Social sculpture, Philanthropy in the Republic of Croatia

Why it is the most isolated and marginalized activity of conscious individuals

**FOREWORD**

**"Who does not want to think, flies out"**

**Joseph Beuys**

**From paraphrasing Beuys' saying "Who wants to think and act flies out" to a social sculpture without a pedestal in the cultural system, towards a possible miracle in the cultural system...**

...because we still somehow believe that human intelligence and exhibitions could change the world, you are reading this text and seeing the exhibition:

**France Prešern**

This exhibition realizes the plastic extended concept of social sculpture, poetically and shrewdly transformed into a manifestation, which explicitly mirrors artistic activism as a word spoken through the silence of the gaze, like an unpolished diamond on a velvet tray of engaged art. The mission of the exhibition resembles a mass of metaphors of love, which reside in the sky of our gazes, in dreams where you do not yet have dreams...in realities where we do not yet have a reality, and you have it. The idea for the exhibition was conceived after a conversation with a very good connoisseur of the art scene in Croatia and globally, of which he was a prominent protagonist. That conversation ended with an ironic tone and the sentence: Listen, when you're already spending money on crazy ideas, pay and keep quiet, just as we artists paint, suffer and keep quiet… I answered: It is a lack of good taste and culture when, on the money given for artists, the state charges a fine, and takes not only a symbolic amount, but a rather large one. Such a situation makes the thought of philanthropy very repulsive, and obstructs its concrete implementation. At the same time, the state is doing it in accordance with the law, and that law should be changed in favor of the artist for whom this humanitarian and intellectual assistance is intended. The donation agreement in the Republic of Croatia is such that you can see from the plane, that even if it had the best pilot, you will land wrongly with your intentions, figuratively speaking, you will land in the stone age of indifference. And he said to me: It is even more difficult for you to change that than to pay that tax... With that, you’re opening a Pandora's box. The system likes to defend its comfort. It would rather invest in declarative and manifestation changes, so it could be spared the real changes. The system has always tried and tested methods to silence, frighten and liquidate an individual from the cultural scene if necessary. I was talking to Vladimir Dodik Trokut, when he was still walking the Earth that we still walk on … I also talked with him about the fact that Slovenia made culture one of its national holidays, that of France Prešern, and how it would be great if Croatia also introduced something like that, so that the holidays are not only of a political, historical and religious nature. How to capitalize on the fact that Vladimir Dodik Trokut was born in Kranj, that he is a Croat and a Slovene, and since the Croatian cultural institutions disparage him so much, (there has been no retrospective exhibition after his death) while the Slovenian institutions have rehabilitated him...

**Money**

The two strongest poles that bring into interaction the dimensions of space and time that we call human life are certainly Love and Money. However, we need to bear in mind that Homo Sapiens did not invent Love or decide that it exists, but he feels, experiences and interprets it.... through life, its poetry and reality, and through art...

As for Money, the situation is diametrically opposite. The Man invented Money and decided that Money should exist. It is his deed or misdeed. Money does not exist in the entire system of Nature. Nature in this world has a different logic, or, are we ashamed to say, Genius? It is in the nature or, more precisely, in the imposed nature of man to earn and spend money. The Genius of Nature does not need money to realize the miracle of life and the entire spectrum of cycles that arise from that miracle. It is not so difficult to agree with the formula that the man lives for Love, but lives off Money.

Just as nature needs the sun to live, the man needs money to pay the costs of his existence and to materialize the hyper tertiary contents of that existence, the poles of Essence and Existence.

Essence equals Love, Existence equals Money. Welcome, Man, to the Planet Earth inhabited by Humans.

What is philanthropy in Croatia? A romantic utopia or a possible reality of today for a better tomorrow for artists and for the sustainable system of culture.

**How fascinating**

How fascinating is the narrative substance of various expressions of artistic poetics and the spectrum of nuances of individual creative expressions that emerge from them. This immanent matter is similar to volcanic magma, which art theorists and critics, with their words and intellectual constructs, so zealously want to frame, control, interpret, select, systematize, affirm or otherwise prevent from circulating through the well-trodden or still untrodden channels of civilization. For this, they studied, took exams, graduated, obtained master's or doctoral degrees... as a wise saying goes: stole a little joy from sadness and a little eternity from death... It's always nice when criticism manages to put an artist in the public light.

 The nomenclature of all civilizations, in all segments of art in the human history of existence on planet Earth, gives labels: avant-garde, neo-avant-garde, sensational, new or newer than new and vice versa. In a world where mental hospitals are repositories for the redundant, and culture is an exclusive refuge for the opposite of the redundant, fantasies of the mind receive triumphant praise and professional treatment in the show business of cultural institutions. They must enable contemporary Homo Sapiens, who are still chained by merciless chains of earning money and paying their living and other expenses, to consume the freedom and creativity that artists live. These Homo Sapiens or the so-called ordinary people do not have that kind of freedom, because they have to do the jobs that are most in demand and offer the so-called monthly salaries, health insurance and - at the end of the story of human existence – retirement in an increasingly tiring world...

In such a world, which is full of declarative engagements of social-artistic performances and full of offers of a better world and social justice through art and all possible activism arising from that apostolate, questioning everything, except the phenomenon which raises the question... finally it got the potential right of citizenship. Among many exhibitions and in this one, which is more impudent than polite, up to the sky and beyond the sky, cosmopolitan and altruistic on the verge of the forbidden to push the boundaries in a way that it embraces those boundaries with love, asks fairly because it also gives fairly.

Impudent, because almost in the same sentence, it does not put a noun but a verb, love, money, politics, truth, lie, being and pretending in its naturalistic element... and does not worry about disturbing public order and peace in culture.

