

Interview with Franc Purg - the 90s Conversation with Dejan Habicht

DH The title of the book in which you give us a grand overview of your work is "*What is it that moves us?*", and there is no doubt that you are among the Slovene artists who moves a great deal in life. You're living in London at the moment, but whenever I write to you, I never know from which corner of the world I'll receive your reply. Most rarely from Celje (home of Franc Purg- ed.). You graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts (ALU) in 1979, but the first exhibition you've put on your curriculum vitae (found on the Ljudmila website) is dated 1990. What were you doing in the interim? No- let's go back even further. What brought you to the Academy in the first place?

FP "*What is it that moves us?*" is a quote that was expressed in one of my videos by Damir, an obscure poet. He did not publish, and just before his death burned most of his work. He wrote poems for one-time-use. He maintained that only the now exists, changing quickly, we changing with it; there is no past nor future. Maybe he was a pessimist. It is precisely those changes that interested me when writing the book you mention at the beginning, a book which tries to pass itself off as a biography. Perhaps it is not insignificant that there are some projects in the book which never actually took place. I don't rank them by order of importance.

...The past! The desire to study fine art brought me to the ALU. I was committed and enthusiastic even as teenager (one year I was the youngest student at the ALU). I was asking certain professors questions as to why Renaissance technical skills were being taught in the time of hight Modernism. It was working from a model. I had in mind then. I don't remember what answers I was given, nor why I wasn't working those ten years after the Academy. Well, I had to have been doing something. I joined street musicians in big cities many times, read, kept track of the "Nova Podoba" (the Slovene manifestation of "wild" subjective figuration movements such as the New Image, Junge Wilde, in other countries, etc) and was sceptical about it; mostly I made a lot of love.

DH In the course of studying, we usually go through a process that is similar to growing up. From dependence on professors, as on parents, to rebellion and reliance on peers. Which professors made the biggest impression on you, whether in a good or bad way? I know of artists who created their best work in conflict or clarification with their professors. And which of your peers? But how does a school which teaches renaissance skills value theory? Did you have anyone to show you a direction, or were you left more to your own devices?

FP Ouch, where is that in my memory! We put bad experiences out of mind, don't we! Well, there did come a day of freedom, when we could do as we wanted. On that happy day there was no live model or antique plaster and my colleagues worked in abstractions. I as well, of course, but very unsuccessfully. I find myself alone in the atelier at the academy, crying to myself and I start throwing clay at the floor, one chunk on the other. And to my great surprise, professor Tihec liked that. That gives me wings and I describe to him my new project, throwing clay all over the atelier, on the floor, the ceiling, the walls, on the plaster figures of my colleagues in the room, and at participating visitors- soft gooey clay. I explain my new concept, that the artist is not the priority member in creating art, that the material is an equally important co-creator, that the two are equal participants in creation and that the material (which in this case was the clay) is not just dead matter.

Well, that didn't go over so well. Maybe because I did not accept artistic work as an autonomous body or structure, as was still expected of us in the eighties.

After that I stubbornly kept on, and exploded or rather cracked eggs – white ellipsoids- of different sizes, up to two meters.

Later, under the mentorship of Milan Butina, I wrote my diploma, *Material as co-creator of artistic work*. Professor Butina opened the way for me to certain writers whom I really did need to read at that time, for example Braco Rotar, F. de Saussure, Pierre Francastel and others. Let's say, the book *Art and Technique*, which I read many times back then.

DH What about your colleagues? When I was studying, sitting in Pod Lipo and Rio and a couple of other bars and cafes near the philosophy campus is where we really went over what we had heard in lectures, connecting the ideas to books, films and theatre we had read or seen. I don't imagine that those at the art academy were doing much differently, or that students were one-on-one with professors, not influencing other, and rushing right home right after school.

FP Unfortunately, we never sat around in bars, except for some older students would go down to the "Šumi", if I remember right. We were very diverse in age; some had already completed some degree prior to ALU. For example my colleague from Pristina, Agam Rudi, was ten years older than I. Not long ago we found each other on Facebook. He's already a tenured professor now.

