

Countless works and exhibitions have already sought to dissolve the fine lines between aesthetic appeal and art, speculating on both, criticising one, positioning themselves in a third space, approaching the subject from ethical or aesthetic, socio-critical or ironic perspectives. Every era demands and articulates new artistic themes, methods and social interrelations, and this most recent (post-)postmodern age does so somewhat more transparently, or perhaps this is merely the impression arising from our immersion in it, whereby everything is experienced more intensely, more densely, and more dramatically.

Bogdanić's *Vending Machine* is therefore neither the first nor certainly the last attempt to explain the world from the perspective of one's own and the general artistic role and position, yet it remains one of the most direct expressions of this endeavour in contemporary Croatian art. It is an "installation" that approaches the theme both literally and with ironic distance, absurdist and ethical in its emphasis on contradictions, while simultaneously blurring their boundaries and frameworks.

Essentially, this self-service machine is a reflection of modern and contemporary society, its need for the quick and easy, for technological advancement and optimisation, for efficiency and consumption, but also for a return to simpler times. By subversively appropriating this proto-robot creature, the artist presents her sculptural works as equally hollowed-out content, but with the aim of opening a dialogue. A dialogue about time, about society, about artistic value, about apathy.

Modelling in clay, that classical material, the artist produces a series of sculptural studies: torsos, hands, feet, animals, accessible and fundamental forms. By returning to these formative beginnings, she recalls the tradition and importance of craftsmanship, yet in the very next step, through 3D scanning and printing, she turns to new achievements and methods. She does this consciously, in order to satisfy insatiable and unsustainable appetites, the pressures for constant activity, presence, and innovation. These multiplied, yet authentic, sculptures are simultaneously an expression of the permanent division felt by most artists between their job and their vocation, between labour and authenticity, between the socially significant and the personally vital. Bogdanić honestly embraces this position, creating works that demand skill, yet reflect the drive for constant progress, optimisation, and digitisation.

Vending Machine is thus an exaggerated, even absurd, attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable, those dichotomies that perhaps do not even exist. Conflicts based on the eternal either-or-principle. Either high art or art that sells, either a proper career or a meagre existence, either the sanctity of the gallery or the shabbiness of the shop, and ultimately, either conformity or exclusion.

This repurposed, or rather appropriated, self-service machine provokes both interest and resistance. An ordinary machine, a symbol of the fast-paced society of the spectacle, is now trying to serve a work of art as a product, not as a product of the creative industries, but as art as we have known it until now. Its placement within the solemnity of the gallery thus more clearly exposes the artist's ironic strategy; however, its function is not merely mimicry of familiar

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forms and a subversion of consumerism, but is both of these and everything in between. These plastic objects are as much sculptures as they are products; they rely equally on manual labour and automated processes; the machine itself is as much a sculpture as it is an industrial apparatus; it is both a critique and an acceptance of reality. It is a question that is answered individually and collectively, monetarily and in terms of value. It is nothing more than its own essence, and nothing less than a continuation of intertwined relationships full of third options. All these connections, neuralgic points, and spaces in between are worth discussing, as well as reflecting on the broader implications of artistic practice that has always mirrored the reality from which it emerges.

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