

Tirana Institute of Contemporary Art

AIR - LAB / 2014 / STORYTELLING / as artistic practice / FALL period

Alketa Kurrizo in conversation with Saša Tkačenko

Alketa Kurrizo: The work you produced in Tirana was a continuity of an already started research as practice and methodology as well. Why this choice?

Saša Tkačenko: In the work *Under Control* my previous interest in dealing with architectural objects with specific cultural and social histories is continued. By incorporating actions or activities that are unconventional for the given spaces, I am trying to create a field for new perspectives of reading and observing these places to open up, as well as for understanding the resources, which these spaces possess. The National History Museum in Tirana was my first and only choice during the residency. The robust architecture, which is characteristic for a particular historical moment during which the museum was built, and the monumentality of the building represented a perfect *mise-en-scène* to perform this work.

AK: Your project was produced in total intimacy, within the space you have chosen to work in, with the subject you were working with. You finalized this experience as a video documentation of the process, and this is what you present for the public. What de facto happened during the production process was a live performance (which could be consumed by the audience as such), could the site performance be considered in this case “the artwork”, or the video you propose is a sentence which fully expresses your statement?

ST: The space where the work *Under control* is incorporated is a very complex space, but that was precisely the challenge I wanted to meet: how to physically “shape” such a demanding space through the sound. My idea was to create an ambience in which a simple rhythmical segment of three seconds and its repetition at different intervals of time can determine the volume of the space. The focus of this work is actually the process during which it was created; the way through which the sound is transformed during a transition from exterior to interior space, and the intensity by which it fulfills the different parts of the museum building. On the other side, the desire to explore all the possibilities of this monumental structure determined the absence of audience during the performance and further complicated the modes of communication with spectators (after the work is finished and exhibited). From the very beginning it was clear that the video recording of the performance in museum should not be just an artifact of the documentary process. The selection of frames, the editing technique, and the way in which the video is projected in the exhibition space aim to create the sense of physical presence to the event, which previously took place at the museum.

AK: What stands out immediately in your projects is your aesthetic approach. The composition is clean, well planned, very little is left to fortuitousness. What is the relevance of this approach in your practice?

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ST: The conditions under which the works such as *Under Control* are made are actually very uncertain, lot of things are conditioned by the moment and the situation in which the work is created. This approach requires extensive planning and preparation of the way the process will be visually and experientially transmitted to the audience. I try to record situations that carry no unnecessary information or noises that could eventually attract the attention of the viewer and redirect him from the idea I wanted to materialize.

AK: The core subject of your work “Under control” is the space and its relationship with the music you add inside it, giving in some way sense to this last one. Is this relationship the one which leads the viewer to the story of the subject/space or the intent here is to build a new narrative?

ST: The sound performance *Under Control* examines the relationship between sound and space in a direct manner. The work process was as follows: the drummer performed the rhythm according to the previously specified intervals in the open space of atrium of the National Historical Museum. The produced sound was then transmitted through the speakers set in different parts of the museum interior. In this way the sound became a form that materializes the space emptied of any added associations – the space became shaped by sound. It is at this precise moment, when the sound fulfills the symbolically discharged space, that the possibility to create a new narrative appears – a narrative that is unconstrained of socially defined norms. In this case music becomes a tool that allows the particular space to “liberate” its primary content and emphasize its physical strength, while offering to the observer a chance to create the narrative about the monumental place performing in front of him/her.