Fair, because it doesn't pretend to be overly clever, avant-garde or phenomenal, it wants to be exactly what preceded cleverness, avant-garde or phenomenality, where the attempt speaks more than the result. Understand this as you please...... illegally possible or legally impossible... It wants to be outside of all those amplitudes and charged psychograms of megalomania...

**Just like Big Bang**

In fact, it is quite logical that the HDLU, with one of its members who initiated everything and started that pilot project, (a little more than seven years ago, in which fit compressed 100 years of solitude of the novel of the same name), wants to tear one away from social isolation. Because, paradoxically, the extent to which one is socially needed and useful is the same as one’s isolation. The Anonymous Philanthropist deals with this topic in a graphic and "modest" way similar to the Big Bang. With a small beginning, it expands and transforms that glaring gap in the culture system. In this context, he can certainly be identified as a global member of the Homo Sapiens society of the planet Earth. Although on a professional, intellectual, teaching and artistic level, he is almost not present in Croatia, and in other parts of the world he works with not one, but several pseudonyms, thus opposing the archaic concept of creating a name.

**From New York, Quebec to Paris, Kyiv, Moscow and further into Space...**

We have known each other since the days of the National Academy of Fine Arts in Paris, and even in the wildest artistic imagination I could not imagine that he deals not only with philanthropy but also with the difficulties of philanthropy, which developed democracies have long since solved for the benefit of artists and the reputation of the state. We live in two different cities, he is currently in Quebec after many cities, and I am permanently in New York, he was born in Paris and I was born in Athens. And now, in addition to being an active artist, he is also active in the function of the Anonymous Philanthropist who, as an engaged conceptual artist, places Beuys's paradigm of social sculpture in the public space of Croatian society and culture, to converge into a concrete result for the benefit of Croatian artists and culture. We live in two different cities, he is currently in Quebec after many cities, and I am permanently in New York, he was born in Paris and I was born in Athens. And now, in addition to being an active artist, he is also active in the function of the Anonymous Philanthropist who, as an engaged conceptual artist, places Beuys's paradigm of social sculpture in the public space of Croatian society and culture, to converge into a concrete result for the benefit of Croatian artists and culture.

In this case, the paradigm of social sculpture, through the initiator, the focus and the mission of the exhibition, has finally got its upgrade and the most concrete example in the functional reality. This is where things really change or not.  Where the masks are removed and, in parallel, beautiful words are replaced by concrete actions and empty promises, by the politics of the fait accompli. Everything else is theory without concrete application in everyday life.

**Acknowledgment**

From the bottom of our hearts and a very singular type of lavish intellectual modesty, we thank the laureates of this award. They have, by their example, made it possible for awareness to grow about the need for philanthropy on the Croatian cultural scene, as it is an established custom in the rest of Europe, through economic corporations in the form of sponsorships and donations, as well as through very delicately aware individuals, who have the intellectual and financial capacity for it. It is desirable that philanthropy be regulated and stimulated by an adequate law thus providing an incentive to spread the awareness and practice of it. It is important to distinguish between the concept of philanthropy and the reality of conscious individuals who have the intellectual and financial capacity for it. Because they advertise philanthropy as such and are at the very source of a better world, which, paradoxically, all politicians publicly swear is their mission, and they are like our great competition, or the other way around... Unlike various sponsorships of economic entities that invest and advertise themselves by funding art, although advertising in this case is secondary. This is one of the most important challenges for the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia, because it is about the bare existence of art and, so to speak, the naked and bare-to-the-bone dignity of the fine artist in the coldness and indifference of the functional reality of this world. It is about the devastation of a diverse cultural eco-system, as well as the eco-system of our planet, without which we cannot live.

**Waiting for Godot**

According to the current law, this experimental counterpoint prize, which has been awarded for more than 7 years in a row, in order to exist in a functional reality, imposed by the law of the stronger, is fined for philanthropy by the state, i.e. it successively faces a concrete and effective measure of disincentive of such activity in the field of culture in Croatia.

The measure is proportionally devastating, to the extent that philanthropy and its further development are very necessary for our present and future culture. Instead of a win-win strategy, it is still in a situation of waiting for Godot and breaking the ice.   
As Albert Einstein says: "Intellectuals solve problems, and geniuses prevent them from ever arising." According to this formula, the initiative and unadulterated impulse of the genius of the vision and mission of the prize is quite numb, stopped like a frozen frame of a story that has never been told to the end. As if all that remains is its intellectual perseverance, defiance and civil disobedience or a kind of pathetic activism that lasts as long as it lasts.

To paraphrase and expand on the saying of Voltaire;

It is delicate to be right in matters where governments and authorities are wrong.

For authorities have the power to put the vision into the dungeon of marginalization, which transforms the power of enthusiasm into un-energy.   
Be that as it may or not, the differences of legality and morality must remain uncompromising because they make up that ecosystem that does not take, but gives life to everything and everyone on this planet, our habitat, our residence and our home in the universe, be they legal, illegal or endless asylum seekers.

*"Happiness is a wandering bird, it doesn't like cages, but they like to lock people in cages". All that is good is not easy to do, and all that is bad is done with ease.* *That Earth, on which we are born and on which we walk and that Sky we look at, we will combine into unique drops of human effort that will strengthen us and illuminate the paths we have not yet walked, and leave behind us the paths that others have taken; through our works we will talk about the art and savoir-faire of the culture of the human race, to which we belong by birth, residence, the pathos of poetry, and to make visible both fatality and its invisible boundlessness...''*

Incorrigible idealists with their unspoken words still believe that the opposite is possible from the spoken maxim: Money is eternal... and human life is fleeting.

**Anonymous Philanthropist**, Québec, December 24, 2022 **Lidia Venieri**, New York

If space and art are your home, it's clear that you're homeless among people... and a seeker of cultural asylum for your worlds...