

Prostor u dva čina
Space in Two Acts



Petra Varl

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Muzej-Museo Lapidarium, 2020

Petra Varl prvi put je izlagala u Galeriji Rigo 1997. godine. Izložila je mnogobojnu priču o Zvezdi i Odeonu, što je bio i sadržaj pratećeg kataloga. Obećale smo jedna drugoј da čemo se jednom opet naći u tom malom, bijelom prostoru. Sada, kada drugi put izlaže u istoj galeriji, dakle 23 godine kasnije i u vremenu kada niz kriza potresa svijet, u mjesecu kada radi teštiranje na Covid-19 kako bi mogla preći susjednu granicu, Petra Varl razvija topološke strategije za pojedinačne proštore kao sigurne zone međuljudske prisutnosti.

Prvi prostor (Rigo) je *prostor* upisa. Stotinjak upakiranih radova poslagano је na podu galerije. Tu je sva do-sadašnja produkcija koju je umjetnica imala pohranjenu u svom ljubljanskom domu.

Istovremeno radi na drugom prostoru. Po površini i gabaritima arhitektura proštora gotovo je preslik novigradske galerije. On se nalazi u umjetničinom štanu u Ljubljani.

Drugi prostor (stan) je *prostor* iskušta. Kako bi u svom štanu konstruirala novi prostor, bilo je potrebno isprazniti i porušiti postojeći. Na taj je način, ispraznivši svoj štan dijela prošlosti, koju upakiranu dokumentira u Galeriji Rigo, umjetnica otvorila svoj novi *prostor*. Od difuznog bjelila on je gotovo nevidljiv, kontemplativan. U njemu leže akteri, odnosno gledaoci koji borave u *Prostoru* štana.

Smještaj umjetničine prošle produkcije kao čina *upisa* dokumentacije u galerijski prostor, i istovremeno čina novog *iskustva* u privatnome, svakidašnjem prostoru, nisu odvojene radnje, nego se na razini *prostora* poštije ono što umjetnica postiže na razini *vremena* – promišljajući prošlost, sadašnjost i (moguću) budućnost.

Petra Varl je i ovaj put pokazala, baš kao i prije 23 godine, da je, bez obzira na sadržajne razlike, umjetnica i „autorica projekta“. Stoga, umjetnica je samoj sebi kuhinja, a cilj joj je stvoriti višeslojni narativ koji špaja formalnu strukturu, mentalne procese, kreativne suradničke prakse i interakcije, što potiče odnose kako javnog ili privatnog prostora, tako i prolazne ili trenutne slike vremena.

Jerica Zihrl

Petra Varl had her first exhibition in the Rigo Gallery in 1997. She exhibited a multicoloured story of Zvezda and Odeon, which was also the topic of the accompanying catalogue. We promised each other that we will meet again in that small, white space. Now, 23 years later, she is once again exhibiting at the Rigo Gallery. At a time when the world is faced with a series of crises and when she has to do a test for Covid-19 if she wishes to cross the border, Petra Varl is working on the topological strategies for particular places, thus transforming Space into a safe zone for interpersonal presence.

Her first space (Rigo) is a space of inscription. Around a hundred wrapped up objects are arranged on the gallery's floor. Here is the artist's entire past production that she had previously stored at her home in Ljubljana.

At the same time, she is working on another space. The architecture of that space is by its size and dimensions almost an exact copy of the Novigrad's gallery. It is in the artist's apartment in Ljubljana.

Her second space (apartment) is a space of experience. To construct a new space in her apartment, it was necessary to empty and demolish the existing one. By emptying her

apartment of the part of her past, which she has wrapped up and is exhibiting in Gallery Rigo, the artist has created her own new space. Due to the diffused whiteness, it is almost invisible, contemplative. The actors lie in it, they are the spectators who dwell in the apartment's *Space*.

The positioning of the artist's previous production as an *inscription* of documentation into the gallery and the simultaneous act of a new *experience* in a private everyday place, are not two separate actions. On the contrary, choosing *space* as a creative process is what the artist achieves through *time* - by contemplating the past, the present and the (possible) future.

Just like 23 years ago, Petra Varl has again shown that she is, regardless of the contextual differences, an artist and "the figure of the author". Therefore, the artist is primarily the curator of herself whose goal is to create a multi-layered narrative that connects formal structure, mental processes, creative cooperatives and interactions, relationships of public and private spaces, as well as transitory and brief images of time.

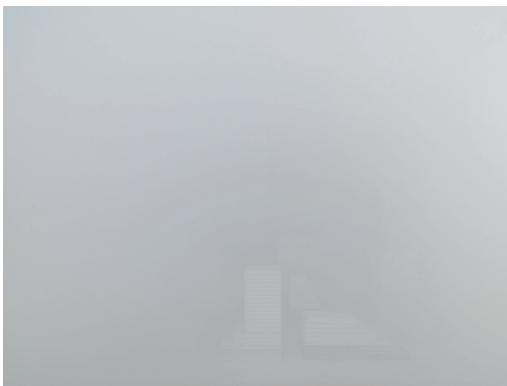
Jerica Zihirl

Prvi čin

Act One

Prostor je ispunjen koreografijom prošlih radova koje je umjetnica stvorila tijekom svoje tridesetogodišnje karijere. No radovi više nisu vidljivi, oni su zapečaćeni, beskompromisno i hermetički, unutar novog umjetničkog objekta. Ovu se gestu može razumjeti kao umjetničino obračunavanje s vlastitom prošlosti – stvaranje retrospektive koja je lišena svoje izvorne funkcije te umjesto toga zauzima izložbeni prostor kao objekt koji najavljuje umjetničine sadašnje i buduće interese.