We were great individualists. But I remember something very touching, which was a big surprise to me. When my son Andraž was born, my schoolmates knitted some wool rompers, gloves and cap for him.

DH Andraž was born while you were still at the academy. Judging by what I know of you, I suppose that he was just a child and not a genetic sculpture or art project. Or am I wrong?

FP Hehe, of course. Andraž was a beautiful infant, and I was in my second year at ALU.

DH If Butina was giving you Saussure, Rotar and Pierre Francastel to read, I would think that he infused you well with theory which was breaking new ground in the field. Which really shows in what you do in art. You mentioned your scepticism observing the "Nova Podoba" during your post-academy period. May I ask that you describe that process? It's about a process, isn't it?

FP Remembering the "Nova Podoba", New Image, which flooded galleries in the eighties and which even lasted for decades in central Europe, with consequences for a great number of young Slovenes, is like talking about last year's snow. A young person wants to be "in" and I have to admit that back then I even tried it a bit, pretty successfully. I even had an exhibition of sculptures, the

first and last of mine to sell. It seems to me that the New Image was cooked up by commercial galleries who wanted a “piece” above all else, something that would hang on a wall or stand on a pedestal, a piece which faces toward the past.

DH The art market in Slovenia today is almost non-existent, but almost no one doubts that a market is a constitutive part of the art system, so there is a definite effort to establish one. MZK (Ministry of Culture) supports entrance into art fairs, which have become an exceptionally important platform for the presentation of the fine arts, from the nineties to today. This is in keeping with the trend to commodify the arts. Actually I'm interested in your opinion on this: have art works always been “commodities”, but we just did not use the expression, pretending that we believe that art is a “sublime mission which carries an obligation to fanaticism”. (A description of art by Slovene musical artists Laibach in a well-known and controversial television interview from 1983- ed.)

FP Of course art works have always been and still are substances or products to sell, exchange, lease, use as propaganda, and so on. Still, we have to make the distinction of whether an art work is in servitude to the system or market, or, to the contrary, the market and system take an active interest in the art. Let me comment on what you wrote; “MZK supports entrance into art fairs, which have become an exceptionally important platform for the presentation of the fine arts, from the nineties to today. This is in keeping with the trend to commodify the arts.” The MZK experiment has been going on for a good fifteen years, enough time to start talking about results, if not of success, and not be talking of a non-existent art market in Slovenia.

The division into a Slovene and a European market doesn't make sense. It reminds me of the dual price system on the Adriatic for foreign and domestic tourists, during the time of the former Yugoslavia.

It is odd that we already had the first AAF (Art Antiques Fair) at the commercial exhibition hall in Ljubljana. I participated as well, which I did a few times then blew off. It was very encouraging that there were entrepreneurs at those fairs ten years before the European trend and I can imagine, what might the art market in Slovenia be like today? With AAF maybe being one of the leading art fairs in central Europe today.

To say more about art fairs, I've been closely following, for example, the Frieze Art Fair, which started as early as 2003. I highly doubt that that is the place for the presentation of fine artworks. It is an excellent place, though, for business with artists who more or less adapt to art fair buyers. By the way, last autumn they sent tickets a few days prior to the event. Probably not out of love or the need for art works, don't you think?

DH It's been a little less than fifteen years, because MZK did not implement their policies for supporting participation in the fairs at the same moment the fairs started happening. But that short delay is not to be blamed for the state of the art market in Slovenia.

The prevailing opinion about art in the period of Yugoslavian self-management socialism is that it lived without an art market, and didn't need one. That it was even beneath the artist to put some nominal value on their work. But you said you successfully sold an entire exhibition of your sculptures. Is it a secret to whom you sold? And you bring up the commercial gallery, in the plural. I know that at that time there were some antique dealers who were able to sell some old works to the nouveau riche now and then, and about the Equrna gallery, which began as a "permanent working association of independent cultural workers" and pretended not to be a commercial gallery.

