

## DECODING MEMORIES OF A SINGLE DAY IN GRAZ

Nina Todorović's exhibition *Decoding Memories* is a sequel to her previous research work dealing with the topics of memories, memorising, archiving, mapping, relationship between analogue and digital, personal and public/collective, and glitch. The artist stressed that the exhibition is also related to the project *Journal of Walking* "in which geographic points of reference lose their usual meaning and steer towards personal questioning of the authenticity of one's memories and the spirit of a place." The artist found a specific city location in Graz – an oasis which triggered creation of a new utopian place and mapping of the city.

On that day, in those moments, in Graz, the artist experienced an unexpected and unusual feeling of freedom and tranquillity. She focused her senses on absorbing the audio-visual impulses from her surroundings. Nina recorded such experience: she took photos, made footage, wrote down impressions in her notebook and drew routes on the map. During her subsequent gathering of impressions, she focused on questioning the veracity of her memories of that single day, putting a particular stress on the park area within the Baroque Schloss Eggenberg complex. Nina presented the memory of this mental and physical dislocation from the daily routine through timeless moments which could have happened or will happen at any time.

While visualising and contextualizing the experience, she put to use the majority of the processes she had applied to her earlier exhibitions: digital print and software processing, glitch and glitch effects, collage technique, subsequent colouring and drawing, and printing on transparent materials. Actually, glitch<sup>1</sup> is the key perception term which unifies technical and mental characteristics of her works. The term can also be used to describe recollection/memory of the human brain, which is subject to time distortions, i.e. errors, i.e. subsequent interpretation by the brain caused by the lack of the memorised information or the need to alter the missing sections of the memorised information.

Other processes, which are beyond the scope of artist's influence, involve certain segments of digitalization. When creating a digital record, the image of reality is subjected to the automated operations of processing and reconstruction<sup>2</sup>. Digital version of reality provides a partial depiction of reality; it is more of a reconstruction of reality than its image. The process of digitalization is a specific process which involves deconstruction and construction, and which often dissolves the artist's identity, forcing them to rebuild it on their own, as dictated by the digital technology.

The artist's switch to the digital form and virtual space led her to Boris Groys' question about the strength of a digital image and the status of the original. Is the binary code of a digital image the original and does its visualisation represent a copy? The artist compares numeric codes with her own memory to test its validity.

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<sup>1</sup>According to the definition, *glitch* is a fault or a short-lived, transient error in a system, which usually corrects itself, and is therefore difficult to detect and troubleshoot. It can be both analogue and digital, and it is particularly emphasised by the art movement based on aestheticization of software, i.e. system error.

<sup>2</sup>Analogue image formed in the lens is further conveyed to the photodiodes with RGB filters and transformed to an electrical signal. The process is further transferred to the D/A converter, where the signal is digitalised (pixelated). The result is a "raw" version of the photo (RAW format). Since the JPEG format is in broad use, the process within the camera continues, and the raw image undergoes further processing determined by complex algorithms.

Nina divided her thoughts into three segments of the exhibition. Each of them can operate separately. However, when presented together, they add to/expand the essential concept, namely contextualisation of the memories through moments, on a single day.

The first segment includes four collages. On watercolour paper, she arranged photos and parts of black and white and colour photos snapped during that day, drew the routes she had taken on mini maps – one of which represented a route from the city centre to the park – coloured the surfaces and, on top of it all, placed clippings of her notebook writings. Abstract art moments manifest themselves through lines and surfaces coloured in solid and transparent dark green, black lines and chunks of text printed in strips on a tracing paper where nothing but parts of the text can be discerned. The only two legible sentences are “I feel good” and “I *overstand* you”. Mapping of the route taken through the city during that one day was supplemented by photos displaying timeless road and landscape shots. Making use of this psychogeographic approach, as the artist herself names it, makes it possible to follow the route the artist herself took, where personal and public spaces interweave through different layers, where nodular points are discernible at the moments displayed by the photos and text parts.

The second segment consists of a video. This video postcard was created using the original shot taken in Graz on return from the Schloss Eggenberg castle on that day. Riding on a tram through Graz, observing and listening, the artist recorded audio and video landscapes of architecture and the sky in order to map her trip. Nina indulged in observing and attentive listening of the language she did not understand. The hum coming from her surrounding became a soundtrack for her future video. The artist stressed that the video was the result of her need to comment on Bojan Savić Ostojić's novel *No Oasis*. The background audio turned out to be the key element which provoked her most intimate reaction to the novel and her need to produce this video, even though she emphasised that the rhythm and the starting points were different. For the video, which shows constant movement, Nina used glitch effect and created parallel rhythm in relation to the raw video with decentered background shot. It is reflected through multi-coloured, semi-transparent surfaces that take their respective turns and occasionally overlap creating new shades. The video represents a symbolic moment which indicates dislocation from the artist's usual routine, its positive effects, illusion of escape from reality, timeless moments that take place while experiencing new surroundings.

