

## **SHOW CASE: SCENE DESIGN SPACE** (Sideline programme of the Yugoslav Theatre Festival)

**Tatjana Dadić Dinulović, project author**

### **Scene design as artistic and curatorial practice**

Term scene design relates to professional, artistic, curatorial, theoretical and ideological practices developed from the expanded meaning of scenography – as semantic category and artistic discipline. It has been introduced into Serbian language to indicate a joint process of conception, creation and realisation of a scene in the broadest sense of the word. Or more precisely, to signify a creation of a complex synaesthetic environment, physical or metaphorical, much broader than actual theatre space, in which scene can be build or thought. In professional theatre practice, scene design connects several artistic disciplines - design of a performing space and set, costume, sound and light design, joint together in the process of creating theatre performance. As a complex artistic and curatorial practice, scene design belongs to interdisciplinary field - it stands at the crossroads of theatre, architecture, visual arts, performance, installation, site-specific projects, written text and new media, but also interdisciplinary art *per se*. By taking the space “in between” disciplines, scene design becomes an open model for artistic research and practice, as well as a core drive for a large number of artistic and curatorial works. Since orientation towards a “white cube“ (an ideal exhibition space) or a “black box” (an ideal performing space) has undoubtedly been questioned, there is a possibility for a hybrid environment in which belonging to a discipline, except in ideological sense, seizes to be the most important topic. As a result of this process, scene design outside theatre practice can be defined not only as “scenography expanded” but as art on its own. Every process which includes scenic way of thinking, scenographic means of expression and “desire” to become a spectacle can be defined as independent scene design artwork.

## **Scene design space**

“Scene Design Space” programme is showcasing artistic and curatorial practices of scene design in Serbia and the region. The first selection criterion has been my personal perception of the works, followed by diversity of artistic outcomes, forms and means of expression, variety of performing environments and types of audience, as well as specific circumstances in which works were created or diversity of media used. It is also important to note the range of artists’ profiles – in terms of their formal education, areas of work and means of expression, or their conscious or unintentional decision to use scene design as way of thinking.

There are three reasons why the Yugoslav Theatre Festival “Without translation” serves as natural environment for such a curatorial - artistic project.

First relates to the fact that, usually, theatre festivals are places to “exhibit” and evaluate set and costume design; less often composed music or selected stage music; and rarely sound or light design, or any other aspect of scene design in theatre. In this context, Showcase programme aims at emphasising the need for recognition and articulation of theatre scene components – visual, auditive and all other media lines addressing different senses or all senses at the same time. Naturally, once again, we need to remember the Biennial of Scene Design, the most important and the largest manifestation dedicated to design and technical production in performing arts in this part of Europe, officially using term scene design for the first time in Yugoslavia/Serbia. Dealing with various forms of performing activities, this manifestation has determined the framework for further development of scene design, mainly in terms of conventional drama theatre and national production but, also, applicable to other forms of artistic work. Second reason relates to the physical space of the National Theatre in Užice, not only because this is one of the rare contemporary buildings in ex-Yugoslavia purposely designed for theatre, but also because it has a unique urban position, both in terms of character and meaning. It holds a dominant position in the city

centre and, at the same time, represents an “urban royal box” from which the monumental stage of the Partizan Square can be perceived. One of the rare, if not the only, square left by contemporary urbanism to our cities, this square brings huge performing potential and meaning – in terms of historical, cultural, environmental and, even, ideological sense. And finally, artistic and production efforts of the Yugoslav Theatre Festival to preserve its nominal and cultural importance, as well as to continue its development with the same title and in circumstances which by no means are favourable, represents an important and unusual fact for the culture in Serbia and Serbian society in general. Selection of works in the Showcase programme directly is based on these three issues.

## **Space and body**

### **Dorijan Kolundžija: “Displacements”**

Art work “Displacements” by Dorijan Kolundžija represented Serbia at the Prague Quadrennial 2011, the most important world manifestation dedicated to performance space and design. This project has been initiated as a collaborative platform to explore principal aspects of contemporary art production and live performance. It consists of six small “black boxes” – physical spaces which, at the same time, compose frame for virtual space of holographic performing events, performed and recorded in another real space. “Video, audio, performance streaming, web presence and holographic projection are the mediums used as materials from which the artwork emerges”, say Dorijan Kolundžija and co-curators Ana Adamović and Milica Pekić. The work deals with the questions of physical presence and absence, direct and mediated experience (of both performer and the audience) and intimate in relation to the spectacular (performance vs. watching). It, also, raises the question of exhibiting elements of performing event outside the actual performing space, as well as storing and archiving of the performing work. “Displacements”, therefore, represents extraordinary scene design work in every of the mentioned aspects.