FP Talking about my exhibition in the last decade of the former Yugoslavia- I sold the entire thing, don't have a single piece left, and even received critical recognition, with representative pieces exhibited in the April 1986 Work of the Month exhibition in Cankarjev Dom (Cankar Hall, largest cultural centre in Slovenia-ed.) That exhibition was a purely experimental project: how to get into the Slovenian, or to be more precise, Yugoslavian art system. My story of success was in reality more a story of poignant realization, and disappointment.

I sold individual pieces to private collectors and to two galleries, which have them in their collections. At the conclusion of the project I could have continued with variations and lived comfortably a good many years on sales, but I made a radical break and began something completely different, to the amazement of some professional colleagues.

DH Aha! You blew off a golden opportunity. And if you don't have a bread, than just eat "*potica*" (slovenian delicious queen of festive dishes). Could you describe the "survival tactics" of artists in the nineties.

FP Between the ages of seven and fourteen I lived on my father's farm where we produced everything . The farm consisted of vineyards, woods, orchards, fields of grain, livestock, two gardens and so on. The concept he'd come up with was to have some crop every year; for example apples one year, pears the next. The economist Eugene Fama won a Nobel laureate in 2013 for a theoretically fleshed-out but very similar model. In short, a model of survival in which I grew up and matured.

DH After Yugoslavia disintegrated, when Slovene business lost the implicit Yugoslavian market, when we began to learn the ABC's of capitalism, it became clear that form *is* important. And who knows form better than artists do? Advertising agencies blossomed, taking products which weren't necessary to advertise before and ennobling them with symbolic value. Agencies recruited directors and musicians, architects, photographers and painters. ALU introduced design courses. And artists who didn't earn enough for bread with their main work could earn enough for biscuits with design. So they could do crop rotation between apples and pears.

You live in London but you're well connected to your native environment. How about in the nineties? How where the opportunities for working? What were the conditions for production and presentation?

FP Since you brought that up, in the nineties there were some advertisements with greater artistic potential than art in museums and galleries, which were mostly tied down to "the real thing" art.

Just remember Olivier Toscani and his advertising campaign for Benetton, which raised dust and outrage in Catholic countries, including Slovenia. For example, that bloodied shirt of a dead soldier on a jumbo billboard, just some hundreds of kilometres from the massacre at Srebrenica at that.

And the slogan of the art system, that art is what is in galleries and museums, was both an ideology and a method of control. That really irritated me, and I instituted the “*Vstop Prost* “ 1999 (Admission Free) festival, which avoids the system, a festival which operates to this day in Celje, inviting artists and “non-artists” from the national sphere and foreign countries. It functions mostly without government support. The projects happening in *Admission Free* are very low-impact, no-budget. From the outset, the festival was based on participatory practices and approaches; it was inspired by the book *Artificial Hells*. Pardon me, of course that book came out quite a bit later.

And if you call “the real thing” art “an apples”, then I recommend a pears and “*potica*”.

As for the second part of the question: in addition to public co-production in Slovenia being better, more inclusive and less elitist than today, hardly comparable to the last ten years, the key role in production in the nineties was played by the Soros foundation. The crisis conditions of production and self-employment in Slovenia started, of course, some years before the bankruptcy of financial moguls Lehman Brothers in 2008. At that time I was in Santa Fe and carefully followed the media coverage of the end of the world.

A bit more on presentations in the nineties, installations for example: I hadn't intended to exhibit *What makes me look like this?* in Slovenia, but in expressly Catholic countries such as Poland, Ireland, Croatia. I succeeded in doing so in Poland and Ireland, but not in Croatia. “*Majski vrh*” (May Peak) was installed, with twenty tons of wheat poured out in an obsolete but still active EMO factory for enamelled containers. The exhibition lasted only several hours on a Saturday morning, when the giant machines had gone silent. I can still remember the strong scent of wheat, motor oil, the droning of the machines, the sweaty clothes, as we set things up from Friday to Saturday. The performance *Where is the line?* was not held in the Kapelica gallery, even though it fit in with the direction Kapelica was going at the time, but in the Škuc gallery. At the Ujazdowski center for contemporary art in Warsaw, *What makes me look like this?* was brutally censored. I incurred a serious lawsuit in court due to the performance *Where is the line?* in the Škuc gallery.

