

ROBOACTION(s) //

DRAGAN ILIC // FROM 1 TO 10 AND FURTHER ON..

INTERRUPTION: THE 30TH LJUBLJANA BIENNIAL OF GRAPHIC ARTS

"The process of creation that comes from human interaction with machines fascinates me. It is the primary theme in my work. Much of my practice focuses around the tools of artistic production. I have created numerous installations and performances wherein, with my entire body, I set in motion individually-fabricated drawing devices that I have produced. My devices are comprised of sets of graphite or colored pencils, pastels, or brushes that are clamped together in a straight, parallel line of two to five hundred pieces. The works created through the convergence of the artist's body, tools, and participating audiences, produces an event, an experience of energy, sound, and imagery."

The key or the starting point in my work is conceptual analysis and de/reconstruction of the process of drawing as inscription of bodily and machine-based activities on paper and other drawing materials and opening the space for communication of ideas or realization of specific artistic intentions.

Dragan Illic deals with the conceptual analysis of the process of drawing as an expressive form in visual arts, and with technologies of inscribing bodily actions onto the surface of the paper. His works thematize the process of the creation of a drawing, materials used in that process and the technological devices that mediate in it. Whatever is being used or activated in the process of producing a drawing is being introduced this way into the realm of the art: pens, brushes, tubes and pencils, different prosthetic devices that intercede their utilization, as well as the system of transfer utensils which move them within the frame of an interactive, technologically mediated performance, which enables the visitors to produce the drawing themselves by the use of remote controlled home robots.

Works of Dragan Illic investigate the relation between technology and imagination, autonomy of artistic expression and the automatism of mechanical action, as well as the relation between the diagram and the drawing, in the process of work that involves the use of artificial intelligence in the course of a drawing action. Automatized devices that produce the work exhibited in the show were introduced into the drawing practice in order to brake the routine of the draftsman and the skill of performing a graphic figure, forcing thereby the author to get to the same level as any visitor in respect of the competences for the act of drawing. The hand of the draftsman, mechanical and electronic devices that usually serve as its extensions, pens, brushes, pencils and tubes attached to them in order to bring about the performing of the act in the creative sense, are being here brought down to their basic materiality, and introduced in a privileged way into the spatial settings and actions, as their only content, or the instantiation of the topic of the exhibition in a straight and direct manner.

The artist in this context is represented as the panic subject of the technologically framed civilization, in which the difference between the mechanical prosthesis and its organic bearer, between the individual body of the artist and the collective, media interceded / produced collective body of the collective to which he belongs, between the act of creation and its simple mechanical reproduction, as well as between the products and byproducts of art is being gravely diminished through various hybrid forms. Authorship in this performance is shared between all participants in the event - the artist, who is the carrier of the action in fact produces the context in which the drawing is being shaped through the interaction between the temporary users of refurbished robots and the minimal setting of the gallery space, where the whole floor is in fact a sheet of paper that keeps bearing the traces of whatever is being physically introduced into the setting, including the audience and the robots.

One can encounter here also a total de-sublimation of myths on draftsman's skills, on the hand of the master, and on the transgressiveness of entering the space of the image, or any other visual representation. Immediate, physical entering into the space of the drawing, and leaving traces of one's own rhythms on it, does not hold as a sole privilege of an artist, but a necessity of being present in the event, and taking over the mandate for active participation in producing a visual representation and its inauguration into a drawing of a new kind.

"Physics and mathematics inform my work. I explore in visual and aural terms the power of technology - manual and robotic - in collaboration with human volition and intuition. My work considers the threshold between our quasi-android relationship with tools today and the robotics of tomorrow."

In the first half of the 1970s prompted by frequent conflicts with artistic, social and political establishment and attempts to find new ways of expression, I intuitively grabbed an entire handful of wooden pencils and began to draw. The change that can be traced in my work at precisely that point has occurred as a result of discovering new possibilities in classical artistic disciplines such as drawing. My artistic destiny and at the same time my position as a citizen have also been determined by the decision to publicly oppose the overthrowing of the rather progressive Australian government which paradoxically and symbolically had been initiated due to allegedly bad investment in future state-owned collection of modern art. As a witness of the abuse of international artistic legacy of modern civilization in the name of local daily-political manipulation, I have decided to leave not just the physical and living space and environment in which I have for the first time actively participated in artistic and public life and to become an artist-activist - my rebellion against the use of culture in the name of short-term political goals has found its „sanctuary“ in technology, functioning to this day as a permanent creative extension and as a communication interface in works which address both challenges of the future and risks of research and the form, the media and the genre of thousand-year-long tradition of „image of (our) civilization“.