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Irena Lagator Pejović. Images of a Social Strategy

Image Think is the title given by the artist Irena Lagator Pejović to the Montenegrin National Pavilion (Palazzo Malipiero, commissioner/curator Nataša Nikčević) at the Encyclopedic Palace of the 55th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia.

Image Think is developed in four spaces and over four times, which together aim to construct a path of knowledge and awareness building in the visitor, who is repeatedly asked to make a choice when interacting with the works, whether by walking, researching, mirroring, or believing. The material actions (walking, touching, seeing, doing, constructing) alter with the immaterial processes, voluntary and rational or otherwise (perceiving, imagining, comprehending, elaborating, confronting). The visitor's body is both the instrument of perception and the medium of the work, which, thanks to it, can reach its full potential.

The twofold thread of rational and irrational experience gives rise to the construction of personal identities, which participate in the process of vision and knowledge. An experience which requires immersive environments that may stimulate all the senses and evoke a complex and layered personal imaginary.

As the fruit of intellect and matter, sensibility and culture, the images are part of a processes of “social strategy” – one of the key components of Irena Lagator Pejović's oeuvre – defined during the many conversations and epistolary exchanges with Bazon Brock (author of one of the texts in the catalogue, an ideal continuation of the correspondence with the artist).

Mathematics (not only Euclidean), economics, art, philosophy, sociology (Baudrillard, Lefebvre, Derrida, Foucault, Eco, Benjamin), literature (Orwell), are the disciplines referenced by Irena Lagator Pejović's work – as processes to comprehend what is contemporary and syntagms of a provisional visualization of the present rather more so than univocal references. These bodies of knowledge constitute the encyclopedic substrate into which the visitor may choose to enter or not but which contribute to “thinking through the image”.

In the first room we encounter a kind of apparition – *Further than Beyond*. The two golden tetrahedra – three-dimensional figures, both monumental and light, constructed with golden strings and suspended in the space – seem to dissolve as the visitor passes by, due to the nature of illumination and the colour of the material. The conceptual and kinetic research underlying the history of the contemporary image interweaves with the golden backgrounds of Byzantine icons, the world of medieval symbols and abstraction, Malevic's black square, as well as

with the here-and-now (the light, the water, the investigation of light in Venetian painting).

The black cube of *Image Think* takes up the second chamber. Its sides are perforated, its base consists of mirrors: those entering must constantly fine-tune their focus, shifting it from their own image reflected in the mirrors to the multiplicity of luminous starry universes appearing on the walls – from the reflected Self to the multiform and fluid Us, variable and distant.

The seemingly white room of *Ecce Mundi* constitutes the third stage of the itinerary: the walls and the floor are covered in printed and hand-drawn canvases: a square net, akin to a school notebook, hosts a multitude of minuscule stylized creatures, similar to pictograms. Each and every one of them appears to rotate freely inside its own space and yet in harmony with its peers. Together they orchestrate an alphabet of signs, the manifesto of a harmonious society which can exist between the Self and the Us, where the rules of coexistence are defined in the spirit of limitless possibilities of the individual, who adjusts her/his actions and lives her/his space also with respect to others. As the evolution of *Man or Star* (video, 2006) and the *Society of Unlimited Responsibility* (2006), the work develops inside the space in which the visitor is invited to enter and to walk across the floor covered in pictograms defining the experience of the work of art. S/he is asked to participate in an individual and collective process, and to take on the responsibility towards the images created through art as well as the materiality of the work itself.

The last intervention of the project, *Camera Imaginata. The Means for Exchanging the Power of the Imagination*, is realized in the catalogue: the drawing of a white cube, a cross, which becomes three-dimensional when cut and glued together, hiding nonetheless the exhortations written on the margin of its “sides”: *feel the presence, multiply time, imagine knowledge, define peace, create love, recall imagination*. After the reader’s intervention, the images remain in individual memories, becoming transferred from the Palace of Knowledge to more intimate and personal spaces, and simultaneously, from intellectual experience into life itself.