

Press Release

Jasmina Cibic – ‘No Experience Necessary (Win a Gallery Show in London)’

Bus-Tops International Invited Artist’s Projects, London Cultural Olympiad 2012

In ‘No Experience Necessary (Win a Gallery Show in London)’, the new work for Bus-Tops by the London-based Slovenian artist Jasmina Cibic (b.1979), there are a number of features that connect with her pre-existing practice. The specific screens of Bus-Tops are not entirely dissimilar to the public information screens at Ljubljana’s international airport that she once used to make a work. Mass transport of all kinds features strongly in Cibic’s work, whether implied by the airports in which she created ‘welcoming committees’ that manifested as performances and subsequent film works or the seductive aesthetics of beautiful staged photographs shot inside disused airliners. Similarly, the almost persistent preoccupation with the role of a space – open or enclosed, public versus private- in defining and refining an art work is also acutely present.

Perhaps most importantly, even if the bingo hall and lottery ticket look of the new work on the Bus-Tops screens give the impression of something of a departure at first glance, it is the conceptual resolution of the work that connects it most strongly to her core artistic preoccupations. Space, and the position of an art work in space, is once again primary. Though in this instance it is the contemplation of the use of the Bus-Tops technology beyond its lifespan as a platform for art that has prompted Cibic to muse that it is inevitable that someone will try to exploit it commercially; that it is a ‘surface for advertising’ waiting to happen.

Taking this as her starting point Jasmina Cibic uses the Bus-Tops screens to advertise the opportunity for the broadest public to enter a lottery that could literally see them win the opportunity of a solo exhibition in a London gallery space. No mere cynical rhetoric: by gathering a minimum number of required passwords, going to a specifically created website (www.noexperiencenecessary.org) and completing an online entry form, anyone is able to enter the draw that will result in the winner being offered a solo exhibition in a brand new project space in London. No experience necessary, no questions asked – apart from the required minimum 5 (of 31) passwords- anyone defining himself or herself as an artist who is lucky enough to have his or her name drawn out of the lottery ball will be offered a solo exhibition

opening in January 2013. The lucky winner will be announced at a public ceremony planned to take place in London in July 2012.

In the work of Jasmina Cibic there is frequently an approach of the tensions that exist between things; more usually than not, abstract and notional concepts – art and craft or politics and aesthetics- that remain open, up for debate and not easy to encapsulate. However, Cibic's work does not bring its particular focus to the uneasy ground that lies between profound and vast abstract phenomena from a naïve position. Hers is a knowing eye that casts its investigation into these unclear 'spaces' fully informed by an art historical knowledge and an awareness of political and cultural theory.

In 'No Experience Necessary (Win a Gallery Show in London)', certain discourses are immediately, even humorously, evident. For example, there's a tongue-in-cheek comment on the nature of the international art system and London's fevered complicity in sustaining an art system that focuses heavily on the commercial and the visibility of the individual, in part by creating a structure that strips away the correlation of artistic quality and individual identity that are often a feature of this phenomenon. But other aspects prove it an altogether more complex and ambivalent work: in requiring that the would-be entrants gather a certain number of passwords to qualify, there is an implied narrative that we might interpret as seeing the international art system as being something that requires a lot of legwork to get ahead. Or, for those who are smart enough to crack the code with minimal information, there may be means by which some canny individuals can circumvent time-consuming effort. As a lottery, however, luck and statistical likelihood always plays a role.

We might even intuit artists' narcissistic reflections of the international art system as a competitive environment comparable with the Olympic sports themselves. Though, even within this notion we immediately encounter the position of capital; the ongoing discussion about the relative nobility and merits of 'amateur' versus 'professional'.

Considered in more depth, however, there are numerous other ideas raised by the work. A number of these connect with Jasmina Cibic's ongoing interest in performance and the performative. Like a number of her existing works –such as a performance work that deploys sculpture and a live trained falcon- this is a work that might be understood as a long-run performance in which budding artists effectively

become the performers with varying degrees of self-awareness. This 'delegation of labour' by the artist is another ongoing strategy of Jasmina Cibic who has often deployed and managed relevantly skilled craftspeople to execute the physical production of aspects of her work. In one sense, 'No Experience Necessary (Win a Gallery Show in London)' sees Cibic deploying others who identify themselves as artists to complete her art work.

Furthermore, within the total body of Cibic's work to date, all such ideas often come together as a confluence of considerations addressing some of the theoretical or political concerns that are familiar ground in the work of artists from the 'post-Communist European mainland'. Playfulness and good-natured humour are often features of Jasmina Cibic's work. But she also frequently –as in 'No Experience Necessary (Win a Gallery Show in London)'- turns a steely gaze on the once hallowed tenets of 'the artist of the socialist state' as much as critiquing more recent global developments. Occupying and subverting public space can become a means of social, professional and personal critique. In a world in which an increasing amount of open space is becoming privately owned, we are prompted to consider what now constitutes 'public' space. Perhaps even those once most public of spaces - the bus or the bus shelter- are no longer immune to change. Similarly, as many physical locales and publicly visible surfaces across Europe previously managed by the state according to rigid regulation of any commercial exploitation drift into a world of out-sourcing, contracted management by private companies or the selling off of public assets, what new manifestations of visual culture might follow?

Ken Pratt