

EXHIBITIONS AS A FORM OF VISUAL ADDRESS: THE HISTORY OF EXHIBITING IN SLOVENIA IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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The diversity of contemporary art can be appreciated through exhibitions, which are becoming increasingly complex systems and discourses of art presentation. Exhibitions as complete visual organisms encourage reflection on new setup approaches as co-creators of art.

The exhibition¹ as an inside-gallery product usually tends towards a devised setup model with clear emphasis on independent visual address or messaging. While the gallery is a place of communication between art exposed to the public and the visitors, the exhibition is about to become an interlacing grid of various contacts and thus represents a hierarchical art chain, combining not only physical space (i.e., the gallery), works of art, and accompanying literature (i.e., a catalog, book, invitation card), but also the idea (setup concept, meaning/content, interpretation and associativity), as well as viewer feedback. The exhibition creates its own design existence and is set up on the basis of visual energy directed toward a particular goal. Such a goal may originate either from the exhibition content, thus

¹ The meaning of the word “exhibition” in the sense of public display of artwork and the place of such display undoubtedly has its roots in the nineteenth century. The Slovenians have taken the word and its meaning from the Germans. Already in 1711 we come across a statement that claims the act of exhibiting to be “putting in a certain order”: “Orden in ordnung stellen.” “Restáviti, naravnáti v órdengo poštáviti” (Hipolit 1711–12: 138). Later, in 1804, Valentin Vodnik (1804–1806, 13/ib) wrote in *Slovenski besednjak*: “Aussortiren, noch den Sorten in Ordnung bringen, raftávlam, raftávim,” where again the need for “ordering, putting in order” was expressed. Afterwards, Anton Murko (1833: 130) under “Ausstellen” observed that the word means “to display, to put outside,” also “to give away, to repair, to take away, to dispose.” Later Matej Cigale (1860: 158) gave a deeper meaning to the word *Ausstellen*, expanding it to: “to expose, to put on show, to set up.” In connection with other words, though, the active meaning was even more accentuated: “to give, to give away, to issue, to set out, to put before one’s eyes, to put on show, to arrange,” these already being the expressions that encompass the basic idea of an exhibition and are linked to the artistic activity. Also Anton Janežič (1867: 81) explained the word *Ausstellen* as “to display, to arrange, to put on show, to show, to make available, to exhibit, to issue”; and the word *Ausstellung* as “an exhibition, show,” which was in 1894 also recapitulated by Maks Pleteršnik in his *Slovensko-nemški slovar I-II* (1894–95: 403). Hence, we can conclude that in the middle of the nineteenth century, the words “exhibition” and “to exhibit” already had firm, clear and, above all, defined working meanings, and were as such used precisely to define public displays of art in Slovenia.

representing originality, or from a concept devised by the curator, who is, as a subject, the condition for the picturesqueness of the display. With a well-setup exhibition, the viewer feels compelled to take an active part and, in some cases, even to fill in indefinite (from the point of view of setup), unsupported points that have been left unexpressed—maybe even deliberately—by the curator. This study will, by way of analysis and through a concise historical overview, deal with select twentieth-century exhibitions in Slovenia and their key features. The focus will be mainly on those exhibitions that define and create the evolution of the visual image of exhibiting in the Slovenian cultural creativity. I have limited a very extensive scope of activity in the visual arts to a selection of exhibitions distinguished by their content and design, accentuating organized message-conveying ability, and thus made an attempt to find a characteristic evolutionary path in the field of exhibiting.

An in-depth understanding of the exhibition setup requires an examination of the relationship between those participating in the exhibition setup. I believe that those who set up the exhibition and how they do so are important factors in an exhibition setup since it is necessary to put the objects in the right place and create a recognizable visual image of the exhibition from its visible “speech.” Since the beginning of the twentieth century, when the first exhibitions appeared in Slovenia, exhibitions have been set up by the artists themselves or by individuals who are considered to be the most important first curators, such as the Slovenian painter Rihard Jakopič. And we can say with certainty that Slovenians have adhered to European and global trends in terms of the curator’s role as the bearer of responsibility for the exhibition setup, as well as for the artists themselves, and as the person who illustrates the exhibition and its content through their creativity.

In the case where the artist himself sets up an exhibition, the artist is both exhibition designer and the person in charge of the exhibition setup. This is typical for solo exhibitions. An exhibition may also be set up by the curator, who can be the exhibition designer and the person in charge of the exhibition setup at the same time. Curators usually work in various types of group or travelling (solo or group) exhibitions featuring a specific theme or selected artists, but they may also serve this function in large-scale historical, survey, or retrospective exhibitions. If an exhibition is set up by the author of the exhibition (this term has been used by certain exhibition designers, such as Stane Bernik), that person may be both the exhibition designer and the person responsible for the exhibition setup.

In this study, the author of the exhibition is seen as the person that prepares the exhibition theme and orients it towards a specific creative problem presented in the exhibition. This is not the same person as the curator, even though they both serve similar functions. They differ in the

fact that the curator usually works in the gallery as an institutional member whereas the author of the exhibition is usually an external collaborator. Exhibitions that are prepared by the author of the exhibition are often monographic exhibitions or they focus on a specific theme or selected content. An exhibition may also be set up by an exhibition designer, who is involved in various types of exhibitions, and is the exhibition designer and the person in charge of the exhibition setup at the same time. The artist, the curator (the author of the exhibition), and the designer can all work together and create a comprehensive picture of the exhibition setup as a team. Such exhibitions are usually complex history-related projects that involve an extensive presentation of works of art.

Over the last 100 years, the curator's role has developed and expanded as a result of an increasing need for the ambient development of exhibitions, particularly gallery exhibitions. Today, curators² no longer have just the traditional task of selecting, acquiring and displaying art products, but also an extensive administrative and creative role, which involves creating a conceptual framework, selecting team members with training and expertise in different fields, supervising the work team, consulting with the designer, establishing the formal structure of the presentation, and overseeing the preparation and publication of the exhibition catalog.