### **Marina Radulj: “Body never lies”**

At the same manifestation in Prague, Marina Radulj presented her art project “Body never lies” developed with the 4<sup>th</sup> year students of architecture at the Faculty of Architecture and Civil Engineering in Banjaluka. Together with Monika Ponjavić, Marina Radulj initiated and realised a complex research procedure in which students of architecture exploited their own bodies in the process of examining existential space, especially looking for the relation between space and event. Here, a body is seen both as instrument of spectacle and a building material. At the same time, body represents physical frame for inner space, theatrical and dramatic similarly to the physical space inhabited by the bodies. This project, realised in the public space of Banjaluka, media spaces of photography and video, virtual space of various construction means, as well as spiritual space of each individual and a group as a whole, was completed by a performing event which could be classified as *site-specific*. It used a space of the “Tereza” building, constructed for military purposes during Austro-Hungarian government in Bosnia and Herzegovina, later used by ex-Yugoslav National Army, then Republic of Srpska Army and, finally, given to local university for educating young architects. This space of exceptional environmental value and strong performing potential already was exploited for various artistic researches as part of the architectural curriculum. However, this project made it true dramatic space, the one that Ognjenka Milićević called “space: drama character”.

### **Mia David: “Peep Show”**

Mia David derives her spatial constructs from her inner intimate being and stage them through establishing micro-spatial levels, those that could be recognised as “hand” levels. In her art project entitled “Peep Show” Mia David creates completely closed worlds, placed within variously shaped and dimensioned metal boxes. Of course, it is impossible to enter the boxes but it is possible to look through many peepholes placed on the surface. Inside the boxes, occupying physical exhibition space, there are complex art installations, illuminated and composed of various artefacts, some of them being part of the most intimate

history of the author. Photographs, excerpts of written texts and different objects, construct various structures, undoubtedly theatrical and exceptionally scenic. "The actual physical space occupied by the boxes-objects stands for a metaphor of our internal psychological mechanisms which keep us imprisoned. This work deals with voyeurism; with human curiosity; and with boundaries of intimacy and its phantasmagorical constructions", says Mia David, adding that this is how "fragments of someone's past, interrupted images, words, places and reflections, become sufficient material for an "innocent viewer" to compile a powerful puzzle, create firm beliefs and become a judge". By their nature, inner spaces of Mia David's boxes easily can be related to those of Dorijan Kolundžija, although first ones were created some years before. Furthermore, Kolundžija's boxes are inhabited with other people, while Mia David fills hers with her own world.

#### **Tijana Đuričić: "Two Owls"**

There was no need for Tijana Đuričić to construct anything. She dedicated herself to researching her primary existential space – her own body, not by taking it to another space (such in Marina Radulj's work), but by using her inner space as source of new energy – in this case, sound. As an active opera singer and artist of a specific sensibility, Tijana Đuričić is inspired by a solo voice composition "Two Owls" written by Hideki Kozakura, contemporary Japanese composer, and based on the lyrics of a Czech poet Petr Borkovec. She explores and activates all her creative potentials, exploiting the music in the broadest sense of the word. Obviously, this work does not showcase scene design as a process of space construction or space articulation, although the actual realisation can be seen as a performing act, supplemented by relevant theatrical means, above all stage light. However, this is not necessary (and even is undesirable), since actual performance, as special production of sound image, becomes authentic and complete work of art. Not only that this represents scene design but also stands for the most direct paradigm of one of the possible meanings of this discipline – body, as generator of sound, becomes a generator of spatial image.

