

Petja Grafenauer: 20<sup>th</sup> Century

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The new series of work from Jasmina Cibic takes as its theme an investigation into the level of meanings of those objects to which the West has ascribed the ability to trigger experience. Souvenirs from other lands, fictional icons, photographs, design objects and obviously – on top of the social ladder of values – works of art, are all instruments that allow the viewer to experience that which is for various reasons unattainable directly, and it is for this reason that a surplus value (mythical, subjective, market driven, aesthetic, political, cultural and ideal) is inscribed within these objects in the first place. Cibic explores the reasons for these shifts in values and the processes and conditions of experience itself under which these are made possible.

The series *20th Century* consists of a series of photographs which depict birds of prey resting on what seem to be at a first glance perches. These hunting birds, initially used by man to satisfy basic requirements, only later become bearers of status and a symbol of luxurious pursuit. At this point their owners substitute their use value with that of a cultivated experience of nature. Within this process of shift from utility object to trophy object we recognize a release of sentimental, cultural, social and market value towards the viewer.

Perhaps it is for this reason that genuine trophies, gathered on the voyages of the bourgeoisie in far away lands, are substituted by fake replicas, consumer goods and souvenirs which have none of the real essence itself of the thing which is supposed to be remembered in the first place. A similarity can be drawn with the substitution, which takes place between a poster of a work of art and a real work of art, both decorate the apartment of the holder but only one is a genuine article.

The perches in Cibic's photographs on which the birds of prey sit are in fact objects to which 20th century western society attributes extremely high values, breathed into them by the giver of experience – the artist. The surplus value of these objects is added to by their inclusion into the personal collections of their owners, but more

importantly by the art and design establishment prior to this, the former including them within her/ his collection for the existing artistic value (and effectively their cultural, national, subjective, market and ideological value) assigned to them by the art world solely because of the iconic name of their maker in the first place.

There are various reasons for which objects are included within a collection. The latter being a space which allows the meeting of the viewer and the object that triggers the internal process of experience. Within the fictitious collection that Cibic portrays in her series, the birds of prey and the art works/perches are both accessible to the viewer in the same way. The possibility of experience is in this case not dependent upon the fact as to whether the inclusion within a collection was of a personal, critical, market led, ideal or political nature and it is not the object itself which allows the experience, but the contextual framework within which it is inserted. The experience is different if the framework of the collection within which the exhibited object is placed is different.

The objects on display, which Cibic carefully reconstructs from or after a real model, is never physically present within the series 20th Century. The viewer merely meets its photographic image. It is only within this physical absence of the object that a sufficient distance is established which allows an insight into the fetishisation that is in fact the real activator of the setting up of experience. It is only when Cibic removes the object and closes the door upon experience that the economics of the subjective, material, political, cultural, artistic and other values which were established by western 20th century society are unveiled in front of the viewer. It is these economics that is still today subconsciously accepted through the context, which all along marks the apparent iconic directness of the object.