In regard to the curator's expanded role, the Slovenian curator Igor Zabel (14 August 1958–23 July 2005) wrote that “the development of the arts has led to a strong emphasis on the role of the curator, who serves as a selector, the author of an exhibition, an interpreter and a co-creator of the exhibition context” (1998: 62). The characteristics of the curator's role have developed to such an extent that the modern curator has become increasingly active as a selector, in which case objectivity often overlaps with subjectivity. The curator can also direct you to see specific works of art and select authors, and he can highlight their main artistic traits and characteristics that set them apart from others.

If the person(s) setting up an exhibition wants the exhibition to give visitors a creative experience, increase their interest, and enable them to feel a certain degree of esthetic pleasure, then the interpretive

² Today, a number of philosophers, critics, artistic directors, various film crew members, and film directors also take on the role of an exhibition curator (e.g., the exhibition *Les Immatériaux* was organized by the French philosopher Jean François Lyotard in 1985). The exhibition *Vienne, naissance d'un siècle*, which was held at the Pompidou Centre in Paris in 1986, was one of the most significant exhibitions in the evolution of the curator, greatly contributing to the new role of the curator. This exhibition was the product of the collaborative efforts of a number of departments and more than fifty different collaborators (architects, historians, curators, specialists in different areas, photographers, musicians, etc.) (Heinich and Pollak, in Ferguson 1996: 237–42).

frameworks provided by each exhibition setup must be taken into account (keeping in mind that each gallery is a special place). The criteria used to determine value in an exhibition setup are the harmony between the form and content of expression and the artistic skills and experience of the person(s) setting up the exhibition. The concept plan for the exhibition setup becomes an important part of the artistic process (evolving gradually over the entire twentieth century), and as such expands the viewer's knowledge beyond the object and the visual experience to the field of dynamic movement around the exhibition, provoking intellectual and esthetic explorations, especially when the exhibits are dispersed across the exhibition space or are multi-layered.

Curators formulate their own views about the setup of exhibitions that are tied to the past or to certain memories of historical works of art. The social, artistic, and historical context is always associated with the artist, the work of art and the curator, but the cultural content of the time in which an exhibition is created (e.g., how it is understood at a particular time and place) is what stands out most. For example, it is to be expected that an exhibition featuring the work of an artist who is already a historical memory would be set up differently during the period 1960–1970 than it would be during the period of 1990–2000. From 1945 to 1980, there was a prevailing tendency for painting and sculpture exhibitions to be set up in a clear and orderly fashion, and the exhibits were usually arranged thematically or in chronological order (with some exceptions such as exhibitions featuring the works of conceptual artists, particularly the Slovenian artist group OHO). From 1980 onwards (especially during the last decade of the twentieth century), it became more common for exhibits to be dispersed across the exhibition space.

Curators have become increasingly interested in the dynamics of the exhibition space with an emphasis on movement, circular tours, the spacing and overlapping of objects, increased visual activity, and some form of a longitudinal connecting system, ensuring that the exhibits are arranged in such a way that they form a meaningful visual whole. The desire for experimentation is thus increasing, conditioned by a very diverse variety of exhibited works of art. Such exhibitions are becoming objects intended primarily for the viewers. Not only are they a presentation of exhibits, but also of their ambience and their visual interpretation.

An exhibition display can be considered a fusion of elements of content and idea, where the works of art become more easily understood and accessible. In the twentieth century, exhibitions gained autonomy in the sense of a contemporary art medium, for they are the communication ("voice" and "body" of the artist), from which the multiple meanings of art

evolve. They are a true and vital part of the “culture industry”³ and, as modern forms of visual rhetoric, they develop a diversity of display expressions. They are also considered the systems or strategies of presentations as essential material reflections of all that is substantive or basic in galleries as art institutions. Last but not least, they are the factors that act in such a way as to distinguish the strings of consequences and influences at any historical moment.⁴ Exhibitions preserve, commission, and show as well as diversify the hierarchy and narrative character of art. Their messaging ability and setup diversity co-shaped the image of culture in Slovenia in the twentieth century.

For a more illustrative demonstration of the visual process in exhibition setup, I have drawn up a typology of exhibitions mounted in galleries in Slovenia. With regard to the content of exhibited items, exhibitions have been divided into exhibitions of painting, sculpture, architecture, design, photographic, graphic; further, video, interactive, internet or computer-based exhibitions, as well as multimedia exhibitions. In the setup process, however, all this can be merged into a combined exhibition. The number of exhibiting artists is also important, therefore we distinguish solo and group exhibitions, as well as special solo exhibitions with two, three or more participating artists, who are presented as distinctly individual exhibitors. The third important distinguishing segment is the exhibition concept, which is carried along by the exhibition and usually prepared either by the exhibition curator (multiple curators are possible), by the exhibition creator (a very common expression in Slovenia), or by the artist himself. Hence we distinguish between overview, thematic, monographic, retrospective, historical, and documentary exhibitions. With regard to the period or span of repeating individual exhibitions, there are also annual exhibitions (Winter Salon, May Salon), biennials (Biennial of Design, international graphic biennial), triennials (U3) as well as exhibitions that are repeated every few years (there are no such exhibitions in Slovenia, yet abroad there is Documenta in Kassel, which is held every five years). An overview of exhibiting in Slovenia indicates the gradually growing awareness of the importance of receiving and understanding the visual art displays, in particular where exhibitions could be shaped as independent visual organisms. In Slovenia, there have been to date no studies nor analyses of the history of exhibiting and exhibition design

³ The term, coined by Theodor Adorno in Max Horkheimer to unite the manifoldness of ideological signs inside of what was called “mass” culture. This term was then expanded by Hans Enzensberger into the “consciousness industry,” which includes advertising, education and any kind of institutional application of media techniques (Ferguson 1996: 178).

