

Sometimes, there are moments that seem to hang in the air. Time passes, but the space condenses around these points as if something in us refuses to let go and move on. Being stuck then becomes more than just an internal state; it becomes the space around us. It is not the space through which we move, but the one in which we remain – an interior where feelings fade yet linger, sometimes return and repeat. In this sense, blockage can be understood as a state in which we remain attached to a certain affective moment despite the passage of time and changing circumstances. Such states often manifest in fixed images, gestures and places that become points of suspension, places where time ceases to be linear and becomes saturated, compressed, almost motionless.

In the work *Help, Where's the Exit from the Restaurant*, Andrej Drožđan constructs a charged atmosphere of being stuck – an installation that, through an imaginary restaurant, becomes a place of the impossibility of forgetting, letting go and escaping. The starting point of the work is the scenes evoked by contemporary pop songs, those that depict inner stagnations and moments of breakups, where emotions are trapped in space and time. Inspired by the image of a person left at a restaurant table, both literally and emotionally, Drožđan explores spaces in which emotions are not processed but persistently accumulated, displaced and revived. This is a place of stagnation, an emotional crossroads, where time stops flowing, and experiences remain served like an unfinished plate. The restaurant, typically a space for shared meals and encounters, is here transformed into a metaphorical interior of inner states, a landscape of nostalgia, loss and quiet discomfort.

The installation imagines a fictional restaurant where experiences are served: unresolved relationships, unwanted emotions, queer revelations, betrayals, misfits, artificial intimacy. The food, distorted and unfathomable, is not consumed by the body but by experience – each dish materialises a combination of emotional moments. Drožđan's restaurant is frozen in time, both ordinary and surreal.

A table set in the gallery presents a tableau of people/feelings/states, personified through plates, fabrics, and ready-mades. We do not see these people, but their presence is palpable: in fragments of a sewn tablecloth, textile collages, served cutlery, napkins, toothpicks, plates full of discomfort. Faded, blurred, dreamlike photographs appear on the tablecloth – a fusion of personal archive and manipulated fragments of reality – that seem to emerge from the fabric. These images are composed of materials collected through personal devices and archives, with added details, patterns and textures of real tablecloths. The installation uses everyday motifs of restaurant scenery – serving trolleys, plates, cutlery – which become carriers of unspoken micro-dramas.

The gallery space takes on the air of a stifling interior: a soundscape of muffled narration and ambient noises intensifies the atmosphere of emotional claustrophobia. The sound does not illustrate but creates a bridge between the visitor and the work, like the echo of unspoken sentences, a quiet longing or an internal monologue.

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The restaurant thus becomes an emotional landscape, a space between then and now, between leaving and staying. Droždan's restaurant functions as an introspective capsule in which the private and the collective, the real and the artificial, the everyday and the mythical are intertwined. The installation is not narrative in the classical sense – it is tactile, spatial, and layered. Each plate is a kind of souvenir of an unprocessed feeling, and each fragment of the tablecloth is a map of the inner world.

By including personal and other people's experiences – collected both online and offline – Droždan builds a spatial-emotional archive that resembles a museum of intimate losses. In his restaurant, the plate seems to become a time loop – a vicious circle of feelings that cannot be swallowed.

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