Space is inhabited by a choreography of leftover images created by the artist over the past thirty years of her career. But the images are no longer visible; they are sealed, uncompromisingly and hermetically, inside a new art object. This gesture can be understood as the artist settling accounts with her past – the creation, as it were, of a retrospective, which, however, is stripped of its original function and instead occupies the exhibition space as an object that announces the artist's current and future interests.



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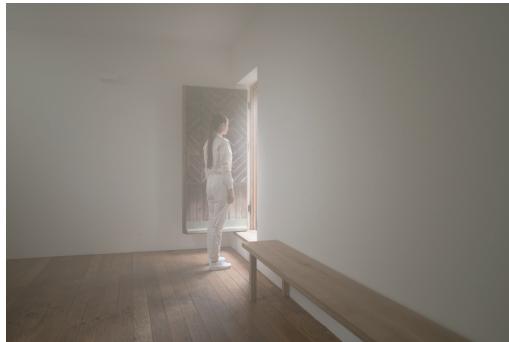


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Drugi čin
Act Two

Umjetnica stavlja iskušto gledatelja na prvo mješto. Prostor, zvuk, svjetlošć i tijelo nisu samo vanjski čimbenici, već nužni elementi za razumijevanje umjetničinog trenutnog promišljanja o umjetničkom djelu. *Prostor* špaja četiri različita „aktivna saštojka“ koja, zauzvrat, uvode gledatelja u međuigru neočekivanih perspektiva i ponovno promišljanje odnosa između tijela i prostora.

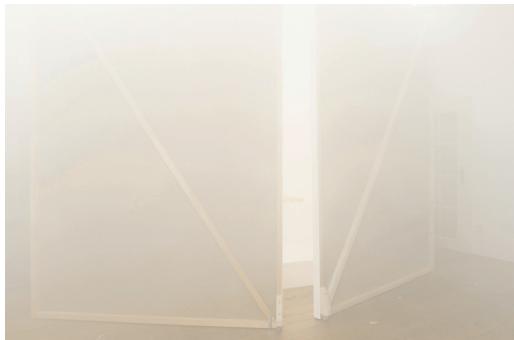
The artist places the experience of the viewer in the foreground. Space, sound, light, and body are not merely external factors, but essential elements for understanding the artist's current thinking about the work of art. Here, Space combines these four separate "active ingredients", which, in turn, lead the spectator into a play of unexpected perspectives and the re-examination of the relationship that develops between body and space.



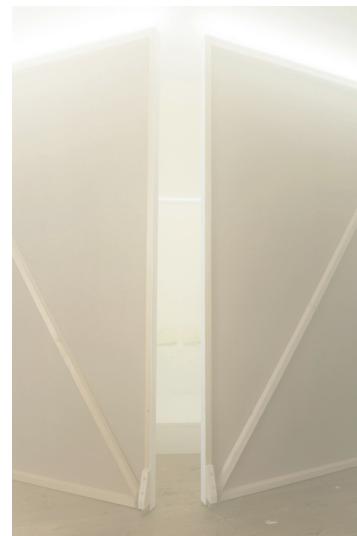
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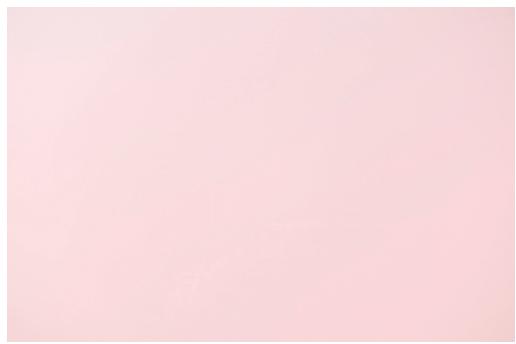


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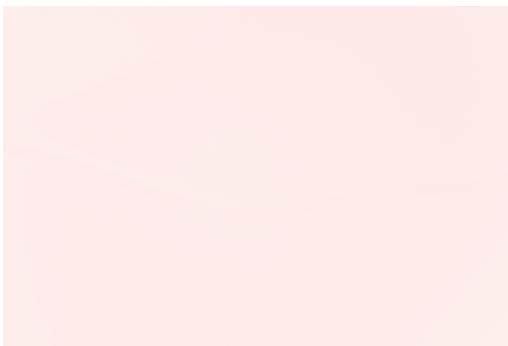