That is, I didn't think of the present has "putting it on display", rather it was my statement, if not a political gesture.

DH I'd like for us to be able to sketch out the spirit of that time in this talk, too. That's why I'm interested in knowing which were key events for you in the nineties? Which books were you reading, which films were you watching? What kind of trauma did you experience due to the wars of our closest neighbours, wars among our former brothers? What artistic presentations, events, and artists did you find noteworthy, and which inspired you, whether due to enthusiasm or rejection?

FP In the mid-nineties I first scored a quarterly residence in Glasgow, Scotland, the third largest city in the UK, with a strong industrial past and, at that time, an active contemporary art scene. Unlike Edinburgh, which fosters traditional arts, to excess with the Edinburgh festival: opera, symphonic music, and all that kind of "beautiful singing".

I fell right into the scene, living as I did with three artists who took me right away to events. At that time the May Festival was going on as well, with daily performances, actions, and a great many videos and installations. I enjoyed it a lot and wished that there were something like that in Slovenia, too. I established good connections with some artists and did some exchange exhibitions, such as *Art from Ruksack*, and a number of things afterwards.

On the way back home I stayed in London for a good month, and got to see live the opportunistic Damien Hirst and the eccentric and frank Tracey Emin.

I read what others were reading. In London at that time I bought for example some books by Helen Blavatsky.

There were a great many good films in the nineties, but the first that comes to mind is *Natural Born Killers*.

Back home in Slovenia, I was impressed at that time by Krpan's program in Kapelica.

The fratricidal war in Bosnia left me feeling helpless. I bought my first PC and digital camera.

But as recent as all that was, it seems to me that the nineties were a hundred years ago.

DH The nineties were the period in which Slovenia emancipated itself from Yugoslavia and was yet subordinate to Europe. From 1970 to 1990, the Cultural Organization of Slovenia, with six employees if I remember correctly, took care of culture at the republic level. After independence, when Slovenia became a country with its own anthem, seal, flag, military and capitol, the Ministry of Culture came into being as well, which employed 129 people as of 1.3.2012. Sure, a nice achievement as far as reducing unemployment, but what most interests me is how you would describe the changes in conditions for production and presentation in the nineties?

FP It's true that it was a nice achievement as far as reducing unemployment in Slovenia, which is no small thing; uncle google tells me that last year, in 2014, MZK (Ministry of Culture) employed 208 persons. If statistics make for the biggest lies, then I have a hard time imagining... will that number will be so high some day and will the money, which every one of us in Slovenia contributes to culture through taxes, just run around in circles and end up in MZK for salaries?

No, that can't happen, because we have too many institutions which have "culture" in their mission descriptions, and therefore can't survive without government funding. Just museums and galleries number one hundred and thirty-four in Slovenia, and a new puppet museum just opened in Lendava- pardon me, in Ljubljana.

In a debate with our niece, a cultural anthropologist and great lover of museums, I brought up the strong Slovenian love of the past, of museums to be more precise- but she retorted that Switzerland has more than 350. Switzerland has a population of eight million, while the population of Slovenia has been usually put at two million, so it's a simple calculation to see that Slovenia surpasses Switzerland in this case. Then I asked her if she knew when women in Switzerland won the right to vote. Before I even finished the question, I fired off the answer: 7 February 1971.

Of course I was alluding to the cause-and-effect connection between the state of human rights, and the government, or official policy, concept of arts and culture today.

From all of that, it is probably clear that there is nothing left over for the production of new art projects, which is a reflection of the times we live in.

The consequence of that concept is "Sunday art", where the artist works five days a week on an assembly line, waits tables, or, if they're lucky, teaches in some school, and when his children fall asleep in the evening, sits down at the computer and tiredly creates a new project which some curator got him interested in and invited him to do.

