Introduction by Leila Topić –

Main curator of YICCA 2018 Traces of the political, traces of nature The artists featured in this year’s YICCA exhibition project mostly deal with questions related to the meaning of the concept of ‘nature’ in the 21st century, in the era we call anthropocene. It seems that numerous stories and themed exhibitions use the subject of anthropocene to distract from key questions, such as the inheritance of imperialism, power relations or geopolitical situations. However, these particular factors created a world where the distribution of wealth and profits, troubles and poverty is deeply and radically skewed. Most experts point out that the causes of global ecological changes are sociogenetic, not anthropogenetic. Therefore, not even the concept of anthropocene can explain the ecological crisis or the societal recipe for its overcoming. The correlation, or rather, the unbreakable bond between contemporary societies and nature is the most common subject of artworks shown in this exhibition. The transition to a sustainable world, even if it’s possible, is not going to be easy and it’s going to demand a lot of involvement, renouncement, vision, imagination and collective effort. Should we fail, some of the artworks shown in this exhibition represent the locations of some of humanity’s perpetually open wounds, as well as sources of new possible traumas. It remains to be seen whether there will even be any new generations to learn from them.

Alena Grom’s photography cycle Womb celebrates life in the Donbas region, in spite of war circumstances. Unlike the stereotypical war scenes that we are familiar with, the Donbas native builds a photography cycle by emphasizing the similarities between the womb and the underground of towns in the region. In her cycle, the inhabitants of these miner towns are shown like a foetus which develops and lives a full life, while remaining dependent on the mother – the town it protects. Equilibrium by Alejandro Urrutia deepens and explores the game of shapes – the polished stainless steel form reflects fragmented parts of its environment. He points out in his statement that this project is very important to him, since it refers to constant identity changes, to a constant dialectic process of construction and deconstruction, as a sort of reflection of our position in space, that is, in the roles we play in our society. Eunmi Kim is an artist who focuses her experiential explorations on a sensory deprivation in order to examine ‘’atypical, eccentric, but also introspective methods’’ which enable her to establish a diversified spectre of her own comfort zone, so as to distance herself from the state of constantly being flooded with data. The goal of her video experiment entitled Me-Time(3.0): mindfulness-introspection-void is to balance out the mind and body by decreasing sensory stimulation. She notes: ‘’This is a case of self-evaluation using the eccentric REST (Restricted Environmental Stimulation Therapy) methods, which I use to examine my hypothyroidism (a condition connected to stress hormones), my hypersensitivity and meticulousness.’’ Isolation during contemplation and self-reflection represents her form of mindfulness.

Ana María Chamucero’s Caminador represents a great metaphor of the need for creating communities guided by a common interest – this artwork only exists as a sum of individual objects. The artist points out that she tries to create a feeling of collectiveness by using a functional object which would normally be used by just one person. The artistic form takes shape only through the collaboration of seemingly disparate elements. Ana Vivoda’s installation Interaction also questions relations. However, the terms ‘’feeling’’ and ‘’doing’’, graphics and photography, the fragile body and its surroundings are confronted in her work. The artist uses the body as a certain catalyst which speeds up experiential terms through different types of interactions, which can be readily seen through the pressing of layers of images onto fragmented representations of the body. The result is a whole containing layers of images created by the overlapping of ‘’imagination, memory and perception’’.

Annette Goodfriend’s Anemone subtly points to an inability to choose a direction, an apparent inability to choose. Her sculpture is composed of a ‘’bouquet’’ of index fingers which point to different directions. The index finger is traditionally used to point in a certain direction – or to threaten. The artist uses this humorous collection of fingers to revoke both the threat and the ‘’right direction’’, letting one know that she is only interested in the play of shapes and associations which invalidates possible strict or unambiguous interpretations of her work.

Ignacio Unrrein set himself an impossible task with his work entitled Attempt to Draw a Line. The task: to attempt to draw a continuous line that never crosses itself. From 2013 until today, this process has turned every panel into a module of an indefinitely prolonged sequence which creates continuity, although the lines occasionally touch and the permanent marker ink fades almost completely. In the end, the line becomes a symbol of an infinite event, a continued process which the artist uses to record the durability of his own artistic will.

Ikuru Kuwajima’s video work Repatriation acquaints us with the unusual adventures of Siberian trees. The trees sometimes fall into rivers, which take them to the Arctic. Once they are there, the trees freeze and continue to flow on, captured in ice, sometimes crossing the Atlantic Ocean and making it to the Icelandic coast. The lack of wood on Iceland makes these floating trees very precious, the artist notes, adding that until the 1990s imported trees used to be expensive. The Icelanders even created a special word for these trees: rekaviðar – driftwood. The artist returned from his trip to Iceland with one such piece of driftwood. Video recordings of the river Yenisei and sound recordings from Iceland are projected onto the driftwood so that the tree is returned, however symbolically, to Siberia.

