OpenLab_WonderLab

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Project *WonderLab* represents a construct of interrelated artistic, educational, scientific, technological and performative content promoting the association between art, nature, science and technology, areas which overlap in contemporary artistic theories and practices, as evidenced by experiments of individuals and many recent international festivals, publications and events on the regional and international art scenes. The aim of the project is to encourage creativity and experiment by intercrossing art and science, the results of new research and the possibilities of modern technology, through an intermedia and post media art practice. In recent years, visible progress has been made domestically in such a practice, hence it is necessary to provide a starting platform and institutional support for the development of the local art scene and its connection/ networking with international protagonists, especially on the regional scene.

The early development of media art was marked by the interest of artists in the use of new technological opportunities, the use of new tools (cameras, computers, projectors, etc.), often absorbed by fascinating effects that could be produced through such practice, and the need for recording temporary art events and processual situations, in order to archive art activities. This kind of approach has been characteristic of the 1970s and 1980s and numerous conceptual artists in the region of ex-Yugoslavia, who, at that time, were the first to use modern technology. Over time, critical media practice began to develop rapidly, especially during the 1990s, particularly focused on the analysis of mass-media culture and current political events that were, at the time, destroying the known geopolitical and social context of Southeast Europe. During the 21st century, a new generation of artists has been gradually developing, ones who use the possibilities of modern technology with ease, experiment with them, at the same time criticizing systems, laws and consequences their implementation produces.

The need for experimentation, interdisciplinary approach, innovation of well-known artistic and scientific techniques and methods, testing new content, critical observation of consumerist society, scientific discoveries, closed technical systems and reconstructing imposed mechanical devices has become increasingly common among many artists interested in the problems of the impact of modern technology on society. A new generation of artists grew up with the use of technical aids, following their expansion in recent years, which has led to changes in their mode of work, mutual communication, and a number of new situations that increasingly affect the daily lives of individuals, changing established habits, patterns of behavior and the value systems of society.

The theoretical base of such practices is constituted by some of the views of Félix Guattari, Gilles Deleuze, Rosalind Krauss, Lev Manovich, Peter Weibel, Howard Slater and many others who

analyze the position of the media in visual arts, criticizing the dominant visual-centric aesthetic concept, as opposed to the affirmation of a conceptualized haptic, affective, pulsating (bodily) perception in the post (new) media art world, with an aspiration to extend the post media practice to conceptual art, installations and relational aesthetics (Rosalind Krauss) or the expansion of new art forms heterogeneous in their materiality, with an emphasis of artists on the "sociological" and not the material properties of the work, and the adoption of digital tools of production, storage and distribution used by the mass media (Lev Manovich).

Through the analysis of individual artistic research we can observe several visible strategies of the impact of contemporary post media practices, among which are: bioart, sound art, device art (DIY and DIWO practices), net and web art, VR art, lumino-kinetic, interactive, haptic robotic, cyber, hybrid art and the like, with no clearly defined boundaries and mutual divisions, leaving room for further development and mutual relations. The concept of the *WonderLab* exhibition is not aimed towards a specific phenomenon but tends to point out the wide possibilities of connecting art, nature, science and technology through the work of artists involved: Albena Baeva (BG), Marko Batista (SL), Wu Chi-Tsung (TW), *diStruktura* (RS), Spartak Dulić (RS), Izvanredni Bob (RS), Dragan Ilić (USA/RS), Mirko Lazović (RS/NL), Darija Medić (RS), Špela Petrič (SL), Robert Pravda (RS/NL), Radiona.org (HR), Marica Radojčić (RS), Robertina Šebjanič (SL), Maja Smrekar (SL), Saša Spačal (SL), Saša Tkačenko (RS), Isidora Todorović (RS), Zoran Todorović (RS), Projekat 0 (RS) and through the research of the Centre for Intermedia and Digital Art MSUV (*Apsolutno*, Predrag Šiđanin, Vladan Joler, Stevan Kojić, Nataša Teofilović ...).