The third and most important segment, the ambient unit, physically takes up the most of the Gallery and dominates the entire area. It consists of tracing paper strips printed with binary codes and hung from the ceiling. The printed binary code belongs to the photo located behind all these strips, on the Gallery wall facing the entrance. The photo was shot in the park within the Baroque Schloss Eggenberg complex, using digital camera. It is dominated by green shades of the park, with a sculpture which can be discerned in a section of the photo. The shot has the abovementioned degree of timelessness, the moment of observation that could happen at any specific point in time. It is the moment of utmost tranquillity and contemplation, a nodular point, a utopian place around which the artist plotted her story of analogue and digital, of recollection and memory, of human and machine. It is the very step backwards, i.e. step inwards. For, as written by Boris Groys, “one can argue that it is not so much the digital image itself as the image file that can be called strong, because the image file remains more or less identical through the process of its distribution”. This is where our passage through the forest of binary codes, resembling Neo's journey through binary architecture in *Matrix*, through the digital document which is actually invisible, comes from. Materialisation of the invisible on the road to illusion, to the printed photo. It is just one of

the forms of the original memory record created at the moment of taking the shot. Whenever we look at a digital photo, we must bear in mind that what we are facing is just one of its forms. However, as argued by Groy, there are no copies without original, and “the difference between original and copy is obliterated in the case of digitalization only by the fact that the original data are invisible”. The photo that we see on the Gallery wall represents one of the ways to visualise invisible data. With regard to this, “we can say: The digital image is a copy – but the event of its visualisation is an original event, because the digital copy is a copy that has no visible original”. Hence Nina’s need to exhibit the photo in order to make the digital image visible. Nevertheless, Nina offers us both. The situation involving potentiality, visualisation of the “invisible”, and the situation involving the visible, the image. Walking through the binary codes, we can let our imagination fly until we leave the binary forest and face the visualisation. The very “positioning of the digital in the exhibition space makes it possible for the viewer to reflect not only on the superstructure but also on the material basis of digitalization”.

In this exhibition, Nina succeeded in condensing and subliming her previous artistic experience, in taking a step further, a step deeper, in leading us through the analogue and digital processes of cartographing her own recollections/memory. After we pass through the forest made of binary codes following our gallery route, and face their visualisation through the absolute illusion of the park within the Baroque Schloss Eggenberg complex hanging on the wall, the other two segments of the exhibition become the maps that will help us find our way to the place where analogue and digital, real and illusory, public and private, image and non-image merge with one another. To the points of decoding Nina’s memories.

Ivan Stanić

## DEKODIRANJA SEĆANJE NA JEDAN DAN U GRACU

Izložba Nine Todorović pod nazivom „Dekodiranje sećanja“ je nastavak njenih prethodnih istraživanja na teme sećanja, memorisanja, arhiviranja, mapiranja, na odnos analognog i digitalnog, ličnog i javnog/kolektivnog i gliča. Umetnica je istakla da je izložba povezana i sa projektom *Dnevnik hodanja* „u kojem geografske odrednice gube uobičajeno značenje i usmeravaju na lična preispitivanja verodostojnosti pamćenja i duha mesta.“ Umetnica je pronašla specifičnu gradsku lokaciju u Gracu, oazu, koja je bila „okidač“ za kreiranje novog utopijskog mesta, i mapiranje grada.

Tog dana, u tim trenucima, u Gracu, kod umetnice se desio nenadani i neuobičajeni osećaj slobode i smirenosti. Svoja čula je usmerila na upijanje audio-vizuelnih nadražaja iz okruženja. Nina je to iskustvo beležila: fotografisala, snimala, zapisivala utiske u beležnici i ucrtavala rute na mapi. Naknadno sabirajući utiske ona se fokusirala na preispitivanje istinitosti sećanja na taj jedan dan, sa akcentom na prostor parka u okviru baroknog kompleksa Schloss Eggenberg. Nina je sećanje na ovo mentalno i fizičko izmeštenje iz svakodnevne rutine prikazala kroz bezvremene trenutke, a koji su mogli, ili će se desiti bilo kada.