Ivan Midžić’s witty EcoCable questions the effect of ecological ideas. In his statement, he writes that, as an artist, he generates a lot of trash and wastes a lot of energy. Therefore, he decided to create a cable from natural materials in order to ask questions on ecology as a potential trend without any real impact on society. Lok Heng Stacey Chan also focuses on social anomalies. The constant imperative for happiness was created by a society addicted to countless relaxants and antidepressants. The artist chooses precisely the products of the unstoppable pharmaceutical industry as a medium to criticize the pointless ecstasy of a society constantly searching for happiness. Luca Di Bartolo’s video work entitled Time Machine thematizes the encounter as a coincidence, but also as the starting point of a certain story. Different time dimensions overlap through movement, rhythm and change of form. Efforts to establish balance among complicated affective relationships between the past, present and future brought forth a video work which enters into a polemic relationship with the conventional idea of the course of time – which was, presumably, the artist’s intention. The body in fight, the movement which stems from an analysis of physical gestures generated by emotions – this is the starting point of Surfacing by Marina Blažek and Sandra Ban. The artwork consists of a prefabricated installation with nineteen modules made out of clay which take on the role of a threedimensional projection screen. Body movements are projected onto this makeshift screen. The roughness of modelled clay corresponds to the projected gestures, forming a memorable installation which is reminiscent of Laookon’s group.

Once Upon a Time in the West is Nicolas Vionnet’s installation, which plays with the idea of the (im)possibility of communication, i.e. of establishing dialogues in unusual conditions. In an attempt to create a dialogue between cookers, the author wittily addresses the fact that even impossible communication conditions can sometimes result in a harmonious dialogue – even when the dialogue in question is established between mere kitchen implements. Tante tante mutande tante is the title of Patricia Glauser’s sculpture, which the artist formed by grouping women’s red underwear. The artist wanted to draw attention to the ever-present violence against women, regardless of their age, economic status or education. Using the red color which symbolizes passion, as well as the stuggle, the artist takes on the role of activist and raises awareness of this global phenomenon. Tako Kono’s work entitled She exchanges her fluid with all others creating shades of red her blood alone could not portray also deals with violence against women. The work consists of a series of handmade dresses painted with a special liquid which is used in forensics to discover traces of blood on materials or objects. The artist uses the exploration of bodies, disappearances and liminal conditions which connect intimacy and violence as his starting point. His goal is to raise the viewers’ awareness of the connection between the mentioned states. As he himself points out – he examines lifeless bodies and bodiless dresses.

In the isthmus Tehuantepec, in Mexico, capital has transformed wind into a commodity, that is, a means of exploitation and expropriation of territory. Admittedly, the exploitation of wind energy has created temporary jobs. On the other hand, the construction of wind turbines has transformed the lives of indigenous inhabitants by creating both a strong neocolonial polarization and a series of negative impacts on the environment. Beatriz Millón’s project Neocolonialismo was created in collaboration with the Union Hidalgo community. It was decided that members of the community would wear letters forming the word ‘Neocolonialismo’ like crosses at stations of the Way of the Cross. The result is an impressive series of photographs which warn of the contemporary, 21st century colonialism which is being developed under the guise of ecological awareness and care for local communities.

The Spider in my Mind by Salomé-Charlotte Camors was created during a volunteer mission to Costarica with the aim of preserving untouched wilderness. The artist applies photographs to iron, invoking the fact that, due to oxidation processes, photographs have an inevitably short lifespan if they are not protected - just like our environment. The artist believes that her photographs are the trigger for reflection on our role and power to start positive changes. However, she doesn’t want to moralize. She emphasizes her activist role which spreads outside the boundaries of art. Zac Endter’s photograph entitled Espresso Bar depicts a seemingly warm and attractive café, reminiscent of American diners in the 60s. However, a more thorough scrutiny reveals a sinister atmosphere, leaving the viewer in a dubious mood because of the interweaving and erasure of the boundaries between the public and private space.

The common objective, which can be read from the individual works, should be a change in the current economic system, the growth towards a common good, i.e. the concept of degrowth which is often perceived as the solution for the salvation of Earth. It would also be very challenging to get the rest of humanity, the rich 20%, to share their wealth and ownership so that degrowth could lead to increased social justice. Many scientists point out that a fair, sustainable world is not possible because people simply aren’t evolutionally equipped to deal with the challenges which lie ahead. This is precisely why exhibited artworks revolving around the idea that a different world is possible and necessary are of great significance and value.

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