

THE MEDIA ARE
IN THE AIR,
BENEATH THE EARTH,
ABOVE WATER,
WITHIN FIRE

Exhibition:

THE MEDIA ARE IN THE AIR, BENEATH THE EARTH, ABOVE WATER, WITHIN FIRE / MEDIJI SU U VAZDUHU, POD ZEMLJOM, NAD VODOM, U VATRI

Duration: 10/5–3/6/2018

Artists: ANNA DOT (ESP), REGINA DE MIGUEL (ESP), VAHIDA RAMUJKIĆ (SER), KOMŠILUK IZ DETELINARE / DETELINARA'S NEIGHBORS (SER), KUDA.ORG (SER) & MIREIA SALLARÈS (ESP), KATARINA ŠEVIĆ (SER/HU), LEA VIDA KOVIĆ (SER)

Curators: Núria Solé Bardalet, Oriol Fontdevila, Gordana Nikolić, Sanja Kojić Mladenov

Designer: Mirjana Dušić-Lazić

Exhibition Producer: Jovan Jakšić

Multimedia Manager and Photographer: Marko Ercegović

Technical Support: Pajica Dejanović, Đorđe Popić

Production: Muzej savremene umetnosti Vojvodine

In collaboration with: Fundació Antoni Tàpies

The exhibition was organized as a continuation of the cooperation between the two partner institutions on Per Muse project supported by the European Commission through the Creative Europe program.

Published by:

Muzej savremene umetnosti Vojvodine / Museum of Contemporary Art of Vojvodina
21000 Novi Sad, Dunavska 37 • office@msuv.org • www.msuv.org

Executive Publisher: Radovan Jokić

Editors-in-Chief: Gordana Nikolić, Sanja Kojić Mladenov

Texts by: Núria Solé Bardalet, Oriol Fontdevila,
Gordana Nikolić, Sanja Kojić Mladenov

Translation and Proofreading: Novica Petrović

Design: Mirjana Dušić-Lazić

Photographs by: The artists

Print : Signum Print run : 100

CIP - Каталогизacija y publikaciji
Biblioteka Maticе српске, Нови Сад

7.038.53(497.11+460)"20"(083.824)

The MEDIA are in the air, beneath the Earth, above water, within fire / [texts by Núria Solé Bardalet, Oriol Fontdevila, Gordana Nikolić, Sanja Kojić Mladenov ; design Mirjana Dušić Lazić]. - Novi Sad : Museum of Contemporary Art of Vojvodina, 2018 (Novi Sad : Signum). - 16 str. : ilustr. ; 14 x 21 cm

Tiraž 100.

ISBN 978-86-6333-049-8

a) Мултимедијална уметност - Србија - Шпанија - 21. в. - Изложбени каталози
COBISS.SR-ID 323238663

Núria Solé Bardalet, Oriol Fontdevila, Gordana Nikolić, Sanja Kojić Mladenov

THE MEDIA ARE IN THE AIR, BENEATH THE EARTH, ABOVE WATER, WITHIN FIRE

The group exhibition entitled *The Media Are in the Air, beneath the Earth, above Water, within Fire* represents a curatorial selection of the artistic practices and media tactics of artists from Catalonia/Spain and Vojvodina/Serbia. The exhibition was organized as a continuation of the cooperation between the two partner institutions Museum of Contemporary Art of Vojvodina and Fundació Antoni Tàpies on *Per Muse* project supported by the European Commission through the *Creative Europe* program. The exhibition presents current practices from two geographic regions that ponder the relationship between the world of nature and the world of technology, and deal with issues within the framework of the ongoing discussions on the concept of *new* and *old* media, the use of technology and engaged media tactics within the context of contemporary art.

The starting premise of the exhibition is that the natural and technological worlds are not so divided and different, but that those are infrastructures that enable human life to survive and develop. The theorist John Durham Peters maintains that digital media are just a continuation of the early practices connected with the establishment of civilisation such as mastering fire, developing a calendar, reading the stars, creating language and establishing religions. Viewed from this perspective, the media do not represent just mere surroundings, they are elements that make up man's world. Thus art, among other things, provides space for research and posing questions about what the media are and how they form the basis of our interactions with the world around us. The Media Are in the Air, beneath the Earth, above Water, within Fire.



АЗБУЧНИК
ALPHABET OF **ДЕТЕЛИНАРЕ**
А

Detelinara's neighbors, kuda.org & Mireia Sallarès
Alphabet of Detelinara, March 2018

Oriol Fontdevila, Núria Solé Bardalet

MEDIA IS IN THE AIR

Media as a concept is turning back to the basics: contemporary artists have definitely left behind former visions such as the formalist-informed *medium self-specificity* or the latter so-called *New Media*. The current approach rather brings into focus the media capacity to perform, that is to say: the ability of each medium to develop relations and to sustain environments, to produce action and to confer agency; *to mediate*, in a word.