⁴ The inner logic of an art institution, which is by Fredric Jameson called the “utopian dimension of any public spectacle,” is also applicable to the analysis of the exhibition medium (Ferguson 1996: 179).

evolution; therefore, this study is the first attempt of a concise historical overview of various exhibition types and their basic setup features. Let us consider the sequence of the historical evolution of exhibiting in Slovenia.⁵

The last two decades of the nineteenth century in Slovenia saw the start of a systematic exhibition continuity (figure 1), which initially accustomed the viewers to a distinctly condensed, partly non-transparent setup, to later more and more raise the presentation criteria and, in particular with the exhibitions in the Jakopič Pavilion/Jakopičev paviljon in Ljubljana, design a much better regulated setup models. There were certain criteria that gained recognition, such as greater setup clarity and transparency, selected accentuations, which make a better visual artwork more noticeable, decorativeness, which corresponds to the time of the exhibition, then smooth linking system or a vertical setup and a search for a certain order of expression, which is based on the experience of the setup creator. All this added to the exhibition image and the need for increasingly diverse art from the visual and style aspect. Parallel to this, the viewer requirements were increasing, too, for it was the viewer with some education in the visual arts that promoted the development of exhibiting and raised the complexity of presentation dynamics. Such setup directives were then affirmed at the exhibitions between the years 1945 and 1960, in particular in the most active galleries of that time (Museum of Modern Art/Moderna galerija, Ljubljana; Small Gallery/Mala galerija, Ljubljana; Maribor Art Gallery/Umetnostna galerija Maribor; Jakopič Pavilion/Jakopičev paviljon, Ljubljana; Koroška Art Gallery/Koroška galerija likovnih umetnosti,

⁵ I have pursued and analyzed the evolution of exhibitions as complete visual organisms mainly in the following central galleries in Slovenia: National Gallery/Narodna galerija, Ljubljana; Museum of Modern Art/Moderna galerija, Ljubljana; International Centre of Graphic Art Tivoli/Mednarodni grafični likovni center (MGLC), Ljubljana; City Art Gallery/Mestna galerija, Ljubljana; Bežigrad Gallery/Bežigradska galerija, Ljubljana; Cankarjev dom Gallery/Galerija Cankarjevega doma, Ljubljana; Equrna Gallery/Galerija Equrna, Ljubljana; Jakopič Gallery/Jakopičeva galerija, Ljubljana; Gallery of Ljubljana Fine Artists Society/Galerija ZDSLU, Ljubljana; Škuc Gallery/Galerija Škuc, Ljubljana; Kapelica Gallery/Galerija Kapelica, Ljubljana; Maribor Art Gallery/Umetnostna galerija Maribor; Gallery of Murska Sobota/Galerija Murska Sobota; Center of Contemporary Art – Gallery of Contemporary Art /Center sodobnih umetnosti, Celje; Koroška Art Gallery/Koroška galerija likovnih umetnosti, Slovenj Gradec; Loža Gallery/Galerija Loža, Koper; Town Gallery/Mestna galerija, Piran; The Pilon Gallery/Pilonova galerija, Ajdovščina; The Gorenjska Museum, City Hall Gallery/Gorenjski muzej, Galerije mestne hiše, Kranj; Miklova hiša Gallery/Galerija Miklova hiša, Ribnica; Božidar Jakac Gallery – monastery church/Galerija Božidar Jakac – samostanska cerkev, Kostanjevica na Krki. I have paid special attention to the International Graphic Biennial, the Biennial of Design (BIO) and the U3 – Triennial of Contemporary Art in Slovenia.

Slovenj Gradec). Hence the overview or retrospective painting exhibitions of individual authors predominated (e.g., authors like Anton Gojmir Kos, Ivan Grohar,⁶ Janez, and Jurij Šubic⁷); usually bringing a firm display concept, based on a distinctive personal poetics and evolution of the artist. Those exhibitions were, as a rule, prepared chronologically and longitudinally into the space, which I call a “linking system”; the diversity of the exhibition ground plan was achieved by partition walls, resembling some kind of censorship and creating the necessary ground plan fragmentation, which enabled a logical outline of the viewer’s path through the exhibition. In the case of personal exhibitions in smaller galleries (e.g., solo exhibitions of artists Drago Tršar, Stane Kregar, and Zoran Mušič),⁸ an unobtrusive and not overly bold setup idea predominated. The exhibitions were designed to display the most recent pieces of work; only some works stood out and occupied a greater portion of the gallery space. Several exhibitions of that time also had a political orientation, so the content itself (socialist realism) prevented the use of a bolder setup idea. I would also like to mention a large international exhibition that has been held in Slovenia since 1955, The International Graphic Biennial (figure 2).⁹ It has, in both the organizational and display sense, introduced a more complex attitude to the exhibition as an extensive display and organizational organism, which requires several years of preparation. The international graphic biennial established the concept of panoramic, country-based display, at first still with distinctly condensed placement, with many decorative accentuations (curtains, flowers). Later the decorative and condensed character gave way to more transparent display of the works of art.

⁶ There was a retrospective exhibition of Anton Gojmir Kos’s work at the Museum of Modern Art/Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 14 May–6 June 1956, and a retrospective exhibition of Ivan Grohar at the Museum of Modern Art/Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 12 November–10 December 1958.

⁷ A retrospective exhibition of Janez and Jurij Šubic, National Gallery/Narodna galerija, Ljubljana, Jakopič Pavilion/Jakopičev paviljon, Ljubljana, November 1938.

⁸ Solo exhibition of Drag Tršar, the Small Gallery/Mala galerija, Ljubljana, 8 November– 4 December 1960; solo exhibition of Stane Kregar, the Small Gallery/Mala galerija, Ljubljana, 15 February– 6 March 1960; solo exhibition of Zoran Mušič, Small Gallery/Mala galerija, Ljubljana, 3–26 June 1960.