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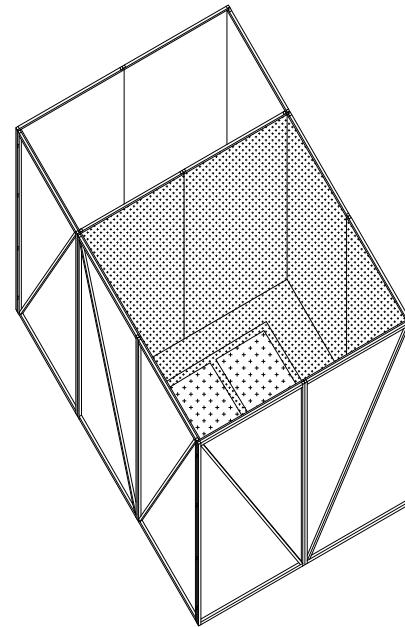
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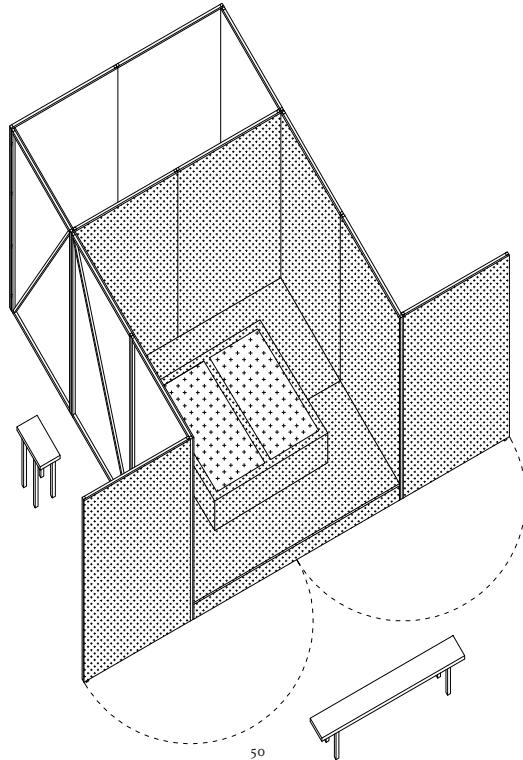


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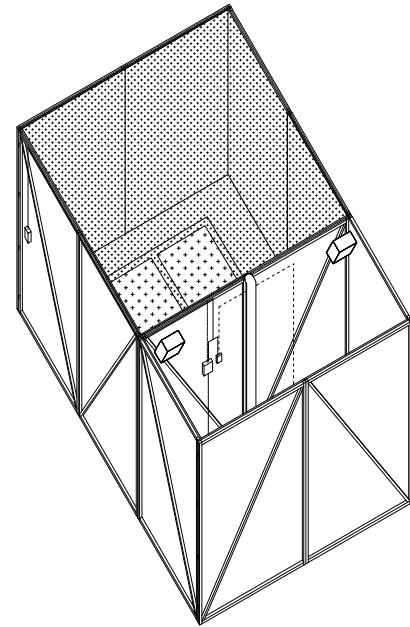
Pokretna arhitektonska struktura, ideja okosnica projekta *Prostor*, nije dizajnirana za određenu lokaciju, već prihvaca ideju štvaranja multipliciranog umjetničkog objekta u obliku povišene strukture gdje se ljudi mogu nasumice sreći i istražiti odnos između tijela i prostora. Takvo umjetničko načelo uvodi metodu dostupnu i razumljivu svakome. Osim štvaranja privlačnih slika mogućih ishoda, umjetnica i suradnici također su predstavili tehničke dodatke i mogućnosti, uključujući i tip arhitektonске konstrukcije, svjetlost, zvuk i dizajn odjeće. Usto, dizajnerske metode dostupne su raznim pojedincima i institucijama za proizvoljno štvaranje i pozicioniranje pokretne prostorne strukture. Fizički je prostor izuzetno važan i ne treba biti shvaćen na apstraktни način. Projekt *Prostor* zasnovan je na štvaranju pokretne arhitektonske strukture na odabranim mjestima, ali ne u smislu posjedovanja nego kontroliranja prostora u ograničenom razdoblju. To privremeno stanje umjetnica je omogućila svakom pojedincu.

A mobile architectural structure, the defining idea of the *Space* project, is not designed for a particular location but rather embraces the idea of creating a multiple in the form of an elevated structure, where people would randomly meet and explore relation between the body and space. This artistic principle introduces a method available and understandable to anyone. Apart from creating attractive images of possible results, the artist and collaborators presented technical add-ons and options, including architectural construction type, light, sound and clothing design. Furthermore, design methods are made available to be used by various individuals or institutions for creating and positioning the mobile space structure however they want. Physical space is extremely important, and does not need to be understood in an abstract way, with the physical aspect pushed into the background. *Space* project is based on the creation of a mobile architectural structure on selected physical locations but not in the sense of owning but rather controlling a space for a limited period of time. A temporary condition made available by the artist to every individual.

