

Jasmina Cibic: Topical Devices

Tuesday 18 July, 2017

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20 July–30 September 2017

Special event: 15 September 2017

NN Contemporary Art is delighted to present *Topical Devices*, a new exhibition by Jasmina Cibic. This exhibition represents a concise moment in Jasmina Cibic's current practice. A distillation of recent research into a specific objective arrangement, it is simultaneously a fragment of a much larger project, and yet complete as an iteration of the whole. At its centre stands that most pervasive figure in art history, the female nude.

Cibic's films, photographs and installations are often populated by female figures. Sometimes speaking, sometimes mute, they dance, decorate and proclaim, acting as mouthpieces through which intricately researched tracts on the nature of power, aesthetics and statecraft pour forth. These ciphers are always formed by that which they appear to represent, even when the contents of their rhetoric is contradictory and garbled. They follow in the dubious tradition of the allegorical female, descendants of stately mother nations. The certainties of those great ages of nation-building gone, the trace and the archive here replace the sound and the fury in a double-game. Key to Cibic's work is her ability to play with fragmentation – highlighting basic "building blocks", be it in language, design or architecture, and representing them in isolation. Upon encountering the quarantined fragments, the spectator cannot help but attempt to reconstruct them, to imagine them in their original formation, and in doing so encounter the foundation of ideological and political thought.

Each element speaks of its place of origin, and is infused with a variable effective half-life, charged with former ideologies that only deplete in potency over time. The elements that make up this particular constellation derive their sources from three historical structures. This first is Dragiša Brašovan's pavilion for the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, built for the occasion of the 1929 Barcelona World Exposition, which according to legend received the first prize at the Exposition. Due to political intrigue it subsequently lost that honour to the German Pavilion and its architect Mies Van der Rohe. The female nude that stands at the centre of this exhibition is taken from the pavilion's entrance, here remodelled based on fragmentary and incomplete photographic documentation. It replaces the original whilst contradicting it, resurrecting this problematic emblem at the same time as overwriting it.

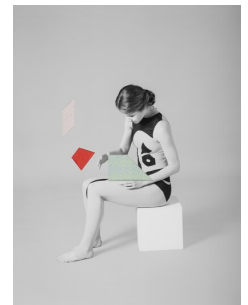
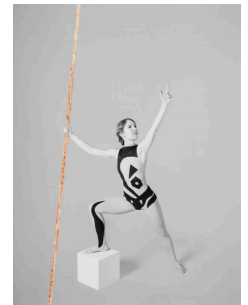
The second site of reference is the Former Palace of the Federation in Belgrade, from which a tapestry has been co-opted and 'mass-produced'. As Brašovan's nude, repurposed and re-contextualized by Cibic stands with the crypto-permanence embodied in its art-historical form, the repetitive facsimiles that background it fade as their historical potency depletes. Elsewhere we see their fixity restored in photographs of the Former Palace, distant in their documentary clarity, yet alluring by way the allegorical females placed in front of them.

The third site is another structure designed to sell Yugoslavia's European potential. Now a republic, it modeled itself as a leading nation in the Non-Aligned Movement. In Cibic's film *NADA: Act I*, Vjenceslav Richter's original design for the 1958 Brussels World Exposition is realised, complete with its censored spire, albeit in the guise of a musical instrument. Once strung, a variation on Béla Bartók's *Magnificent Mandarin* is performed. It was this controversial pantomime ballet that was chosen by the Yugoslav Republic to represent it to the international audience on the Nations' Day in Brussels.

Gathering together these symbols and iconographies, Cibic's projects present a synthesis of gesture, stagecraft and re-enactment. Instantiated in films and installations, hers is also an ongoing performative practice, an 'enacted' exercise in the dissection of statecraft. Her multilayered approach draws together primary sources and falsified narratives. This willful overwriting creates shifting meanings and highlights historical uncertainties and untruths, especially in the gendering of the past. Cibic plays a double-game, at once decoding mechanisms of power whilst building her own exemplary allegorical structures. Hers is a practice that addresses the ways in which visual language, art, architecture, and rhetoric are deployed and instrumentalised by political regimes, before investigating what happens to these fragments when the ideologies they endorse collapse.

About the artist

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Jasmina Cibic's work is site and context specific, performative in nature and employs a range of activity, media and theatrical tactics to redefine or reconsider an existent environment and its politics. Her work draws a parallel between the construction of national culture and its use value for political aims, encouraging the viewer to consider the timelessness of psychological and soft power mechanisms that authoritarian structures utilise in their own reinsertion and reinvention. The basic gesture in her artistic explorations is the dismantlement and careful analysis of the work of art, its representation, and its relationship to the viewer as she tries to operate inside the system she is investigating. Jasmina Cibic represented Slovenia at the 55th Venice Biennial with her project For Our Economy and Culture.

Her recent exhibitions include solo shows at: Aarhus 2017, Esker Foundation Calgary, Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb, Museum of Contemporary Art Belgrade, Museum of Contemporary Art Vojvodina, MGLC Ljubljana and Ludwig Museum Budapest.

Cibic's films have been screened at Pula Film Festival, HKW Berlin, CCA Laznia, Les Rencontres Internationales Paris, Dokfest Kassel and Copenhagen International Documentary Festival. In 2016 Jasmina Cibic has been nominated for the Jarman Award and was the winner of the MAC International Ulster Bank and Charlottenborg Fonden awards.

www.jasminacibic.org

More information on the exhibition and information about NN can be found at

www.nncontemporaryart.org

Ends

Notes to editors:

NN is a contemporary art space in the centre of Northampton, United Kingdom.

Opening hours: Wednesday–Saturday 11am–6pm

NN is supported by:

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Northampton Borough Council

Northampton County Council

The University of Northampton

Northampton Community Foundation

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Company Contact:

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