

Vladimir Vidmar: Building a Long Passageway

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With the construction of a long corridor, Jasmina Cibic, an artist who consistently reflects on ideological interpellation, dissection of institutional frameworks and disclosure of historicizing mechanisms, makes a step into the context of an exhibition that presents the historical overview of the Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts. From her earliest projects, Jasmina Cibic has been “tackling” precisely the decisive part that architecture has to play as an ideologically conditioned determinant of our visible world, with the mechanisms of directing the gaze and the institutions that disperse the chosen symbolic sets and dictate their assent. The “entrance” into the space occurs in the *Building a Long Passageway* project as a sort of unique paraphrase of the exhibition and its archival foundation, as well as its historical framework, which is put under scrutiny by both the artist and the curator. The repute of the Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts and its stature were the construction blocks in the manufacture of the international image of the then socialist Yugoslavia, which liked to “show off” the specifics of its socio-political organization through the so-called mechanisms of soft power.

From a state, where the exchange between culture and business was guaranteed, the country moved to a system in which many social bonds were broken, including those that provided the broadest contact between society and art. With her project *Building a Long Passageway*, Jasmina Cibic enters into the elite spaces of the Cankarjev dom exhibition venue, taking them back with her intervention to the times when the events and contents of the gallery were not so far removed from “the people”. She cuts up the gallery and its set-up by erecting a long hallway, which is reminiscent of the corridors of office spaces and which opens on both sides, offering access to the exhibition and its new reading. The “study” exhibition therefore goes beyond its “institutional” frame, since its original social context is re-evoked: the “office” corridor opens into spaces that could be administrative offices or manufacture plants, spaces that used to offer their users a daily contact with the art production of their times. The archival work of “blow-

ing away the dust of oblivion” goes on here in a double game of the curator and the artist, who in their interaction emphatically revalue the “outlined” experiences of the works and the space.

Jasmina Cibic enters the exhibition with her characteristic gesture of dissection, which she emphasizes with a performative intervention into the installation. The white walls of the corridor slowly disappear in the intervention, saturated with the visual load of stamps. Their patterns combine the logos of the Slovene firms that used to purchase the exhibited artworks and thus represented a positive economic foundation of the local art scene. Many of these companies have already been swallowed up by history, while some have changed their (external?) image through rebranding. And yet, what is left of the system in which culture held its own particular place within the constellation of social values? This is precisely what Jasmina Cibic questions with the performance in which a new generation of Slovene artists have volunteered to create an art event, since they, along with their field of activity, have lost their place as a category in the economic equation. What remains of the social responsibility that the state companies felt by virtue of their integration into the wider social context is merely a decorative pattern. Something which is used today as a kitsch blunder when we (un)successfully appeal for funds from some mythical European fund. The precarity of the (cultural) worker has thus been given its conclusion in a typically local version: the mere fact that the scope of your work is culture, is sufficient reward. Who was it that said that work sets one free?