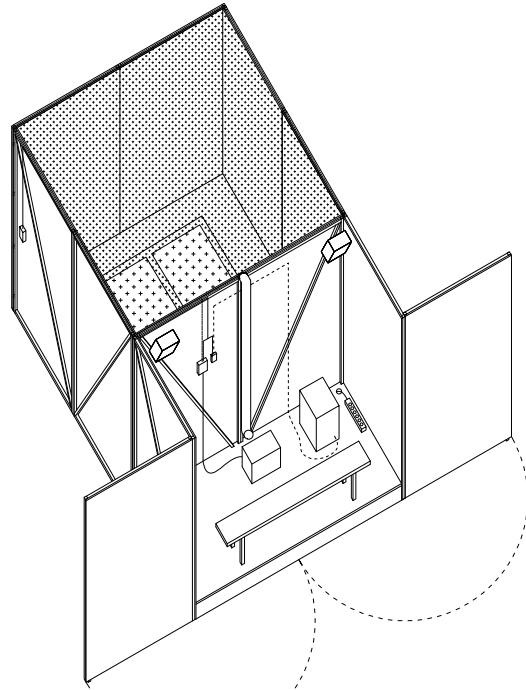




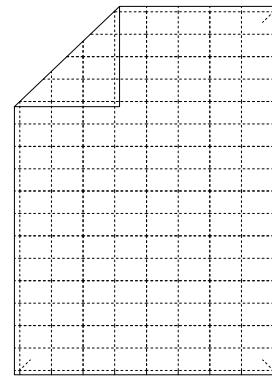
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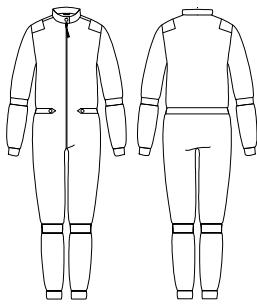
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KUTIJA

Preduvjeti za inštalaciju kutije
- mračno i tiko okruženje

Materijali:

- 20 mm Šperploča
- 40 mm x 40 mm grede (puna bora-vina)
- Bijela epoksidna boja s mat završetkom (samo u glavnoj sobi)

Dimenzije:

- Glavna soba: 360 cm x 360 cm
- Tehnička soba: 360 cm x 180 cm
- Pod obje sobe podignut je 25 cm iznad tla
- Visina kutije = visina stropa - 10 cm

KREVET**Materijali:**

- MDF ploča
- Bijela epoksidna boja s mat završetkom

Dimenzije:

- 200 cm (D) x 200 cm (Š) x 45 cm (V)

KLUPA I STOL**Materijal:**

- Puni hrast, debljine 50 mm (bez vidljivih čvorova)

BOX

Prerequisites for the installation of the box
- dark and quiet environment

Material:

- 20 mm Chip Board
- 40 mm x 40 mm Beams (Solid Pine)
- White Epoxy Paint, MAT finish (Main room only)

Dimensions:

- Area of main room: 360 cm x 360 cm
- Area of technical room: 360 cm x 180 cm
- Floor of both rooms is lifted 25 cm above the ground
- Height of the box = ceiling height - 10 cm

BED**Material:**

- MDF Board
- White Epoxy Paint, MAT finish

Dimensions:

- 200 cm (L) x 200 cm (W) x 45 cm (H)

BENCH AND TABLE**Material:**

- Solid Oak, 50 mm thick (without visible knots)

Dimenzijs:

- Klupa 250 cm (D) x 35 cm (Š) x 45 cm (V)
- Stol 70 cm (D) x 35 cm (Š) x 75 cm (V)

OSVJETLJENJE

Rasvjetna tijela u kutiji:

- LED traka #1:
 - Hladna bijela (6000K-6200K), 120 LED po metru, 15m
 - ALU profili L oblika 45°, bijeli difuzor, 15 m

Led traka #2:

- RGBW, hladna bijela, 60 LED/meter, 15m
- ALU profili, uski, bijeli difuzor, 15 m

Upravljač za svjetlo:

- DMX upravljač sa samostalnim načinom rada i ulazom za upravljanje prekidačem
- mikroSD kartica sa svjetlosnim programom koji je pripremila umjetnica

Priigušivač:

- 24 kanala, min. 3A po kanalu

Napajanje:

- 12V, 400W, pasivno hladeno
- USB 5V, 1A

Dimensions:

- Bench 250 cm (L) x 35 cm (W) x 45 cm (H)
- Table 70 cm (L) x 35 cm (W) x 75 cm (H)

LIGHT

Box luminaries:

- LED strip #1:
 - Cold white (6000K-6200K), 120 LED/meter, 15m
 - ALU profiles; L-shape 45°, white diffuser, 15m

LED strip #2:

- RGBW, cold white, 60 LED/meter, 15m
- ALU profiles; slim, white diffuser, 15m

Light controller:

- DMX controller with stand-alone function and input for switch control
- MicroSD card with light programs provided by the artist

Dimmer:

- 24 channels, min. 3A per channel

Power Supply:

- 12V, 400W, passively cooled
- USB 5V, 1A

Dodatan materijal:
- DMX kabel, 5 m
- 2x DMX konektor, 5-pinski, muški
- Kabel 5G1,5 mm², 30 m
- Kabel 2G1,5 mm², 30 m
- HE10 konektor
- Trakašti kabel, 10 G28AWG, 1m

Rasyjetna tijela na klupi:
- Hladno bijela LED traka, išpod klupe, 20 cm
- Baterije 12V
- Držač za baterije
- Jednosmjerni prekidač
- Kabel 2Go,75mm², 1m

MAGLA

Stroj za maglu:
- Stroj za maglu s DMX upravljačem
- Tekućina za maglu

Cijevi za maglu:
- PVC ili savitljivo crijevo, Ø 140 mm
- Montažni hardver

Dodatan materijal:
- DMX kabel, 5 m
- DMX konektor, 5-pinski, muški
- DMX konektor, 3-pinski, muški