⁹ The International Biennial of Graphic Arts (the first was held in the Museum of Modern Art/Moderna galerija in Ljubljana, 3 July–25 September 1955) has been running continuously in various art galleries, such as the Museum of Modern Art/Moderna galerija in Ljubljana, the Rihard Jakopič Art Salon (later renamed the Jakopič Gallery/Jakopičeva galerija) in Ljubljana, the International Center of Graphic Arts in Ljubljana, and also at various alternative, available locations, such as at the old, abandoned tobacco factory in Ljubljana.



Fig. 1. The Ivana Kobilca Exhibition at the Ljubljana High School, 1889. Setup by the artist (archive of the National Gallery/Narodna galerija in Ljubljana).

From the year 1955 on, the idea of a gallery as a “living” space started to appear, and the exhibition space itself evolved, just as was the case with the subjects of art.¹⁰ The gallery turned into a field of dynamic creative forces, where the greatest possible amount of the artistic poetics by the selected artist or artist group is organized and visually presented. In Slovenia, such ideas started to gain recognition only with the generation of artists, who tended to deviate from academism and modernism and to look for new, even unusual ways. In the 1960s, conceptual visual art activity was of utmost importance in Slovenia, and it was the conceptual exhibitions that brought novelties and visually more active displays. When the artist used the conceptual form of art, he relied on a previously conceived and executed concept, for it is the idea itself that becomes the driving force of the art. The

¹⁰ In 1957, Yves Klein made an interesting gallery move at the Galerie Collette Allendy in Paris. A small room was left entirely empty to testify to the presence of pictorial sensibility. This was the time of Klein’s Blue Period, when even the façade was painted blue and the cocktails were served blue, whereas the walls were painted white. The exhibition named *Le Vide* (The void) represented the isolation of sensibility in the primary space, stabilized by pictorial sensibility (O’Doherty 1996: 323). A gallery was considered a space, which evolves as a subject of art. It became a metaphor for some distinctly subjective system, in Klein’s case even a connection of mysticism, art and kitsch.

exhibitions of that time were already near to certain scenic effects. Such change of priorities was reflected in numerous large international exhibitions between the years 1960 and 1970, where the curators wished to research various visual art productions in modernism. The presence of the artist was an important, even a necessary condition, in particular where creation from perishable materials took place in the exhibit area. It was also due to such socializing that the exhibition itself enabled quick exchange of information and creation of international networks and circles of friends. The curator or the creator of the exhibition at that time was given the role of the co-creator, and a number of exhibitions were staged with an attempt to undermine the traditional display forms.¹¹



Fig. 2. 1st International Graphic Exhibition, Museum of Modern Art/Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 3 July–25 September 1955. Selector: Z. Kržišnik. Setup: Z. Kržišnik and S. Pavlin. Catalog editor: Z. Kržišnik (Photo archive of the Museum of Modern Art/Moderna galerija, Ljubljana).

In the period between 1960 and 1970, the number of exhibitions increased as some new galleries opened in Slovenia (Town Gallery/Mestna

¹¹ The curators, such as Harald Szeemann and Seth Siegelaub, introduced the idea of the curator's active anticipation and intervention into the artist's display. Their exhibition setups were therefore characterized by less and less limitations, giving breadth to conceptual outlines. The personal models of art presentation gained in importance, as they were dealing with basic questions, such as on the exhibition's character and visual application of an item in the gallery space (Altshuler 1994: 20–23).

galerija, Piran; Loža Gallery/Galerija Loža, Koper; City Hall Gallery/Mestna galerija, Kranj; City Art Gallery/Mestna galerija, Ljubljana; Center of Gallery of Contemporary Art – Gallery of Contemporary Art/Center sodobnih umetnosti – Galerija sodobnih umetnosti, Celje). At the same time, the way was paved for the phenomenon of a more active curator (exhibition creator) with a scholarly approach and an increased accent on personal views of art. The role of exhibition designer also gained more and more recognition. At that time, the architect and designer Jože Brumen outlined a diversified setup model—for instance, for an overview exhibition of Gabrijel Stupica's¹² paintings (figure 3). The panels were used to divide space and introduce more active variety, thus removing the option of a one-way, smooth, longitudinal linking system. In addition to the change in the arrangement of display walls, an important novelty was also that of introducing selected and well-weighed empty white caesuras, for it was their emptiness that accentuated other works of art displayed. At that point the setup idea that less artworks at the exhibition mean more content and feeling of comfort for the viewers came to the fore. This particular setup, with active intervention by the designer, was considered an important advance, and as such predicted more active cooperation between the artist and the exhibition designer, the setup creator, the curator or the creator of the exhibition. The tendency towards greater presentational freedom was particularly stressed in the most provocative art in Slovenia of that time, conceptualism. The conceptual art exhibitions (in Slovenia the OHO group)¹³ changed the gallery from a place where only “great art” was arranged; it was no more a place of sophisticated dedication, but became a place of active communication between the artist, the conceptual works exhibited, and the viewers. A certain game of meanings and a visual diversity of the entire space developed, with the artist actively participating throughout the exhibition setup period. The Biennial of Design also contributed significantly to the comprehension of and new ideas for exhibition setup (BIO).¹⁴ The exhibition design was expanded by a great number of exhibited items (and also by merging visually very different pieces), and it introduced the use of structures (metal, wood) for accentuation of particular works.

¹² Retrospective exhibiton Gabriel Stupica, Museum of Modern Art/Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 12 January–12 February 1968.

¹³ An important exhibition featuring works by the OHO group (in the Studio 69 series) was held at the Museum of Modern Art/Moderna galerija in Ljubljana from 23 February to 3 April 1969 (figure 4) and, in the same year, an open-air exhibition of the group's works was held outside the museum.

