mouse in Photoshop portrayed our absurd relationships with technology in another way. These images worked not only because of the striking irony, but also because of the explicit identification of technology and content. With the introduction of reskilling, the post-Duchamp dismantling and recycling of cultural signs and ready-made strategies have literally been replaced by the "creativity" of technology. This was the first step on the path of the technological takeover of the identity of the son:DA collective and blurring the line between the living and the artificial, between biology and technology and finally, between fictional construction and real projection. If science is concerned with decoding the human mind as an information record, we can also imagine the opposite path: an artificial intelligence which will not only create a duplicate of the human brain, but will also become independent of it or even subjugate it in a darker version.

In this spirit, the project by the son:DA art collective for the exhibition entitled *Cybernation* was designed by an artificial intelligence which completely took over the identity of the collective. Using the machine learning method (today it is widely used to analyse databases and identify their characteristics), the computer algorithm examined and, based on statistical data, organized the group's work so far, as well as textual material, documents and geolocation cartography of exhibitions in the period 2010–2015, and based on the entered variables provided its most recent manifestation. With an extremely ironic and minimalist gesture, the latter took on a new physical appearance in the form of an apparatus called the *Electric Apparatus Using Insecticide Pills against Common and Tiger Mosquitoes*, through which the presence of the son:DA collective is realized for the duration of the exhibition. The work performed by the artificial intelligence with its identity is thus paradoxically at the same time a retrospective synthesis of previous projects and a projection or prediction of potential occurrences, as it is virtually constantly processed and communicates with the audience through imaginary performativity. From an anthropocentric perspective, the question thus arises as to who or what is son:DA, how in a technical sense a creative act is generated and abstracted, its reception and interpretation – given the fact that technology does not only represent the extended possibilities, but it has (as the media theorist Friedrich Kittler already pointed out) expanded into man. While with Nika Oblak and Primož Novak the subject is still a trapped stakeholder within the circuits which otherwise networked his mind and sensorium, in the futuristic projection of the son:DA art group, its complete technological occupation takes place, in which human consciousness is disembodied and transferred to the cybernetic metaphysics of electric current. It looks like the time for resetting has come.

Nadja Gnamuš