ZVUK

Svirač glazbe:
- Svirač glazbe s vanjskim gumbima
- MikroSD kartica sa zvukovnim

Extra material:
- DMX cable, 5m
- 2x DMX plug, 5-pin, male
- cable 5G1.5mm², 30m
- cable 2G1.5mm², 30m
- HE10 connector
- ribbon cable, 10G28AWG, 1m

Bench luminaries:
- Cold White LED strip, placed under the bench, 20cm
- 12V batteries
- Battery holder
- DC switch
- cable 2Go,75mm², 1m

HAZE

Haze machine:
- DMX controlled fine haze machine
- Haze fluid

Dučiling for haze:
- PVC or flexible hose, Ø 140mm
- mounting hardware

Extra material:
- DMX cable, 5m
- DMX plug, 5-pin, male
- DMX plug, 3-pin, male

SOUND

Player:
- Sound player with external buttons
- MicroSD card with sound

programom koji je pripremila umjetnica

Zvučnici:
- 2.1 sustav, 150W, subwoofer,
2x100W sateliti
- Nosači zvučnika

Napajanje:
- 5V 1A

Dodatan materijal:
- AUX kabel, 5 m

KORISNIČKO SUČELJE

Upravljačka ploča:
- Malo kućište (otprilike 20x15x10 cm)
- 3 pritisna prekidača

Dodatan materijal:
- UTP5 kabel, 15 m

ODJEĆA I TKANINA

Kombinezon za hostesu

Materijal:
- 100% najlon, bijeli
Detalji:
- Zlatni zatvarač, 60 cm
- Elastična traka širine 4 cm
- Zlatni drukeri širine 1,5 cm

programme provided by the artist

Speakers:
- 2.1 system; 150W subwoofer,
2x100W satellites
- Speaker mounts

Power supply:
- 5V 1A

Extra material:
- AUX cable, 5m

USER INTERFACE

Control panel:
- small case (approx. 20x15x10 cm)
- 3x momentary button

Extra material:
- UTP5 cable, 15m

CLOTHING AND TEXTILE

Jumpsuit for the hostess

Material:
- 100% Nylon, white
Details:
- 60 cm long zipper, gold
- 4 cm wide elastic band
- 1,5 cm wide snap buttons, gold

| | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| Pokrivač | Blanket | vače koji su poštenjani na platformi za ležanje | blankets previously positioned on the lying platform |
| Materijal: | Material: | - Zatvaranje vrata | - Closing the door of the box |
| - Izotermalna folija, prevlaka od narančastog aluminija i poliester, 160 x 210 cm, presavijena, zlatna/srebrna | - Recyclable Sheet, aluminum-vaporized polyesther film, 160 x 210 cm, folded, gold / silver | | |
| - 100% poliesterska netkana išpuna, debljine 0,5 cm, bijela | - 100% Polyester nonwoven filling, 0,5 cm thick, white | | |
| - Ljeplilo - 3M Spray Mount | - Fusible - 3M Spray Mount | | |
| ASISTENTICA I GLEDATELJ | ASSISTANT AND SPECTATOR | Drugi dio | Part 2 |
| - 1 asistent | - 1 assistant | - Započinjanje procesa svjetlosti i zvuka, trajanje 5 minuta | - Initiating the light and sound process, duration of 5 minutes |
| - 1 ili 2 gledatelja (u vezi, prijatelji ili obitelji) | - 1 or 2 spectators (in relationship, friends or family) | - Otvaranje vrata | - Opening the door |
| Protokol za asistenta: | Assistant protocol: | - Puštanje gledatelja van | - Letting spectator out |
| Prvi dio | Part 1 | Protokol gledatelja: | Spectator protocol: |
| - Kutija je zatvorena | - Box is closed | | |
| - Pozivanje gledatelja da sjednu na klupu koja se nalazi u paraleli s vratima od kutije, objašnjavanje procedure | - Welcoming the spectator/s to sit on the bench positioned parallel to the box door and explaining the procedure | | |
| - Paljenje stroja za maglu, trajanje je 7 minuta dok se kutija ne ispunjava magmom | - Initiating the haze machine, duration 7 minutes until the box is full of haze | | |
| - Čekanje signala jačeg bijelog svjetla na vratima od kutije | - Waiting for the signal of stronger white light on the door of the box | | |
| - Otvaranje vrata | - Opening the door of the box | | |
| - Puštanje gledatelja u kutiju nakon čega ih se poziva da legnu na pokri- | - Letting spectator/s inside the box and directing them to lie on the | Dio prvi i drugi | Part 1 and 2 |

Petra Varl
Prostor u dva čina

Od samog početka, kroz različite serije i razne medije, umjetnička praksa Petre Varl izgrađena je na prikazima koji se na prvi pogled mogu razumjeti kao reprezentacija strategija popularne umjetnosti koje propituju objekt i kult masovno proizvedenih slika. No u njezinim slikama postoji puno veća prisnošt. Kroz svoju nevjerljivo preciznu osobnu estetiku, Varl značajno umanjuje njihov ideološki naglasak, time dopuštajući gledateljima da se osvrnu isključivo na svoje iskušto rada koji Varl predstavlja. Svakako su njezina najtipičnija djela ona čija se unutarnja logika izražava kroz kontrast između slike i pozadine u koju umjetnica intervenira. Bilo da je riječ o printu, slikama na platnu, crtežima na papiru ili objektima od izrezanog metala, Varlina gešta nije samo službena bilješka trenutačne situacije, već na razini sadržaja simbolizira kontrast štavova i odnosa koji se javljaju unutar društva. Posljedično, njezin je umjetnički izražaj uvek razapet između humora i tuge, ljubavi i boli, crnog i bijelog i, ne manje važnima, tame i svjetlosti.