¹⁴ The first exhibitions of the Biennial of Industrial Design (Bienale industrijskega oblikovanja – BIO; note: BIO 1 was held in 1964) were the first attempts at providing a systematic presentation of developments in architecture, urban planning and design creativity in the early 1960s.

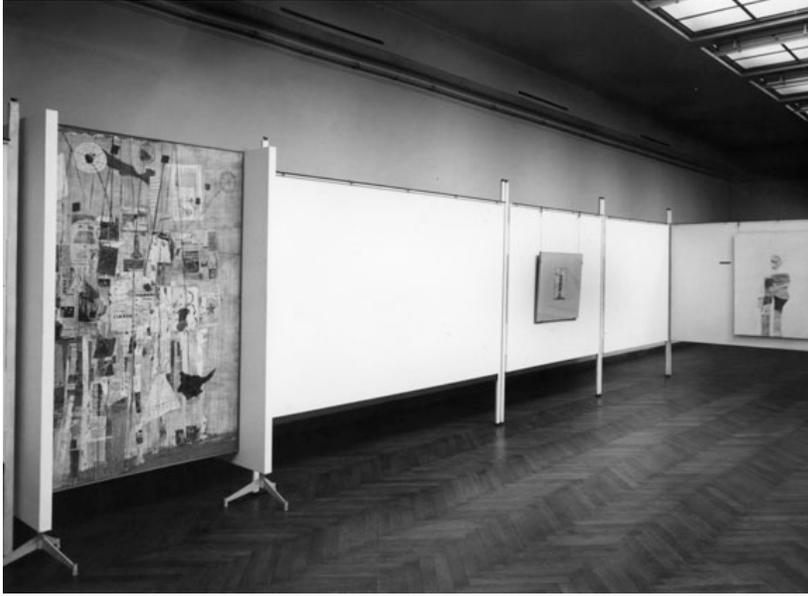


Fig. 3. The Gabrijel Stupica Retrospective Exhibition, Museum of Modern Art/Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 12 January–12 February 1968. Introductory text: Luc Menaše, setup and equipment: J. Brumen. (Photography: L. Mlekuž. Photo archive).

At the time of conceptual art, exhibitions became the scene of artworks offering more intense sensory perception and stimulation. The works assumed a more powerful visual role in the exhibition space and invited the viewers to more complex and multi-layered reception. The communication between the artist, his works, and the audience was more and more becoming the central act of exhibiting. The boundary line between the creation and the presentation of an artwork began to change: a wider audience demanded more activity, which even contained certain elements of fun. If the modernistic period saw an artist as a subject, an almighty creator of a fictional world (Erjavec 1995: 102–105), the post-modern, in contrast, saw the disappearance of that subject. Post-modernism in particular considered communication with the public one of its key objectives; without being limited to a narrow group of more educated public, as was previously the case with modernism. O’Doherty observed that with post-modernism the gallery space lost its neutral character, the wall became a membrane through which both esthetic and commercial values were exchanged (1994: 77–81). From the late 1960s on, galleries more and more turned into active spaces, offering a variety of exhibitions with new artistic programs, which influenced the very form of exhibitions. Such shifts were also the result of greater interaction between the artist and the audience.



Fig. 4. Atelier 69, exhibition of the OHO Group, Museum of Modern Art/Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 23 February–3 April 1969. Setup: the artists (Photography: the artists. Photo archive of the Museum of Modern Art/Moderna galerija, Ljubljana).

The emphasis on personal display narrative became increasingly popular, particularly in the decade between 1970 and 1980, when in Slovenia a type of complex, monographic exhibition model was formed. The actual beginning was the exhibition *Architekt Milan Mihelič*,¹⁵ prepared by the art historian Stane Bernik (figure 5). It was considered a turning point in displaying the creativity of an artist (in particular an architect), because it paved the way for the of the exhibition creator or curator's exploratory, active role. He acted as an interpreter through professional and, above all, scholarly evaluation and presentation of the artist. Also the large historical exhibition (*Slovenska umetnost 1945–1978/Art in Slovenia 1945–1978*),¹⁶ Museum of Modern Art/Moderna galerija, Ljubljana; Museum of Architecture/Arhitekturni muzej, Ljubljana; and the Rihard Jakopič Gallery/Jakopičeva galerija) introduced a working

¹⁵ Monographic exhibition of *Arhitekt Milan Mihelič*, Jakopič Gallery/Jakopičeva galerija, Ljubljana, 25 November–10 December 1980.

¹⁶ Historical exhibition *Slovenska umetnost 1945–1978/Art in Slovenia 1945–1978*, Museum of Modern Art/Moderna galerija, Ljubljana; Museum of Architecture/Arhitekturni muzej, Ljubljana; Jakopič Gallery/Jakopičeva galerija, 22 March–6 May 1979.

method of combining several co-creators/curators, whereas at the same time the display division of the art itself (photography was not admitted into the main frame of the exhibition) brought to light the problem of equality in evaluation. This exhibition also showed certain weak points of wide artistic presentation, where individual artists are being concealed or even excluded on account of others. If both the monographic and the historical exhibition were regarded as a major shift in ambience in Slovenia in the attitude towards displaying extensive contents and extensive presentations, the retrospective exhibitions, on the other hand, (e.g., Frančišek Smerdu and Avgust Černigoj)¹⁷ paved the way for an overview, evolutionary, mostly chronological display of art, with selected accentuations of the most important works. The setup of retrospective and group exhibitions (e.g., Group 69 and Group June)¹⁸ continued, with a tendency towards a uniform, longitudinal (linking system), transparent method of presentation, based on chronological (for retrospectives) and thematic (for collectives) setup.