Prilikom vizualizacije i kontekstualizacije iskustva uključila je većinu procesa koje je koristila na ranijim izložbama: digitalnu štampu i softversku obradu, glič i efekte gliča, kolaž tehniku, naknadno bojenje i crtanje i štampu na transparentnim materijalima. Upravo je *glitch*<sup>3</sup> ključni pojam percepcije koji objedinjuje tehničko-mentalne karaktersitike njenih radova. Pojmom možemo da opišemo i sećanje/memoriju ljudskog mozga koje je podložno vremenskim distorzijama, tj. grešci, tj. naknadnoj interpretaciji mozga u nedostatku ili potrebi da nedostajuće delove memorisanih informacija izmeni.

Drugi procesi na koje umetnica nije mogla da utiče su određeni segmenti digitalizacije. Prilikom dobijanja digitalnog zapisa slika stvarnosti prolazi kroz automatske procese obrade i rekonstrukcije<sup>4</sup>. Digitalne verzija stvarnosti delimično odslikava sliku stvarnosti, ona je više rekonstrukcija stvarnosti nego njena slika. Proces digitalizacije je specifičan dekonstruktivno-konstruktivan proces koji često kod umetnika rastvara identitet, uslovljavajući ga da ga ponovo sama iznova uspostavi pod diktatom digitalne tehnologije.

Prebacivanjem u digitalnu formu i virtuelni prostor umetnicu su doveli do pitanja koje je Boris Grojs postavio, a odnosi se na to koliko je digitalna slika snažna i gde je tu original. Da li je binarni zapis digitalne slike original a vizualizacija kopija? Umetnica će numeričke zapise uporediti sa sopstvenim sećanjem kako bi ispitala njegovu validnost.

Nina je na izložbi svoja razmišljanja podelila u tri segmenta. Svaki od njih može da funkcioniše i zasebno, ali prezentovani zajedno dopunjuju/proširuju osnovnu ideju, a to je kontekstualizacija sećanja u trenucima, u jednom danu.

Prvi segment je sastavljen od četiri kolaža. Na akvarel papir je slagala fotografije i delove crno-belih fotografija i u boji snimljene tog dana, ucrtavala preko mini planova putanje kojima se kretala, na jednom od centra grada do parka, bojila površine i preko svega postavljala isečke teksta iz beležnice. Apstraktni likovni momenti se ogledaju kroz linije i obojene površine pune i prozirne tamno zelene boje, crne linije i delove teksta odštampane

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<sup>3</sup> Po definiciji, *glič (glitch)* je kvar ili kratkotrajna, prolazna greška u sistemu, koja se obično sama popravlja i zato ju je teško uočiti i otkloniti. Može biti analogna i digitalna i naročito je potencirana kroz pravac u umetnosti koji se zasniva na estetizaciji softverske tj. systemske greške.

<sup>4</sup> Analogna slika iz sočiva dolazi na fotodiode sa RGB filterima i pretvara se u električni signal. Proces se dalje nastavlja u DA konverteru u kome se vrši digitalizacija signala (pikselizacija). Dobija se „sirova“ verzija fotografije (RAW format). Proces u fotoaparatu se nastavlja, jer većina koristi JPEG format, i sirova slika prolazi kroz dalju obradu uslovljenu komplikovanim algoritimima.

u trakama na paus papiru gde se razaznaju samo sentence teksta. Jedine dve čitljive rečenice su "Dobro mi je" i „I *overstand* you“. Mapiranje rute putovanja tog jednog dana kroz grad nadopunjena je fotografijama bezvremenih kadrova puteva i pejzaža. Ovim, kako sama umetnica kaže, psihogeografskim pristupom putuje se rutom same umetnice gde se kroz razne slojeve prepliću lični i javni prostori, gde se čvorne tačke razaznaju u trenucima na koje ukazuju fotografije i sentence teksta.