Varl neumorno istražuje i kritički se osvrće na vlastitu umjetničku prisutnošću već dulje od tri desetljeća; njezino je istraživanje doseglo svoj vrhunac izložbom *Near Light* (hrv. Blizu svjetla) koju su ona i suradnici predstavili u Galeriji Božidar Jakac 2018. godine. Već je ovaj projekt ukazivao na promjene u njezinoj praksi koje su neodvojivo povezane s umjetničnim povratkom trodimenzionalnom prostoru i njezinim intenzivnim proučavanjem materijala koji čine takav prijelaz mogućim. Ako se *Near Light* može tumačiti kao Varlinina podrobna intervencija u simbolički nabijen izložbeni prostor bivše samostanske crkve, onda se *Prostor* (eng. *Space*) – novi projekt koji se ištovremeno održava u Galeriji Rigo i u novoizgrađenom prostoru koji oblikom rezonira s Galerijom Rigo, a nalazi se na Vodnikovom trgu 5 u Ljubljani – može shvatiti kao naštavak istraživanja različitih medija kroz koje Varl stvara potpuno novi totalni prostor. Stoga se *Prostor* može opisati kao ključno djelo koje unutar sebe sadržava umjetničine beskompromisne iskaze o prošlosti dok ištovremeno otkriva smjer njezinih trenutnih umjetničkih interesa. Dok uvodni odlomak ovog teksta sažima Varlinin tridesetogodišnju karijeru u nekoliko rečenica, mora se naglasiti da su njezini trenutačni interesi u potpunosti usmjereni drugamo; to se može vidjeti u napetošći koja nastaje između prvog i drugog čina *Prostora*.

Prvi čin Prostora, koji je uštvari umjetničina intervencija u prazan izložbeni prostor Galerije Rigo, ključan je jer predstavlja osnovu na kojoj Varl stvara novo iskušće posjetitelja. Ako su njezini raniji projekti „zauzimali“ zidove izložbenog prostora raznim dvodimenzionalnim slikama, sadašnji se projekt izravno suprotstavlja toj praksi: ovdje umjetnička djela kao objekti različitih boja „zauzimaju“ samo pod. Službena transformacija umjetničinog prostornog razumijevanja nije u prvome planu, već ključ za razumijevanje projekta leži u umjetničinoj namjeri iz stvorenih objekata. Ti su objekti zapravo radovi preostali iz projekata na kojima je Varl radila tijekom svoje tridesetogodišnje karijere i koji su sad „hermetički“ zatvoreni u međugri novih objekata. Tu se gestu može shvatiti kao umjetničino obraćunavanje s prošlošću – vrsta „retrospektive“, ali ona kojoj je oduzet bilo kakav pogled u prošlost i koja umjesto toga zauzima izložbeni prostor kao novi objekt koji najavljuje umjetničin trenutni interes. Da bismo razumjeli tu gestu, moramo se udaljiti od ideje da je gubitak, prikrivanje ili nedostatak materijalne prisutnosti u umjetnosti nešto tragično i, posljedično, uz nemiravajuće bilo kome što se s time suočava. Važno je biti svjestan da također postoji oblik umjetnosti koji je stvoren da bi s vremenom nestao – što je posljedica njegove prolazne prirode.

Stoga je razumljiva Varlina odluka da, istovremeno kad i u Galeriji Rigo, izlaže drugi čin *Proštor* u novoizgrađenom prostoru u Ljubljani. Drugi čin štavlja iskušto gledatelja – i zajedničko štvaranje tog iskušta – u prvi plan. Tu prostor, zvuk, svjetlošć i tijelo nisu samo vanjski čimbenici, već nužni elementi za razumijevanje Varlinih misli. Okruženje koje štvaraju ta četiri „aktivna saštajka“ uvlači gledatelja u igru neočekivanih perspektivi i otkrivanje prostora koji je u svojoj osnovi neutralan a čini ga pokretna „bijela kocka“ koju je dizajnirao arhitekt Matic Vrabić. Projekt *Proštor* podrazumijeva četiri različita elementa koja ne djeluju međusobno samo na estetskoj razini već se također pojavljuju u „kakofoniji“ koja propituje vezu između tijela i prostora. Varl tako štvara napetošć u prostoru između materijalnog aspekta umjetničkog djela i nečega što postoji na rubu materijalne prisutnosti, između vizualnog i ne-vizualnog. Prvi je element u *Proštoru* trokutašta metalna struktura koja, u jednu ruku, može djelovati kao estetski objekt, dok istovremeno služi kao nešto na čemu posjetitelj može sjediti ili ležati. Važno je istaknuti da ne djeluje samo kao estetski objekt već, unutar čitave „koreografije“, simbolizira otvoreni prostor i mogućnosti koje svjetlošć – kao svjetlošć – ima u prostoru. Drugi element bitan za štvaranje „totalnog prostora“ Varl je razvila u suradnji sa Sašom Kalanom koji je dizajnirao zvuk