But it wasn't always like that. At the beginning of the nineties, when for the first time in history the nation printed its own currency, we find that the symbols of the nation printed on the cash are portraits of Slovene artists: Prešeren, Plečnik, Cankar, Kobilica, Jakopič and others. I highly doubt that there has ever been anything else like that in the world. All those artists were contemporary artists in the time, and their art was strongly tied to the time in which they lived, reflecting it as well, and not some romantic nostalgia for the past.

DH From the nineties, I also remember that Hollywood productions no longer came to our cinemas with a ten-year delay, that there was a growing interest in astrology, mysticism and religion, and that exhibitions had titles in English. In 1996, you upset the Polish public with your installation *What Makes Me Look Like This?* at the *For Your Eyes Only* exhibition in Center for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski in Warsaw, and earned a complaint to the Commission for Religious Affairs in the EU.

FP If you exhibit outside your home country, as I was saying earlier, you simply title your project in English. All of us at the time wanted to move outward. At the Center for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski in Warsaw, they heavily censored installations, including the excellent *Piss Christ* photo by Andres Serrano, the year after I was there. The Poles at the time were drunk with joy

about the first Polish pope, Wojtyla, and at the press conference in Warsaw the reporters didn't want to hear about any censorship.

In the Triskel Art Centre in Ireland, they even printed posters with photos from the installation. Of course the posters were torn down in the night. But there were nuns at the opening, who naturally wanted to talk to me. They were very friendly, but a reporter from some radio station was not. Then I learned that there had been a request to shut down the exhibition before it finished.

At home afterwards, I exhibited in Kapelica. Nothing shocking happened in the media, but they gave my mother some worry and interrogated her at the vicarage...My mom is going every Sunday in the church.

Rode became the Archbishop of Ljubljana a year later, in 1997, and stirred up the infamous campaign against Strelnikoff in 1998.

Soon after the exhibitions in Poland and Ireland, the Benetton factory sent an offer to buy the installation, which didn't pan out.

It's still not clear to me what drove me to make the *What makes me look like this?* installation. There'll also be time to do that.

DH What about "*Pohujšanje*" *Outrage*. That is actually the title of the polished crossed Christ, from whom you took the loincloth, and equipped with the gospel of Mark? While the Christ in *What makes me look like this?* had been roughly hewn, hairy and virile, the Jesus of *Outrage* was effeminized. That's the piece I like best of your work in photographs on laminated billboards. A real museum piece. Is it in some collection? And of course: is that one of your works that kicked up as much dust as *What makes me look like this?*

FP

43 And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

44 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched,

45 And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

46 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched,

47 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire:

The Gospel of Mark 9, 43- 47

A very inspiring part of the gospels for the project named *Outrage* and "*Obrušen*" *Sanded* (polished,)

No, the Inquisition didn't chop off my head or hand, hehe.

DH You were working on the Christs a bit later than the middle of the nineties (1996-1997), but you entered the decade eighties with "*LesResRaketa*" *TrueClueRocket* or *Wahrwarrakete* in 1989 *

Now that you've told me about how as a student you were engaged in the idea of the material as co-author, and presented this idea in your thesis, I'm curious as to how much of that theme endured eleven years later? We can quickly spot the wood and the rocket that are found in the title of the installation, but the "real" is not so clearly defined. It may be linked to the notion that the truth can be a "thing" (*res-cogitans: res-extensa*) or on something that hasn't occurred to me. Am I mistaken, or was that your first installation? First you did sculptures and of course took note of how you'd place them in an exhibition space, but with *TrueClueRocket* you tackled the entire "box". The installation was constructed out of sculpture, video and performance.

FP No, you are not mistaken. It was the first installation within the art system, if we don't count juvenile works and performances in the attic at home, or performance for nobody with soft clay in the ALU. (Academy for art)

So, *TrueClueRocket* there's nothing left of that project. The white object was infected with mould in the Ptuj castle, the iron was consumed by rust in an unsuitable warehouse, the third, rotating, object was taken by Yugoslavia and is somewhere in Serbia, if it

still exists. The leather outfit lacquered white, which looked a lot like a rocket, was turned by a fire into a pile of stinking ash, which I've kept. Twenty-two years down the road, the archival video of the performance, on professional Beta, doesn't show the plexi-glass ball which was endlessly rotating and revolving at the performance. There's just VHS tape remaining, which I bet will disintegrate in a few years, after having been played in exhibitions a thousand time.