### **Vesna Mićović: “Photo-studio ‘The Republic of Užice’”**

The main subject of Vesna Mićović’s work is photographic image. This project, conceived as real photographic studio, contains the highest possible level of interactivity and represents semi-spontaneous or semi-directed performing event in which the process of creation of photography (seen as event construction) is abreast with the process of creation of photographic image (seen as visual art). Although not realised at the Yugoslav Theatre Festival (due to unforeseen reasons), this project was already performed twice in Belgrade dealing with two different topics - “Carnivals” and “Pioneers”. “The power of photography to appropriate reality or suspend time and events is irresistible”, says Vesna Mićović, “regardless of the fact that it is a fictional medium – time can not be stopped the way photography depicts it, while everything that photography shows might be a created reality”. This exact nature of the medium is explored as part of Vesna Mićović’s idea, inspired by the historical event – establishment of the first liberated territory in Europe during II World War, which survived for seventy three days.

### **Biographies**

Dorijan Kolundžija (Belgrade, 1976) is applied graphics and new media artist. He graduated Applied Graphics from the Faculty of Applied Arts in Belgrade, and received MA in Fine Arts, Design, Art and Technology from Peck School of the Arts at the American University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee. He was artistic director of the Belgrade Summer Festival. Currently Kolundžija runs „Gallery 12+” new media solutions studio and works as artistic director of KIOSK platform for contemporary arts. He participated in numerous solo and group exhibitions in Serbia and internationally. He is a lecturer in new media at Megatrend University in Belgrade, School of Art and Design.

Marina Radulj (Banjaluka, 1978) is an architect. She graduated Architecture from the Faculty of Architecture and Civil Engineering at the University of Banjaluka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, where she works as higher teaching instructor and architect. She received PhD in Scene Design from the University of Arts in Belgrade, and was a visiting scholar at the Arizona State University, Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts, School of Architecture. Her PhD project entitled BA(O)SNA deals with experiencing space and articulating narratives of confused identities in public spaces. Currently she has been developing artistic and research project *BODYNEVERLIES* with Monika Ponjavić.

**Mia David** (Belgrade, 1974) is an architect, a visual artist and a cultural manager. She is engaged in exploring and designing of the space. She graduated Architecture from the Faculty of Architecture in Belgrade, and received MA and PhD in Scene Design from the University of Arts in Belgrade. She is an author of a number of projects in the area of architecture, design, scenography and art, as well as numerous articles. She exhibited her architectural and scene design art works in Serbia, Montenegro, Germany, Russia, Italy and Czech Republic, including Venice Biennial of Architecture (2004) and Venice Theatre Biennial (2007. and 2009). She was a curator and one of the authors of the Serbian architectural presentation at the Prague Quadrennial (2011). She was co-founder and Editor-in-chief of the “Kvart” magazine. She is a guest lecturer at the Faculty of Drama Art in Belgrade. Currently, Mia David is a Director of Belgrade Cultural Centre.

Tijana Đuričić (Belgrade, 1983) is a performing artist who uses voice as main means of expression. She graduated Cultural management and Journalism from the Academy of Fine Arts in Belgrade, as well as Opera Singing from the Faculty of Philology and Arts in Kragujevac. She is the member of the National Theatre Opera Studio in Belgrade and Association of Music Artists of Serbia. She performed in Serbia, Italy, France, Germany and Japan. She works as a Teaching Assistant at the Academy of Fine Arts in Belgrade.

Vesna Mićović (Belgrade, 1965) is a photographer. She graduated Photography from the Academy of Arts in Belgrade. She is engaged in photography as contemporary art practice as an artist, a curator and a teacher. She exhibits her own art at solo and group exhibitions. At the same time, she is engaged in curatorial projects. Her works were on show in Serbia, Slovenia and France. She teaches photography at Nova Academy of Arts in Belgrade.

Tatjana Dadić Dinulović (Belgrade, 1963) works in theory and practice of scene design, exploring phenomenology of performing events and relation between artist, media and space. She received an MA in Scene Design, MSc in Theory of Arts and Media, and PhD in Scene Design from the University of Arts in Belgrade. She published two books, a substantial number of articles in scientific and professional journals and presented papers at international conferences. She exhibited her scene design art works in Serbia, Montenegro, Italy, Czech Republic and Bosnia and Herzegovina, including Venice Biennial of Architecture (2004) and Prague Quadrennial (2007). She is a Lecturer at the Academy of Fine Arts and NOVA Academy of Arts in Belgrade, as well as visiting lecturer at the Faculty of Technical Sciences in Novi Sad for PhD programme in architecture and urbanism.