The system of setting up artworks with a focus on diversity of ambience was becoming increasingly dependent on innovativeness and/or curators' (also exhibition creators') individual views, as well as on designers, and last but not least, audience perceptions. Although the appropriation of chronological structure for the purpose of presenting modern art accentuated the trust in historical values, it was in the very setup of art that a shift or a tendency to an "ahistorical" exhibition could be noticed. Such exhibitions deviate from a traditional chronological arrangement. This tendency eradicates time boundaries and conventional stylistic categories in history. The exhibition space thus turns into a spiritual mess, as observed by Harald Szeemann, who always strived for essential connection between various arts. Exhibitions¹⁹ started to avoid overt study

¹⁷ Retrospective exhibition of Frančišek Smerdu, Museum of Modern Art/Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 19 October–30 November 1971; retrospective exhibition Avgust Černigoj, Museum of Modern Art/Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 13 April–7 May 1978.

¹⁸ Retrospective exhibition of Grupa 69, Museum of Modern Art/Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 15 April–3 May 1976; retrospective exhibition of Grupa Junij, City Art Gallery/Mestna galerija, Ljubljana, 15 February–3 March 1977.

¹⁹ At Documenta 7 (1982), prepared by Rudi Fuchs, the curator made an effort to maintain the autonomy of art, whereas on the other hand, he greatly manipulated the selection and adaptation of artworks to his own artistic conception. Fuchs first arranged the setup concept on the free display of each artist in a way that every piece of work was set up in opposition to juxtaposition, when compared to other work of each artist. In this way the differences between artists would be denied and a random setup method shaped. Hence the curator Rudi Fuchs acted as an artist of display, as he shaped it according to his own systems, yet required that the artists create the works of art in a way to suit his own idea of display (Crimp 1993: 241).

of interconnections between individual parts. The exhibition space developed as a new global space, the “moment of truth” of the art, the spatial artifact, prepared for and adapted to each individual exhibition, as the setup effect itself was becoming even more important than the content.



Fig. 5. Monographic exhibition of the architect Milan Mihelič, Rihard Jakopič Exhibition Grounds/Razstavišče Rihard Jakopič, Ljubljana, 25 November–10 December 1980. Exhibition concept: S. Bernik, exhibition design: R. Novak, models made by J. Mihelič. Photographs: J. Kališnik and N. Vranič (photography and documentation: S. Bernik).

The following decade (1980–90) in Slovenia saw the forefronting of artistic creators’ individual poetics. For this reason, solo exhibitions stood out, in which the setup reflected the characteristic artistic address. The setup strategy was based on a condensed display of paintings (e.g., the exhibition of the Irwin group, figure 6),²⁰ which were not only hanging on walls, but partly also hanging above the viewers. The viewer was able to

²⁰ One of the most important projects carried out by IRWIN, a Ljubljana-based group of artists, was the exhibition *Was ist Kunst*, which was first held at the Škuc Gallery/Galerija Škuc in Ljubljana, 7–8 May 1985. This exhibition featured works of art in which the group of artists implemented the retro-avant-garde style, retro techniques (e.g., easel painting, posters, graphite drawings) and well-known motifs. They then simply added a context in which they repeated the motifs, using the ready-made method. The meaningful effects were then moved or merged into a cross-assembly of diverse elements. This assembly, which was originally created as a paradox, gave rise to a new form of pure art (or painting), in which the art repeats itself in an endless self-reproduction, in a new context and, finally, in a reflection of this paradox.

take a more active part in the works of visual art.²¹ The changes in the exhibition activity occurred also as presentations outside galleries (private room, theatre hall, discotheque), which attracted mass audience and changed the type of interest. Thus the exhibition was considered a place of presentation, where changes might occur also in the broader social, historical and cultural sense. As the exhibitions promoted the dialog with the space, the viewers by their intense perception took part in reception of exhibited visual artworks (e.g., solo exhibitions of works by the artists Duba Sambolec, Marko A. Kovačič, Lujo Vodopivec, Matjaž Počivavšek, Mirsad Begić, Janez Boljka, Ivo Prančič, Emerik Bernard).²²



Fig. 6. Irwin. Was ist Kunst?, Škuc Gallery/Galerija Škuc, Ljubljana, 7 and 8 May 1985. Setup: the artists (Documentation of the Škuc Gallery/Galerija Škuc, Ljubljana).

²¹ Condensed presentations of visual artworks resembled the displays from the Baroque times or displays of avant-garde exhibitions from the beginning of the twentieth century.

²² Solo exhibitions: Duba Sambolec, Museum of Modern Art/Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 8 December 1988–29 January 1989; Marko A. Kovačič, Škuc Gallery/Galerija Škuc, Ljubljana, 13 March–3 April 1994; Lujo Vodopivec, Equrna Gallery/Galerija Equrna, Ljubljana, 13 November–5 December 1985; Matjaž Počivavšek, Loža Gallery/Galerija Loža and Meduza Gallery/Galerija Meduza, Koper, 15 January–28 February 1993; Mirsad Begić, Božidar Jakac Gallery – monastery church/Galerija Božidar Jakac – samostanska cerkev, Kostanjevica na Krki, 8 October 1998–26 March 1999; Janez Boljka, Božidar Jakac Gallery – monastery church /Galerija Božidar Jakac – samostanska cerkev, Kostanjevica na Krki, 14 July–15 October 1990; Ivo Prančič, Center of Contemporary Art – Gallery of Contemporary Art/Center sodobnih umetnosti – Galerija sodobne umetnosti, Celje, 31 May–20 June 1990; Emerik Bernard, Center of Contemporary Art – Gallery of Contemporary Art/Center sodobnih umetnosti – Galerija sodobne umetnosti, Celje, 20 October–20 November 1994.

The accuracy of the devised concept was implemented in architectural (e.g., in the case of architect Jože Plečnik,²³ with emphasis on models, plans, and precision photographs) and design exhibitions (e.g., designer Tomaž Kržišnik),²⁴ where graphic expressivity was brought to the forefront. Photography exhibitions (150 let fotografije na Slovenskem/150 years of photography in Slovenia)²⁵ focused on visual diversity, where in the long longitudinal setup, in the sense of a linking system, the complex evolution of creativity in photography was singled out. The periodical exhibitions finally gained recognition as well and became traditional (i.e., the Biennial of Design, International Graphic Biennial, International Biennial of Small Sculpture, and the triennial Ecology and Art).²⁶ Those exhibitions markedly expanded the artistic content and brought large displays with an abundance of exhibited items.