za projekt te je to jedan od prolaznih elemenata koji u svojoj nematerijalnosti obuhvaća cijelošć prostora. Istu ulogu igra treći element – svjetlošć, jedan od onih elemenata koji primarno djeluje na vizualnoj razini i koji se, možda, najizravnije dottiće umjetničinih ranijih shvaćanja umjetničkog djela. Međutim, niti taj vizualni element nije drukčiji jer Varl više ne vidi svjetlošć kroz monumentalnošć monokromatskih površina, već kao ono što ih veže i štvara odnose između njih. Baš kao i zvuk, ova neprekidna kompozicija boja u svjetlosti, koja je razvijena u suradnji s umjetnicima Pašcalom Mératom i Janezom Grošeljom, odgovara osobinama dizajniranog prostora. Zvuk i svjetlošć ne oslikavaju prostor već proizlaze iz njegove beskompromisne praznine dok istovremeno pokušavaju izravno komunicirati s drugim aktivnim elementima u prostoru. Četvrti, i možda najvažniji element čitavog projekta je gledatelj – tijelo gledatelja. Bez njega, *Proštor* ne postoji. Baš kao u ranijem projektu *Near Light* (hrv. Blizu svjetla), Varl je zamolila modnog dizajnera Uroša Belantiča da s njom surađuje na jednom dijelu projekta i njegovi dizajni naglašavaju minimalističku strategiju propitivanja odnosa između tijela i prostora. Iako se čini da je *Proštor* u svakom intervalu isti, uvijek se pojavljuje kao nešto u potpunošći novo. Ušprkos tome što je službeni jezik novog projekta sasvim drukčiji od Varlinih ranijih radova,

on je opet nešto što progovara o iskuštu koje prožima prostor između tame i svjetlosti.

Bez imalo sumnje možemo zaključiti da *Prostor u dva čina* (eng. *Space in Two Acts*) predstavlja logičan nastavak, i izravan osvrt, na Varline prethodne interesu. Ona potpuno iznova stvara prostor – prostor u kojem želi u prvi plan staviti iskuštu gledatelja. Iskuštu gledatelja odvija se u suodnosu s prostorom, ali njihovo tijelo kroz svoje prisustvo istovremeno stvara prostor. U *Prostoru* postoji međuvisinost između tijela i prostora, kao i između materijalnih i nematerijalnih aspekata. U trenutku kad gledatelj uđe u bijelu kocku pronaći će se u potpuno novom okruženju u kojem umjetničko djelo i prostor nisu odvojeni od javnosti, tako da i sami gledatelji postaju saštavni dio ove „kakofonije“. Ako se prvi čin projekta u Galeriji Rigo može shvatiti kao izravno promišljanje i simbolička izjava o prošlim trideset godina umjetničine karijere, onda instalacija na Vodnikovom trgu u Ljubljani predstavlja beskompromisni korak prema naprijed u Varlinom istraživanju vlaštitih umjetničkih djela koja više nisu sadržana u monumentalnosti odabrane slike ili boje, već u besstjesnosti trenutnog iskuštva.

Tevž Logar

Petra Varl
Space in Two Acts

From its very beginning, through different series and in various media, the art practice of Petra Varl has been built on images that at first glance may be understood in formal terms as a representation of the pop art strategy for addressing the object and the cult of mass-produced images. But there is much greater intimacy in her images. Through her remarkably precise personal aesthetic, Varl significantly reduces their ideological charge, thus allowing viewers to reflect solely on their own experience of the image she presents. Certainly, her most characteristic works are those whose inner logic expresses a contrast between the image and the background in which the artist intervenes. Whether this is a print, a painting on canvas, a drawing on paper, or a metal cutout, Varl's gesture is not merely a formal record of a certain state of affairs but, on the level of the content, symbolizes contrasts in the attitudes and relationships that arise within society. As a result, her artistic expression is always suspended between humour and sadness, love and pain, white and black, and, not least of all, between darkness and light.

Varl has been tirelessly exploring and reflecting on her own artistic practice for more than thirty years; her exploration reached its peak with the exhibition *Near Light*, which she and her collaborators presented at Galerija Božidar Jakac in 2018. This project already indicated certain concrete formal shifts in her practice that are connected inextricably to the artist's return to three-dimensional space and her more intensive study of the materials that can make this transition possible. If *Near Light* may be seen as Varl's meticulous intervention in the symbolically charged exhibition space of a former monastery church, then we might understand *Space* – a project that takes place simultaneously at both Galerija Rigo and in a newly constructed space (one that resonates in its form with Galerija Rigo) created by Varl and her collaborators in her flat at Vodnikov trg 5, in Ljubljana – as her continued exploration of the different media in which she constructs an entirely new total environment. *Space*, then, may be described as a pivotal work that contains within itself the artist's uncompromising statement on the past even as it reveals the direction of her current artistic interests. For while the opening paragraph of this text summarized Varl's thirty-year career in a few sentences, we must stress that her current interest lies somewhere else entirely; it can be seen in the tension that arises between the first and second acts of *Space*.