There is also a novelty concerning the media's material condition: an insight into the heterogeneity that constitutes each medium discloses a high diversity of realities, which defies any possibility of idealization, and also cancels the idea of *immateriality* that was linked with the digital media. Related to this, durability turned out to be the central point of research into the media, with a growing interest of artists

in recovering the media once declared dead, obsolete or just far away from the obsolete ideas of progress.

Debates such as these are embedded in *Like a Drop of Water in the Palm of One's Hand* (2016-2018), a long-term project that the Catalan artist Mireia Sallarès has been developing for years, taking Serbia as its central point. Sallarès deals here with a concept that she thinks needs to be rethought, as it is love, beyond market exploitation and hand in hand with contemporary philosophy. *It is a project about love and made with love*, in the artist's own words; presented through her genuine approach, love is not just a research topic (*a project about love*), but increasingly its medium (*a project made with love*).



Regina de Miguel
A Story Never Told from Below, 2016
HD video and 3D animation, 01:09:38

A certain notion of love is performed within this artist's working methods: love is the paste that enables Sallarès to get attached to and to engage with people. Love turns out to be the actual driving force of her travel displacements through the inwardness of the human and non-human networks that constitute society. But, for the same reason, love is also the basis enabling her to envisage the route from the very beginning. Once love is addressed not just as the *what* but also as the *how* of the project, each interaction turns out to work as an uncontrollable and unforeseen diversion. What is obtained is love as a true catalyst for different modes of understanding of living together.

In the case of the collaborations Sallarès carried out in Novi Sad, a work team has been formed in collaboration with Kuda.org and some residents of the Detelinara district. This has resulted in *An Alphabet of Detelinara* (2018), an emotional and subversive cartography of the neighbourhood provided by its inhabitants.

Such a performative approach to the media was also manifested in *A Story Never Told from Below* (2017), a work through which Regina de Miguel retraced the tragic history of the so-called Cybersyn, or the Synco project, which took place in Chile between 1971 and 1973. De Miguel refers to a communication device which could easily be recognised as a medium. However, her viewpoint is intentionally un-specific, tracking the (social) assemblages which the apparatus works with rather than the intrinsic gears of the engine. At the beginning of the film, a voice-over, which is undoubtedly performed by de Miguel's alter ego, admits to feeling inexorably attracted to the charming surfaces of what seemed to be a sci-fi film set. But thereupon, the narration starts to flow through a myriad of networks and connections that emerge from this great Internet predecessor.

Cybersyn was promoted by Salvador Allende's administration as a medium for figuring out alternative ways of governing and intensifying democracy throughout



Anna Dot

Donar un espai a la confusió / Giving Space to Confusion, 2017

Digital print on tarpaulin, 500x75 cm

the Chilean Republic. Cybersyn was conceived as a device for direct participation, and after Pinochet's *coup d'état*, its promoters were persecuted, tortured and murdered by the military junta. Cybersyn raises the awareness that politics relies not merely on the issue of discourse or ideology, but on a myriad of technologies through which government activities are disclosed and spread. Also, de Miguel's approach provides space for speculating on the alternative futures that have remained abandoned since the Cybersyn failure.

Finally, Anna Dot's *Donar un espai a la confusió* [*Giving Space to Confusion*] (2017) is a work that deals with the networks of language, pointing to translation as a potential medium for messing ordinary communication up. The project starts with a temporal and geographical displacement of a former artistic project, *Slogan*, staged by the Collective Actions group in the forest near the Firsanovka railway station, in the Moscow region, in 1977. With the help of a Russian translator, Dot identified an error in what has turned out to be the regular English translation

of the text's intervention: while the slogan in the generally accepted version says *I do not complain about anything and I almost like it here, although I have never been here before and know nothing about this place*, according to Dot, it should be saying *I do not complain about anything and it is all right* instead.

The re-enactment of the artwork conceived by Dot involves not a translation of the text into her mother tongue, but a translation that, still remaining in Russian, dwells on the experience of *Slogan* that she first had. Thereby, the new version includes *I do not complain about anything and I almost like this text, although I have never read these words before and I don't have any idea about what these would mean*. Until now, Dot's work has been shown only in the vicinity of three Catalan towns. Without doubt, to show this now, near the Museum of Contemporary Art of Vojvodina in Novi Sad, will mean releasing its content anew to the unpredictable processes of translation and, definitely, misunderstanding.



Vahida Ramujkić

Labour and Nature, 2008/2018

A collection of objects, photographs, Internet archive

Gordana Nikolić, Sanja Kojić Mladenov

THE MEDIA ARE WITHIN FIRE

Three authors from Serbia who are active on the international art scene, Vahida Ramujkić, Katarina Šević and Lea Vidaković, are connected in the broadest sense by their interest in the relationship between nature and technology. Their artistic installations presented in this exhibition reveal mutually different interesting discourses on the media ontology, technology and the organic world, which are in our focus here.