Janez Strehovec (1989: 125–26) observed that it was of the essence for contemporary works of art to be seen; the emphasis moved from cultural to display value. Visual artworks are considered works of art only after being installed in the display area. This can be the case outside, where there is the most light, or inside, where concentrated light is directed onto them. Yet the moment of having gained its public display space, the work of art is also secularized and becomes part of the profane existence of artifacts, which are, just like this item, intended to be consumed in the act of viewing (searching, listening, translating). The artist became an organizer, designer, and director of artistic actions orientated towards good presentation. Many more recent works of art show that skill in making the shape is no longer required from an artist, because the skill of presentation is much more appreciated—that is, putting together often entirely different elements in a way to create a relationship of tension, from which the most powerful qualities of art are to evolve. With the majority of exhibitions, it is the vicinity of the visual artwork that is gaining in importance, which means that everything in proximity to the viewer creates a more powerful visual address and a special (display) atmosphere. The tendency towards accentuated and dominant visual effect therefore accompanies the general logic of display in the Western world and has in the present time come to focus on show and spectacle as the basic units of all mass media. The

²³ Arhitekt Jože Plečnik, National Gallery/Narodna galerija, Ljubljana, 15 May–15 June 1968.

²⁴ Solo exhibition Tomaž Kržišnik, Cankarjev dom Gallery/Galerija CD, Ljubljana, 18 June–20 August 1984.

²⁵ Historical exhibition 150 let fotografije na Slovenskem 1839–1919/150 years of photography in Slovenia, City Art Gallery/Mestna galerija, Ljubljana and the Museum of Architecture/Arhitekturni muzej, 7 September–25 October 1989.

²⁶ Ekologija in umetnost/Ecology and Art. Art d'Eco, 4. mednarodni triennale Ekologija in umetnost/4. International triennial Ecology and Art, Maribor Art Gallery/Umetnostna galerija, Maribor, 19 June–31 July 1992.

exhibition setup, therefore, creates a certain scenic feature, as reflected upon by Peter Weibel:

In the myths of information and mass media society the social space is either disappearing or is replaced by fabricated fictions and instrumentalized fantasies. The theatre masks become no imitation of life, as the mediatized masks generate the life itself, like the power-controlled forms of staging and presentation, like a spectacle, in which reality and stage performance coincide. (1988: 26)

The development of art and display strategies shifted from the creator and the object (artwork) to the visitors.

Art displays in galleries at the end of the twentieth century showed that some exhibitions were no longer very strictly defined as to content and type. A certain setup ritual also began to appear, when the setup act itself became the very element that brought the work of art to a higher level. With such exhibitions, the gallery became a kind of laboratory where several ideas and interventions circulate, where the setup creators began to pay attention to more alternative, mainly experimental strings of visual artwork arrangement, with a tendency towards active integration of the viewer or even with the need for tactility and intense emotional response. This, however, may also result in critical distance (sometimes even resistance) towards displayed material and the act of displaying in general.

The last decade of the twentieth century saw the most extensive exhibition activity in all galleries. At the same time, the variety of displaying became the basic principle for ambientally made exhibitions. Galleries increasingly accentuated and looked for dynamic display possibilities, and by the introduction and, above all, skillful use of new media (multivision, video, computer, telecommunication, internet) it also came to the extension of the term "exhibiting." The exhibition finally gained recognition as an individual visual unit inside the artistic creativity. The setup hence became an active part of creativity inside art, so the exhibition can be understood as a whole of technical and substantive as well as symbolically emotional models, which build the visual composition in the gallery space.

Extensive group exhibitions (e.g., Slovenske Atene/Slovenian Athens, 1991–1997; Poetike 80-tih v slikarstvu in kiparstvu/Poetics of the Eighties in Slovenian Painting and Sculpture; Akt na Slovenskem II - kiparstvo/Slovenian Nude II - Sculptures; Moja Altamira/My Altamira; TANK)²⁷ addressed the audience as distinctly ambient actions of art in the

²⁷ Group exhibitions: Slovenske Atene/Slovenian Athens 1997–1999, Museum of Modern Art/Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 22 October–8 December 1991;

last decade of the twentieth century. They had a firm substantive concept, where the very possibility of comparison between numerous artists enabled analytical views and theoretical reflection on integrating of visual arts in the gallery space. The displays were based on fragmentation and large grid arrangement of works, full of simultaneous visual art relations, where a judicious setup orientation enabled transition from one work of art to another. Personal setup strategies, however, developed through numerous solo exhibitions (e.g., of the artists Mirsad Begić [figure 7], Rene Rusjan, Lujo Vodopivec, Matjaž Počivavšek, Dragica Čadež, Jakov Brdar, Mojca Smerdu, Marjetica Potrč, Emerik Bernard, Žarko Vrezec, Lojze Logar, Ivo Prančič, Tadej Pogačar, Damijan Kracina, Darij Kreuh, Marko Peljhan, Srečo Dragan, Nataša Prosenc, and Miha Vipotnik).²⁸ Those exhibitions brought to the forefront various display systems, from circular setup, smooth linking system or horizontal accentuations to a condensed display of a greater number of works in a smaller space and arrangements dispersed throughout the entire gallery. There was also emphasis on the clarity of approach to the visual arts medium and the gallery space, which is not only a physical/objective place of presence, but also a place of the meaning of the art. With some exhibitions, the gallery space promoted the concept of open environment with mobile and stretchable display borders. It was just in the case of typical authored exhibitions (e.g., by Milan Mihelič, Veno Pilon, Uroš Vagaja – Oblikovanje/Design 1920–1971, Jože Spacal: Televizijska scenografija/Television Scenography, Mestno Pohištvo – Oprema javnega prostora/Urban Furniture – Public Urban Furniture,

Poetike 80-tih v slikarstvu in kiparstvu/Poetics of the Eighties in Slovenian Painting and Sculpture, Town Gallery/Mestna galerija, Piran, 26 July–27 August 1991; Akt na Slovenskem II – kiparstvo/ Slovenian Nude II - Sculptures, Cankarjev dom Gallery/Galerija CD, Ljubljana; Jakopič Gallery/Jakopičeva galerija, Ljubljana, 15 February–2 April 2000.

