

Initially I only wanted to understand the coincidence between the calendric outset of the new century and the appearance of OPA (2001, Skopje) on the contemporary Macedonian art scene. Namely, while reluctantly moving towards the impending calendric turning point of the new times, I unexpectedly saw myself yielding before the topicality of this already well worn occasion. Hence I felt it my duty to revisit the social dynamics, spiritual turmoil and creative contents of this last decade which is on its way out of my parts and my life, too. Of course, in assuming these chores of my trade I was instigated by yet another topical event. It is to do with the story about the calendar, as well as with the latest project by OPA "One More Frustrated Artist" (2009-2011) which started the exchange of goods, words and images with prominent personalities from the current Macedonian cultural apparatus.

However, I should be proceeding in an orderly manner: OPA is public, executive and institutional platform regarding the creative intentions of the artists Slobodanka Stevčeska (1971, Skopje) and Denis Saraginovski (1971, Skopje). The circumstances surrounding those aspirations of Stevčeska and Saraginovski emerged during the first decade of the new Macedonian century, that is to say, in the heyday of the new Macedonian mythology on the noble and honorable lineage of the everyday life exhausted by social neglect, personal inhibition and cultural solitude. The work of OPA, however, does not appear to be provoked or even postulated by the actual state of affairs. On the contrary, one would say that the concepts of Stevčeska and Saraginovski are opposing the received notions about the socially committed art as ideological reaction, moral criticism and alternative utopia. Their idiom is void of pictorial language, works of art and museum exhibits - it consists of a pure presence which sets new interpretative framework around the existing cultural structure. For the time being, perhaps the most convincing explanation of the endeavors of OPA may be found in the personal concern of this artistic couple with the condition of knowledge today ... the knowledge of things, of people and of the experiences in one's own actuality. Thus, in want of fresh historical research, OPA is engaging in "Catching ODEKAM" (2001); when new anthology of the contemporary Macedonian fine art is lacking, OPA is proposing "Let's Talk About ..." (2003); as a way out from the immobilized isolation, OPA conceives an itinerant "Project Which is Not a Project" (2006); finally, in default of a discernible work of art, OPA offers "Bollocks for Everybody!" (2010). Nevertheless, the logic of absence and replacement is but one among the methods wherewith Stevčeska and Saraginovski are reshaping their own reality.

What is, then, the proper way of grasping the intent and explaining the meaning of their most recent project "One More Frustrated Artist"? In reply I would venture to point to at least two other methods that OPA has adopted as an enduring and autonomous expressive feature: by the rule, the projects are based on principles of interaction and complicity which on their own right, are obliterating the distinction between the attending audience and the public in general; moreover, the narrative thread of the project is regularly beginning or ending in some sort of ironic, extremely ambiguous wordplay leading to an unexpected repartee and to an entirely different interpretative perspective.

On that account, seeking for critical insight into the project “One More Frustrated Artist” means assenting to the long and tiresome roaming along countless different paths crossing the occasion without an event. In other words, this endeavor by Stevčeska and Saraginovski is once again compiled from ostensibly unrelated episodes - a graphic art exhibition and an art performance; an offering counting down to the alleged doomsday of mankind and a calendar of printed embroideries bearing the disturbing message of the helpless and embittered man. Being an incomplete manifestations of the whole, these episodes make up the basis of the creative conspiracy between the artists and their audience: since every story is true, it is important to maintain the narrative going.

Obviously, I am considering myself to be among the accomplices of Stevčeska and Saraginovski, so much so that I abandoned without hesitation further inquiry of meaningful coincidences between the significant dates in the career of OPA and the dates from the calendar which have not been translated into history so far. At the same time, I lost my interest in assessing the Macedonian artistic, cultural and social context from the onset of this century in view of interpreting it as linguistic, operative and life-giving raw material for Slobodanka Stevčeska and Denis Saraginovski. Simply put, I had an inkling that the presence of OPA on the contemporary Macedonian art scene might well be the most pertinent warp on the loom of history - the loom which I was all set out to investigate thoroughly and to describe at length as a context. In consequence, the oeuvre of OPA is something that I came to appreciate as an exceptionally convincing placeholder for a desirable ground plan beneath the missing history and the art which is always somewhere else.

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