WonderLab aspires towards the formation of a lab within traditional museum practices, without striving to discover major scientific ideas and truths, the prerogative of genuine science labs, rather enabling free artistic activity, experimentation and reconstruction of existing, traditional art-institutional systems. Many invited artists focus on the use of open source hardware, hacking of closed systems, and applications of DIY philosophy (DIY and DIWO), recycling of various electronic devices, from old mechanical devices to new technological equipment, thus indicating the potential of machinery and wide possibilities of constructing new devices. It is a typical practice of artists in the West, known as *makers*, the basic concept of their work being experimentation in multidisciplinary projects and criticism of imposed techno-economic systems.

Some artists engage in research of the information flow through different media, and exploring the potential of transforming the visual impulse into an audio or motoric signal, and vice versa, using various sensors that react to human movement in space, light or sound changes, utilizing simple or advanced software, Arduino and other microprocessors. The interaction between machine - space / sound / light - a man and/or vegetable, animal and nano-organism is becoming ever more present through the critical analysis of traditional knowledge and the desire for questioning various phenomena and relations: from testing climate conditions, spatial limitations, light and sound phenomena, to the relationship of "animate" and "inanimate" nature, mutation of organisms,

biodiversity and life cycles.

Criticism of the consumerist system and the use of user friendly closed technical devices, which we cannot change and adapt to ourselves, has also been one of the ideas present in many works, as well as testing of Internet freedoms and digital rights, opportunities of blogging, social networking, communication and information exchange.

These forms of artistic activism in recent years are become more present, both on the international art scene, as well as the regional one, through art projects, among which are: Ars Electronica, Linz; Device Art and Touch Me Festival *Kontejner*, Zagreb; *Kiblix* Multimedia Center *KIBLA*, Maribor; *Soft Control*, Maribor, Slovenj Gradec, Belgrade, Rijeka, Prague Riga, Barcelona, Porto; *Share Foundation*, Belgrade, Beirut, Rijeka; *Resonate* Belgrade Festival of New Media, Belgrade; *HackteriaLab*, Bangalore and activities of organizations such as: the Center for New Media *Ljudmila*, Ljubljana; *Kapelica* Gallery, Ljubljana; *Radiona,* Zagreb; *Gallery 12Hub*, Belgrade; Institute for Flexible Media *Napon*, Novi Sad; Media Space – RIXC, Riga; CIANT - International Centre for Art and New Technologies, Prague; KSEVT - Cultural Centre of European Space Technologies, Slovenia; CERN - European Organization for Nuclear Research in Geneva, and many others.

As a segment of development of media and post media practices, Museum of Contemporary Art Vojvodina founded the Center for Intermedia and Digital Art (2013) with the aim of mapping, systematic study, collection, preservation and presentation of intermedia practices and digital culture. It started collecting works of art (computer, net and web art, virtual reality art, video-games, 3D animation, bioart, device art, media installations, sound art, art actions, interventions, art in public spaces and performative art forms [performance, body art, paratheatre ...]), followed by the introduction of new museological methods of archiving and protection. Project *WonderLab* was designed as an open public segment of the Centre for Intermedia and Digital Art, focusing on the affirmation of interdisciplinary and hybrid approaches to art, development of media and post media practices, criticism of leading economic media systems, as well as the continuation of the introduction of new functions to the Museum in relation to different processes in contemporary culture.

Project *WonderLab* commences with the gathering of artists, art groups, curators, theorists and scholars from Serbia, the region of former Yugoslavia, and the international scene, who have the opportunity to present their works at the exhibition, through lectures, AV performances and workshops that center on the inclusion of local artists and students interested in media installations, bioart, device art, sound art, etc. The concept of the project is directed towards the affirmation of dialogue and exchange of knowledge among the participants, the development of post media art practices stemming from criticism of contemporary environment and pointing out the importance of openness to the public and its inclusion in the artistic and technological museological practices.