The first act of *Space*, which appears as the artist's intervention in the empty exhibition space of Galerija Rigo, is undoubtedly crucial, for it presents the basis on which Varl constructs the new experience of the viewer. If her earlier projects "occupied" the walls of the exhibition space with various kinds of two-dimensional images, the current project directly opposes this practice: here, the artworks, as objects in different colour tones, occupy only the floor. But the formal transformation in artist's spatial understanding is not in the foreground; instead, the key for understanding the project lies in the artist's gesture of the created objects. These, in fact, are a selection of leftover images from projects Varl created over her thirty-year career, which are now "hermetically" sealed in a play of new objects. The gesture can be understood as the artist's settling of accounts with her past – a "retrospective" of sorts, but one that is stripped of any view into the past and instead occupies the exhibition space as a new object that heralds the artist's current interest. To comprehend this gesture, we must distance ourselves from the idea that the loss, concealment, or absence of the material presence of art is tragic and, for this reason, disturbing to anyone who confronts it. We must be aware that there is also an art that is created so as to eventually disappear, due to its ephemeral nature.

All the more logical, then, is Varl's decision to present in a newly constructed space in Ljubljana, simultaneously with the Galerija Rigo event, the second act of her project *Space*, which places the spectator's experience – and co-creation of this experience – in the foreground. Here space, sound, light, and body are not merely external factors, but essential elements for understanding Varl's thought. The environment created by these four "active ingredients" draws the spectator into a play of unexpected perspectives and the discovery of the space, which is in its essence entirely neutral, a mobile "white cube" designed by the architect Matic Vrabič. The project *Space* includes four different elements that do not interact solely on an aesthetic level but appear in a kind of "cacophony" that interrogates the relation between body and space. Varl thus creates a tension in the space between the work's material aspect and something that exists at the edge of material presence, between the visual and the non-visual. The first element that inhabits *Space* is a triangular metal structure which, on the one hand, can act solely as an aesthetic object, while on the other hand it serves as something the spectator can sit or lie on. It is important to note that in its function it is not solely an aesthetic object, but rather, within the whole "choreography", it symbolizes an open space and the possibilities that light – as light – has in the space.

The second element towards the creation of a "total environment" was developed by Varl in collaboration with Sašo Kalan, who designed the project's sound, which is one of the ephemeral elements that, in its (im-)materiality, encompasses the entirety of the space. An identical role is played by the third element – light, which is the only one of these active elements that works primarily on the visual level and, perhaps, most directly touches on the artist's earlier understanding of the work of art. But now even this visual element is different, as Varl no longer understands light through the monumentality of monochromatic surfaces but rather as the thing that binds them together and creates the relationships between them. Just like the sound, this continuous colour composition in light, which was developed by the artist in collaboration with Pascal Mérat and Janez Grošelj, "responds" to the specifics of the designed space. The sound and light do not illustrate the space but instead derive from its uncompromising emptiness; at the same time, they attempt to communicate directly with the space's other active elements. The fourth, last, and perhaps most crucial element of the entire project is the spectator – the spectator's body. Without it, *Space* does not exist. Just as in the earlier project *Near Light*, in this project too, in this segment of it, Varl asked the fashion designer Uroš Belantič to collaborate with her, and his design

again highlights a minimalist strategy for interrogating the relationship between the body and the space. Although it seems that in every interval *Space* remains the same, it always appears as something entirely new. But despite its completely different formal language from Varl's earlier works, the present project is again something that speaks of an experience that permeates the space between darkness and light.

Without the slightest doubt we can say that *Space in Two Acts* represents a logical continuation of, and direct reflection on, Varl's previous interests. She constructs the space completely afresh – a space in which she seeks to bring the spectator's experience to the fore. Spectator's experience is happening in relation to the space, but at the same time their body, through its presence, is creating this space. In *Space* there exists an interdependence between the body and the space, just as between the material and immaterial aspects. The moment the viewer steps into the constructed white cube, they find themselves in a total environment where there is no longer any distance separating artwork, space, and public, so they themselves become a constituent part of this "cacophony". If the project's first act at Galerija Rigo can be understood as a direct consideration and symbolic statement of the past thirty years of the artist's career, then the installation on Vod-

nikov trg in Ljubljana represents an uncompromising step forward in Petra Varl's exploration of her own artwork, which no longer appears in the monumentality of the chosen image or colour, but in the immateriality of the given experience.

Tevž Logar

Act One

Galerija Rigo / Gallery Rigo
Velika ulica/Strada grande 5 a, Novigrad-Cittanova, Hrvatska

Act Two

Stan umjetnice / Artist place
Vodnikv trg 5a, Ljubljana, Slovenija

Suradnici na projektu / Project collaborators

Kustos / Curator
Tevž Logar

Arhitektura i crteži / Architecture and drawings by
Matic Vrabič

Oblikovanje svjetla / Light design by
Pascal Mérat, Janez Grošelj

Oblikovanje zvuka / Sound design by
Sašo Kalan

Oblikovanje kostima / Clothes design by
Uroš Belantič, Tina Verbič

Asistentica umjetnice / Assistant to the artist
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