

The phenomenon of two coherent waves meeting at the same place

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Nika and I established a dialogue in the autumn of 2018, when I was her supervisor of master's degree in sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design, University of Ljubljana. She was distinguished by a desire to learn about materials, wherein her way of working was empirical research; She performed experiments, tested the properties of materials by exposing them to unusual conditions, bred and observed the life (micro)organisms etc. Her study approach also included the exploration of sound and the introduction of electronics and computer programming into the artistic process, which led her to consider noise, among other things. As a result, we started to exchange views of its pollution impact on biotopes in nature and on human, with Erjavec raising at least two key questions that accompany her work, namely: How to present such an 'intangible' topic in a material form? And how to connect it with contemporary socio-ecological topics?

In parallel to her artistic research, also problems related to production dynamics emerged. These dictated the logistical decisions that Nika established as a part of her working process. With the desire to create large objects, but without the opportunity to work in a large private space, she temporarily transformed the gallery into an artistic studio, introduced the materials from the surroundings and assembled them in situ. As a result, she established a systematic working method, which she divides into three parts: she builds artistic objects from (a) basic construction materials; (b) as their integral parts, she uses banal-everyday objects and toys, composed of mechanical devices and mechanisms; (c) her installations always include discarded natural materials, gathered in the area surrounding the gallery, such as: invasive plants, felled trees, or weeds from overgrown building pits.

The exploration of noise led Erjavec to get acquainted with membranes of latex balloon layers, which she composed into several layers already during her studies, with the inner balloon containing a mix of natural silicates, such as basic elements of soil, plastic and concrete, as markers of our material and existential culture. Via a sensor, upon entering the space, visitors triggered the massage vibrator, located as a ready remade on the surface of the balloon, which in addition to sound, caused rapid, jerky movements of the material, which the eye perceived as a coherent whole. After she assembled the balloons into the installation entitled *inVISIBLE* and exhibited it at the final exhibition of the students of the Academy of Fine Arts and Design, for which she won student's Prešeren Award, among others, Nika modularly expanded the phenomenon of collision into her first solo exhibition outside the Academy. *(In)Visible Landscape*, featured at the Small Gallery of Bank of Slovenia, was comprised of four sheaves (seven objects: six hanging, one on the floor) that she connected with various materials from plastic and wrapped them around sheaves of withered branches, gathered in a degraded urban area in Ljubljana.

Erjavec combines and upgrades the topics in the project *Interference* in the Alkatraz Gallery, where she adds plastic fake branches. In addition to the two balloons, the installation is composed of 8 objects, designed from dried branches, grasses and weeds, collected in the immediate proximity of the gallery, whereas an idealised projection of nature is embodied by plastic green branches, wherein in comparison to twitches of dried branches, occurs a difference in friction. When visitors use consoles, which are connected to the sheaves with wires, they trigger vibrations, while gallery lights are positioned at an angle that enables the light to be reflected on the objects so that it

emphasises our perception of vibration. The effect of the twitches of natural and artificial branches evoked in the viewer is a lost sense of perception as to which materials are natural and which are not. And exactly at this point we can recognise the quintessence of interference as an occurrence of two coherent waves that meet at the same place, so that a new wave pattern emerges, in which Erjavec blurs the boundary between nature and culture, as they become one in this exact moment. ... or in Nika's own words: 'with the existential and material we transcended all living things.'