DH The next piece was "*Majski Vrh*" *May Peak* in 1994. It was an imposing installation, which was already breaking out of the "white box" to begin with. It was more a happening than an exhibition, even though you worked out a form through exhibition in the gallery. I only saw the installation at the 85'95 exhibition at the Modern Gallery in 2004. But why and how did you diverge from classic sculpture in this installation? And you mentioned that *TrueClueRocket* was the first within the system, but I'm interested in how you built a system?

FP I love the thesis developed by John Onians in the book *Neuroarthistory*, that art history has not developed linearly, but cognitively; in a way similar to the conscious and unconscious processes in our brain, which respond to and create our mental abilities and therefore the results of work, behaviour, decisions, and so on.

Twenty years earlier, in the mid-eighties, Hans Belting put out a book with the title *The End of the History of Art?* Sure, talking about the end of anything is always getting ahead of yourself. Just the same, the book doesn't talk about the death of art so much as the end of concepts and the popular conception of the development of art as some meaningful and progressive historical sequence. For example, post-modernism happens after modernism as part of a logical evolutionary paradigm.

I'm bringing this up because you asked me how I diverged from classical sculpture in the installation. That never happened, but it might be interesting to ask, how did I diverge from autonomous "classical sculpture", as you call it? The answer is: with great difficulty. I remember that even before *TrueClueRocket* I felt a great relief, even more so in following projects. I had a fantastic

time putting up *May Peak* in the middle of the giant machines in the EMO factory.

Once again I have to bring up my unhappy academy experience. Even the open-minded professors such as Slavko Tihec and Milan Butina, understood, practised, and taught artistic work as an autonomous unity. That means independent and living in its own world.

But ancient Greek sculpture, which is what we usually mean by “classical sculpture”, was never autonomous. It was always part of some function, architectural for example, or part of some ritual, propaganda, and so on. When we see it in the Louvre or some other museum, though, it has been torn from its context, from its primary placement so appears autonomous to our eyes.

Autonomous work is an invention of modernism.

Watching children in the sandbox, something I have many opportunities to do these days, I remember my own early childhood, building houses, rivers, bridges, fields, rockets, airports, from piles of sand. We used anything we could find at hand as well as sand. And then we would all jump into the sandbox and kick everything, saying that we were bombing the city. Isn't that a child's installation and action? I spent hours and hours with those long strings...

And my first experience with art was the baroque church in small village Leskovec, Haloze, east part of Slovenia. All its walls and the cupola are painted. Huge painted sculptures of saints in supernatural proportions, especially at the altar, where they inspire the fear of God. Those are not “classical sculpture”, but a complete installation, a real baroque “Gesamtkunstwerk.”

And another thing is, *May Peak* was exhibited in the Modern gallery in Ljubljana only as a document of the original installation, on very large-scale prints, with just some model houses alongside. To this day I'm grateful to Igor Zabel for accepting my proposal for

this realization, because the installation itself was impossible to repeat.

DH Does that mean that with that installation you were returning to your first interest? The world of a child's imagination works through empathy. Were you challenging the limits of empathy of *Where is the Line?***

FP Yes and no. Once I heard or read in an interview with a prominent Slovenian painter who talked about ideas, how she sought them and so on. Very interesting! Well, he mentioned that the only ideas which interested him were those ideas which can be pictured on canvas or paper... ooph, what a shame, I thought, because she is a good artist and hardly older than I. Some artists who are quite a bit younger than I think along the same lines; they still believe in the autonomy of the media, especially when it comes to painting.