Drugi segment čini video rad. Ova video razglednica nastala je od originalnog zapisa koji je snimljen u Gracu tog dana, u povratku iz dvorca Schloss Eggenberg. Vozeći se tramvajem kroz Grac, posmatrajući i osluškajući, umetnica je snimala zvučne i video pejzaže arhitekture i neba u cilju mapiranja putovanja. Nina se prepustila posmatranju i pažljivom osluškivanju jezika koji ne razume. Žamor iz okruženja je postao *soundtrack* za njen budući video. Umetnica će napomenuti da je ovim videom imala potrebu da odgovori na roman *Nema Oaze* Bojana Savića Ostojića. Iako naglašavajući da su ritam i polazne tačke različite, zvučna podloga je bila ključna koja je kod nje probudila najintimniju reakciju na tekst romana, i potrebu da realizuje ovaj video rad. Tokom trajanja videa, koji pokazuje konstantno kretanje, Nina je koristila glič efekat kojim je uspostavila paralelni ritam u odnosu na sirovi video decentriranog kadra u pozadini. On se ogleda kroz poluprovodne površine raznih boja koje se smenjuju, a u trenucima se preklapaju stvarajuće nove nijanse. Video rad je simbolični momenat koji ukazuje na izmeštanje u odnosu na uobičajenu rutinu umetnice, na njegove pozitivne efekte, iluziju o begu od stvarnosti, bezvremene trenutke koji se dešavaju u trenucima iskustva boravka u nepoznatom okruženju.

Treći i glavni segment, ambijentalna celina, je fizički najrapostranjeniji u prostoru Galerije i dominira čitavim prostorom. Čine ga trake paus papira sa odštampanim binarnim kodovima koje vise sa plafona. Odštampani binarni kod je od fotografije koja se nalazi iza svih traka na zidu Galerije naspram ulaza. Fotografija je snimljena digitalnom kamerom u parku baroknog kompleksa Schloss Eggenberg. Na njoj dominiraju zelene nijanse parka dok se u jednom delu fotografije nazire umetnička skulptura. Fotografisani kadar poseduje pomenuti nivo bezvremenog, momenat posmatranja koji je mogao da se desi bilo kada u vremenu. To je momenat krajnje smirenosti i kontemplacije, čvorna tačka, utopijsko mesto oko koga je umetnica isplela priču o analognom i digitalnom, o sećanju i memoriji, o ljudskom i mašinskom. To je taj korak unazad, tj. korak unutar. Jer, kao što će Boris Grojs napisati, „može se diskutovati da ono što se može nazvati snažnim nije sama digitalna slika koliko je to digitalni dokument slike jer ona ostaje manje-više identična u procesu svoje distribucije“. Otud naš prolazak kroz šumu binarnih kodova, poput putovanja Nea kroz binarnu arhitekturu u filmu *Matriks*, kroz digitalni dokument koji je ustvari nevidljiv. Materijalizovanje nevidljivog na putu ka iluziji, ka odštapanoj fotografiji. Ona je samo jedna od varijanti u odnosu na originalni memorijski zapis formiran u trenutku kada je fotografisana. I svaki put kada posmatramo digitalnu fotografiju moramo imati na umu da se suočavamo samo sa jednom od njenih varijanti. Međutim, kao što i Grojs tvrdi, nema kopija bez originala, a „razlika između originala i kopije je, u slučaju digitalizacije, izbrisana samom činjenicom da su originalni podaci nevidljivi.“ Fotografija koju gledamo na zidu Galerije je jedan od načina vizualizacija nevidljivih podataka. U odnosu na to, „možemo da kažemo da digitalna slika jeste kopija, ali da je događaj vizuelizacije izvorni događaj, jer digitalna kopija je kopija koja nema vidljivi original.“ Otuda i potreba da Nina fotografiju izloži da bi digitalna slika bila viđena. Međutim, Nina nam nudi i jedno i drugo. Situaciju potencijalnog, vizualizaciju „nevidljivog“ i situaciju vidljivog, slike. Putujući kroz binarne kodove možemo da zamišljamo sve dok ne izađemo iz binarne šume i

suočimo se sa vizualizacijom. A baš to „pozicioniranje digitalnog u izložbenom prostoru omogućuje posmatraču da osim o nadgradnji promišlja i o bazi digitalizacije.“

Nina je uspela da na ovoj izložbi sažme i sublimiše dosadašnje umetničko iskustvo, da ode korak dalje, korak dublje, da nas sprovede kroz analogno-digitalne procese kartografije sopstvenog sećanja/memorije. Kada na svojoj galerijskoj ruti prođemo kroz šumu binarnih kodova i suočimo se sa njihovom vizualizacijom kroz apsolutnu iluziju parka baroknog kompleksa Schloss Eggenberg okačenom na zidu, druga dva segmenta izložbe su mape koje će nam pomoći da se snađemo sa pronalaženjem puta ka mestu gde se stapaju analogno i digitalno, stvarno i iluzorno, javno i privatno, slika i ne-slika. Ka tačkama dekodiranja Nininog sećanja.

Ivan Stanić