



Jože Barši - retrospective exhibition, Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova (2013)

<http://www.mg-lj.si/node/1042>

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1. Exhibition Concept

The exhibition is an art exhibition about the retrospective overview of Jože Barši's art work. Jože Barši is a Slovene architect and academic sculptor, who believes art is something to discuss and for everybody. In this sense also his exhibition reflects his philosophical ideas and views on art. He wants for this exhibition to be "alive" that is why he has started a seminar about contemporary art 5 months before the opening of the exhibition. The seminar was admission free and the side idea behind it was to prepare participants to be able to give guided tours for other visitors on this exhibition. The ideal plan was to have half of the participants, who are already retired and the other half would consist of students. These two groups would be combined into pairs (one retired person and one student) for the duration of the exhibition to perform guided tours with their own, individual opinion about the exhibition and displayed work. Unfortunately retired people were not interested in this kind of cooperation and they rather attend their own meetings in context of the exhibition (actually the representative of the old people's home has defended this position in the name of the elderly).

A retrospective exhibition does not represent the artist's works in linear chronological order, but rather focuses on a few sets, which can be traced in Barši's work since the end of the nineties: "architecture", "cooperation", "perception" and "knowledge ". The integral parts of the exhibition are the events that take place in a special room at the exhibition. These events include continuation of the pre-mentioned seminar on contemporary art, leading by artists himself from last December and a reading seminar Value criticism by Workers' Punk University organized now in showrooms.

Events, which are substantially related to the exhibition are organized in collaboration with various individuals and groups, as well is the space reserved for the public exercises, presentations, workshops and talks, and regular meetings with seniors in the retirement home camp.

2. Reception

The Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova (MSUM) has a strong transnational orientation, but in this case the visitor's participation and activity is in absolute priority. The exhibition is still on display, so the total number of visitors cannot be predicted, as well as not the number of events and its visitors. But there were a few regular groups of participants on the events, who visit the museum regularly.

3. Exhibition Design

The exhibition design was made by the artist himself in a way it gives visitors space to decide, whether they want to see the exhibition, or do they want to simply enjoy the view from the windows. There are also "hidden" spots and nooks, where the visitors can get more information on displayed works, if they want to or they can leave their thoughts, impressions or participate in any other way.

4. Visitors Approach-Activation/Participation

The wish behind the exhibition is to make it as open as possibly to all kinds of people. Usual visitor's practice is very limited to those, who are interested in contemporary art. But at this occasion the participants and visitors are young, old, art lovers and art haters. They are practicing yoga, relaxing techniques, knitting and reading (since books, texts and words are usual Barši's working material). Events during the exhibition include reading seminars, contemporary art seminars, workshops, etc. – all that makes the museum an open space.

5. Conclusion: Jože Barši's retrospective exhibition in respect to the COP2

In this case we could talk about the visitor as the ultimate judge of the art. Only the opinion of the visitors is something that matters. Barši speaks about the awoken visitor, who is no longer willing to perceive and receive, but to be active. Less than that is not good enough. There is no special program for disabled public, but there is a strong emphasis on older generations and to change their usual living setting – retirement home and to give them the importance they deserve. This gives them extra value and a chance to express their own view on contemporary art (related to Toolkit 2 – integrating cultural Europe - social



arena). Since Barši strongly defends the participatory museum, he also sympathizes with the idea of role modification (related to Toolkit 3 – activation, participation and & role modification): there is a slight role modification when leaving one area of the exhibition to Workers' Punk University to create their own exhibition within the exhibition and to have their reading seminars in the museum. Also all the events radiate high level of democracy and freedom, unusual or at least rare in Slovenian museums. Most of the interaction is happening live, at the spot, but there are also web connections of the seminar participants to discuss and argue about some international texts about art and philosophy. Everything on the web is in Slovene language, which can be excluding for the potential foreign visitors (Toolkit 5 - Social web and interaction).



Image 1: display space, used for events, MSUM
Photo: Matija Pavlovec, 2013

Beginning of the exhibition and also space for some of the events



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Image 2: display space, used for events and seminars, MSUM

Photo: Matija Pavlovec, 2013

Display room with coffee-seminar space



Image 3: display space, used for a charity workshop on making home slippers, MSUM

Photo: Urška Purg, 2013