Well, I try to realize every idea which interests me, taking it first to heart without asking myself whether it's appropriate for a statue, installation, photograph, video performance, action, interaction, or whatever. I think that all us active artists in the nineties thought similarly about media; we were unburdened and didn't put material first, or more specifically, make our way via distinguishing between different media.

And to the second question the answer is no!, No, twenty years ago empathy didn't interest me, especially in *Where is the line?*, nor did vegetarianism. It is quite strange that vegetarianism didn't interest me, which I find very telling, for, being a vegetarian myself brought mitigating circumstances to the court in connection with this performance.

Just before the performance, the curator of Škuc at that time, Gregor Podnar even though they had invited me and knew about everything in advance, tried to convince me that we should retain only the table richly loaded with meat, as some really thought that was already a performance, and hold the second part of the performance in a slaughterhouse or some other hidden place, and stream video from there, or something along those lines. But my key idea was the question of what happens in extreme cases, when we turn something around, demolish the established order, in this case a space which is social in name and intent? Sure, everything was in the context of social criticism from the position of

an angry youth. At that time I was deeply disturbed by the fact that it was perfectly normal to hide asylums, slaughterhouses, intensive farming of livestock, and so on, from us, and cover them up with “that’s doesn’t concern us”, or hide them behind the pretext of business secrets.

I developed a similar idea a year earlier in the performance *Prima Vista* in the Umetnostna Galerija in Maribor, and two hours later in KIBLA, also in Maribor. Most of the visitors didn't even know that it was a performance.

DH I admit, it never dawned on me to look for a connection between *Where is the line?* and *Prima Vista*. But it can be done if we take hypocrisy as the leitmotiv. On one hand (in *Where is the line?*) we grease ourselves up with meats and close our eyes to the bloody scene which is prerequisite to every salami; on the other hand (in *Prima Vista*) we casually digest art-historical gibberish, which screws over such a wide variety of authors and media with its cliched truisms. But hypocrisy *is* a question of moral stances.

To finish things up, let's return to the situation in the nineties: the artist, who throughout the era of autonomous art was understood to be a converter of “higher” ideas into mundane materials, became a vulnerable worker, and the work of art a commodity dependent on the dictates of fashion in a capricious market. Even in Slovenia, where we can hardly speak of an art market, involving as it did the exchange of a work of art for some number of SIT (do you remember the first post-independence Slovenian monetary unit?), but we can still talk about the flow of symbolic capital. Which also has an effect of course. Beneficial or detrimental, but still, an effect. In 1991 a law was passed which permitted the establishment of limited companies, entrepreneurship, companies, institutions... What's more, an “independent creator in the field of culture” could ask the Ministry of Culture to allocate a portion of public funds for the implementation of an art project, although they had to count on a significantly small amount of money than if they'd applied as an “institution”. On paper, it looks like this led to an explosion of non-governmental organizations; in fact, the law was forcing artists as individuals to objectify themselves as “organizations”, although the “organization” often consisted of but one member. With these we accepted the capitalist dictum that a human is but a production unit with an exchange value.

You, however, remained “Franc Purg”. From the times of socialist Yugoslavia, we were accustomed to work through established

institutions, because it was not easy to establish new ones. In the nineties you were a member of ZDSL (Association of Slovenian Fine Artists). Could you describe the structure and function of this organization at that time?

FP The ZDSL, the association, is a sad story from the dawn of the new millennium. To this day I don't know why I decided to run for president of an art council. Okay, there was some outside support, but I doubt that if that was prevalent in my decision. Three of the regularly employed members ran up a huge financial loss at the time. There was an initiative to take all this to a court of auditors. I am still very disappointed that this did not happen, in spite of many requests and pleas being made to these three employees. One of these three is now a state secretary in the Ministry of Culture and decides who gets funding and who does not... At that time I gave a lot of thought as to whether I'd maintain connections, and if I did, in what form. Afterwards we led the association on a volunteer basis with Irena Brumec as president; I led the gallery, more specifically, the art council. But, that's already about the new millennium; we're interested in the nineties.