Vahida Ramujkić, an artist who, among other things, has many years of experience of living and working within the framework of the artistic-activist scenes of Barcelona and Belgrade, presents to us the installation *Labour and Nature*, 2008/2018, which consists of various objects and photographs created during her stay in a forest and in the city. Ramujkić's artistic practice is marked by the

post-Internet experience that strives to learn or “awaken” techniques neglected in the context of industrial and post-industrial culture, which resulted in man's alienation from his basic skills in mastering nature. The forest segment of this installation presents various objects, tools and dishes that the artist made with her own hands during her stay in Leigh Woods, near Bristol, Great Britain, in 2008. By learning the manual technique, relying on intuition, using the organic material and resources available in the forest (wood, earth, water, fire), she made a boat, knife, rope, ceramic dishes and other objects with a practical application. These activities of Ramujkić's in the forest provide us with a perspective of the existence that applies alternative media and economies in the technologically oversaturated contemporary society.



Katarina Šević
News from Nowhere, ongoing project
objects, wood, various dimensions

*One object from the series is in the Collection of Csaba Hetényi

The second segment of this installation is *Vanishing Archive*, 2018 – a digital archive and collection that consists of rejected objects of organic and inorganic origin, which passed through the artist’s hands during the course of her one-month residence in Vienna’s Museumquartier, and were collected having been sorted out, classified and documented after the model of collections of museum objects in great specialised museums such as natural science, history or historical-artistic museums in Vienna. To the artist, the archive represents a means of recording and exploring the materialities of everyday life in the city relying on the example of her own “waste”, as well as the human work and technology harnessed for the creation or use of these objects or for their return to the cycle of life. The media dichotomy of society is thus presented within the framework of an installation, on the one hand, as a collection from the forest segment that is a product of manual work, and on the other, as a refinedly sorted out collection from A Vanishing Archive, created passively through accumulation after consumption.

The ongoing artistic project entitled *News from Nowhere* by Katarina Šević, an artist who lives and works on the Berlin-Budapest-Novi Sad route, represents a set of handmade, coloured and polished objects made of wood of various dimensions. These wooden objects are specific forms which, as the artist herself claims, were selected from among memories of things and meanings of the utmost importance, or else they toy with the idea of possible future models of certain forms (out of use then) and the possibility of future reconstruction. They evoke shapes of objects with a function (furniture from the 19th century; political and ideological symbols – a five-pronged star, an eagle; objects in everyday use, etc.) or function as ambiguous, anachronistic elements of cosmic appearance, unusual size, with an unknown purpose or meaning, ascribed to it by the viewers themselves. The title of this work of art refers to the eponymous novel written by the British artist and designer William Morris, dating from 1890, which contains ideas of utopian socialism and elements of science fiction. Morris’s novel represents a utopian vision of ideal society



Lea Vidaković

Splendid Isolation, 2010

Three-channel video installation, 1'16", 1'43", 1'46"

Greenhouse, sculpture, mixed media, 62x70x70 cm

which, freed from the burden of industrialisation, finds life's harmony through coexistence with the world of nature. In this series of objects, Šević deals precisely with the issue of the position of crafts (and craftsmanship) in contemporary society, for she views craftsmanship as one of the elements of the materialisation of ideology or an initiative for ideological changes. Craftsmanship objects reveal meanings and narratives of ideological, political, culturological or intimate nature. Thus, Šević's familiar and yet mysterious objects here "reify the process of identification", generating the evocation of the viewer's own memories.

The impressive three-channel video installation in a loop with a sculpture of a greenhouse entitled *Splendid Isolation*, made by the artist Lea Vidaković, introduces the viewer to the intimate world of the main protagonist, shown through three situations in three different spaces: a greenhouse, a kitchen and a bedroom. All three videos are realised in the form of stop-motion animation with dolls, and are of approximately equal duration; the first of them, the central film, shows a girl pursuing her everyday activity of taking

care of plants in a greenhouse, in the course of which she finds a dead bird and drops it from her hand. According to the author's description, the other two films present a continuation of this story in a "what if something were done with the bird" version: in the second video the girl plucks the bird's feathers and makes a hair accessory out of them, while in the third video she arranges her hair in front of a mirror and adorns it with an ornament made of feathers. In view of the fact that in each loop cycle the films meet and overlap at different points in time, each time they form different cause-effect relationships, thereby contributing to a different reading of the triptych's narrative. *Splendid Isolation* may also be a contemporary existentialist fairy tale about an alienated individual and the anxiety of decision-making, about a future which is increasingly difficult to foresee. Even though it seems timeless at first glance, this mysterious poetic world of the protagonist may also evoke the contemporary lifestyles of the digitally networked generation in search of alternative media, work, food, dress code, leisure time pursuits.