You already commented on why there was such an explosion in the growth of NGOs in Slovenia, and on why artists began to make corporations of themselves, and I agree with you. I could add more, but let's let sociologists, culturologists, and such analyse the nineties, with this subject: how to build up a Slovenian elite!

In Celje, we established a group called *The Group*. We wrote a manifesto and carried out some high-profile actions. We heated up the local atmosphere good and well with the first campaign, a round-table with the title *I Hate Celje*. With another action, "*Predlogi*" - *Proposals*, we appeared on the cultural news on national television, right after such things as the Prešeren prize winners, and once again kicked up a lot of dust, especially from the local elderly population.

The Group was flexible. You could be a member for just one project or action, and there were many very different people (lawyers, artists, city planners, journalists, security guards, park rangers and so on) with the intent of changing things, making things happen, building things.

I'm very proud of the house the The Group built in the middle of the woods for a non-conformist local "weirdo" artist.

The action, or project, dates back to initial discussions in the local community of Pečovnik, on the outskirts of Celje, where Borut Holland has lived his whole life. The villagers wanted to kick him out and declare him a dangerous madman in the mid-nineties, because he was a thorn in the side of the small village community; for example, he would collect wild mushrooms in the nude, practice yoga naked on some tree, or swim in the Savinja river when the water was -15 degrees Celsius.

The next big problem was how to get an official formal permission to build a house in private woods. And third, how to do this without money, because he simply didn't have any. I was very happy that the artist Jože Barši allowed his art project *House*, which had been exhibited in a gallery, to be recycled. We gathered a great deal of material from dumps, and Borut Holland was also very engaged in collecting material. The artist Patrick Bloomer from Belfast, during his artistic residence in Celje, made a pedal-driven generator, so that Holland could have light and read on long winter nights. We dug a well in the close vicinity, which does not dry up even in the heaviest droughts.

Free Admission is another “trademark” project. It is a festival which from the beginning has been guided by the idea, or, more precisely, by the question, of whether an artist can work outside of institutions and galleries, as mentioned earlier in this debate. Paradoxically, it was the artists themselves in the sixties who founded the Fine Arts salon in Celje, running it themselves for some years, and only afterwards did they hand it over to professional curators, and thereby to the municipal budget. The second goal is to get into public spaces and respond to people's reactions, to include them and their own power if necessary, and to react to social conditions and feelings. We immediately had the spontaneous understanding that we had to turn to more contemporary expressive media, which require a different conception of art. Let me just mention something that happened at the beginning.

For example, Terezia Bastelj, a traditional painter did her first performance, in keeping with a narrative mode. Adolf Mljač, also a committed painter in his senior years, made his first installations, and fresh winds tauten sails in the city. Željko Opačak conducted a very interesting intervention in a public space, hidden from sight. He poured sweet gelatin over his head and let ants eat it. I, for example, was talking to people on the streets about a public playground for children, which the city did not have at that time,

except for some rusty swings, which I could have included without problems into the current exhibition in RIBA, in London: *The Brutalist Playground*.

So I made a *dinosaur* swing for children and installed it in a local park in Celje without permission. Today there is a playground.

To conclude with some questions which have occurred to me while writing this: can a decade, in this case the nineties, be a unit which we can debate about as some specific age, different to the previous decade and distinct from the decade it will turn into? Isn't a decade more than a number of years which we can chop up into winter, spring, summer, fall, and even smaller units, let's say to the grotesque: the seconds of the nineties? I haven't heard anyone yet calling the first ten years of the new millennium the hundreds or the tens. What exactly happens between one decade and another- we had the opportunity fifteen years ago to experience the jump from the twentieth to the twenty-first century, which marks the beginning or end of something? If nothing ended and nothing began, if the the millennium bug didn't even happen, then what of all this?

London, 2. July 2015

* After thirty years, 2019 a theoretician VÍT HAVRÁNEK choose *TrueClueRocket* it's that one of reference project for new edition of triennial U3.

** *Where is the line?* was 2017\18 a research project of Francisco Tomsich , Uruguay and Tatiana Kocmur, Argentina.