²⁸ Solo exhibitions: Rene Rusjan, Town Gallery/Mestna galerija, Piran, Galerija Loža/Loža galerija, Koper, 12 April–14 May 1991; Dragica Čadež, Božidar Jakac Gallery – monastery church/Galerija Božidar Jakac – samostanska cerkev, Kostanjevica na Krki, 21 June–25 August 1996; Jakov Brdar, Town Gallery/Mestna galerija, Piran, 27 March–15 May 1992; Mojca Smerdu, Božidar Jakac Gallery – lapidarium, Kostanjevica na Krki, 19 May–31 August 2000; Žarko Vrezec, Gallery of Ljubljana Fine Artists Society (ZDSLJU)/Galerija ZDSLJU, 4–24 September 1992; Lojze Logar, Cankarjev dom Gallery/Galerija CD, Ljubljana, 1996; Tadej Pogačar. P. A. R. A. S. I. T. E., Museum of Fine Arts/Muzej sodobne umetnosti, Škuc Gallery/Galerija Škuc, Ljubljana, 9 April–23 May 1996; Damijan Kracina, Škuc Gallery/Galerija Škuc, Ljubljana, 16–30 November 1995; Darij Kreuh, Škuc Gallery/Galerija Škuc, Ljubljana, 9 December–19 January 1998; Marko Peljhan, Škuc Gallery/Galerija Škuc, Ljubljana, 2000; Srečo Dragan: Rotas – sator, Equrna Gallery/Galerija Equrna, Ljubljana, 13–19 January 1997; Nataša Prosenc: Vertikalni horizont/Vertical horizon, Jakopič Gallery/Jakopičeva galerija, Ljubljana, 1994; Miha Vipotnik, City Art Gallery/Mestna galerija, Ljubljana, 2000.

Ljubljana 1800–2000 [figure 9])²⁹ that the well-weighed concept of the exhibition creator as well as his personal influences and views of the selected art merged into a uniform visual address and thus prepared a complex, already scholarly organized exhibition. The distinguishing display features were also those of complexity and intermediality (e.g., exhibitions U3, international triennial Ecology and Art as well as international graphic biennals in recent years),³⁰ with a focus on study of relations between the space and the viewer. At the end of the twentieth century, exhibitions in Slovenia became an interlacement of different setup procedures, materials, and media, being arranged in such a way as to introduce the viewer to an already dramaturgically conceived visual narrative. Exhibitions are considered complex visual organisms, which outline the dynamics of visual arts evolution both in time and space.

Gallery exhibitions have long been considered a privileged method of reception, where the viewer comes into direct contact with the work of art, and it is precisely for this direct contact that the setting up of the exhibited works in the gallery space is important. The discussion of exhibition setup therefore indicates a change in the very understanding of art, since the focus on exhibition setup and design changes the very attitude towards the works of art, which become part of co-dependent interconnections and no more only the items of individual creative energy. And it is only such interconnected exhibited items that are today capable of providing the proper visual effect and giving us a feeling of esthetic pleasure and satisfaction.

²⁹ Authored exhibitions by Venó Pilon, The Pilon Gallery/Pilonova galerija, Ajdovščina, 25 September–18 October 1992; Uroš Vagaja: Oblikovanje/Design: 1920–1971, Museum of Architecture/Arhitekturni muzej, Jakopič Gallery/Jakopičeva galerija, Ljubljana, 1991; Jože Spacal. Televizijska scenografija/Television Scenography, Museum of Modern Art/Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 7–24 October 1993; Mestno pohištvo – Oprema javnega prostora/Public Urban Furniture, Ljubljana 1800–2000, Ljubljana 1800–2000, Jakopič Gallery/Jakopičeva galerija, Ljubljana, 1 December 1999–30 January 2000.

³⁰ Big group exhibitions: U3. 1. Triennale sodobne slovenske umetnosti/First Triennial of Contemporary Art in Slovenia, Museum of Modern Art/Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 21 June–28 August 1994; U3. 2. triennale sodobne slovenske umetnosti/2nd Triennial of Contemporary Art in Slovenia, Museum of Modern Art/Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 14 November 1997–11 January 1998; Ekologija in umetnost. Art d'Eco, 4. mednarodni triennale Ekologija in umetnost/4th International Triennial of Ecology and Art, Maribor Art Gallery/Umetnostna galerija, Maribor, 19 June–31 July 1992; 20. mednarodni grafični bienale/20th Biennial of Graphic Arts, Cankarjev dom Gallery/Galerija CD, Ljubljana, Museum of Modern Art/Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, MGLC Ljubljana, 1993; 23. mednarodni grafični bienale/23rd Biennial of Graphic Arts, Cankarjev dom Gallery/Galerija CD, Ljubljana, Museum of Modern Art/Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, MGLC Ljubljana, 1999.



Fig. 7. Mirsad Begić. Ohraniti sanje/Preserving dreams. Božidar Jakac Gallery – monastery church/Galerija Božidar Jakac – samostanska cerkev, Kostanjevica na Krki, 8 October 1998–26 March 1999. Exhibition setup: the artist, text by A. Medved (Photography: Asja. Documentation of the Božidar Jakac Gallery/Galerija Božidar Jakac, Kostanjevica na Krki).

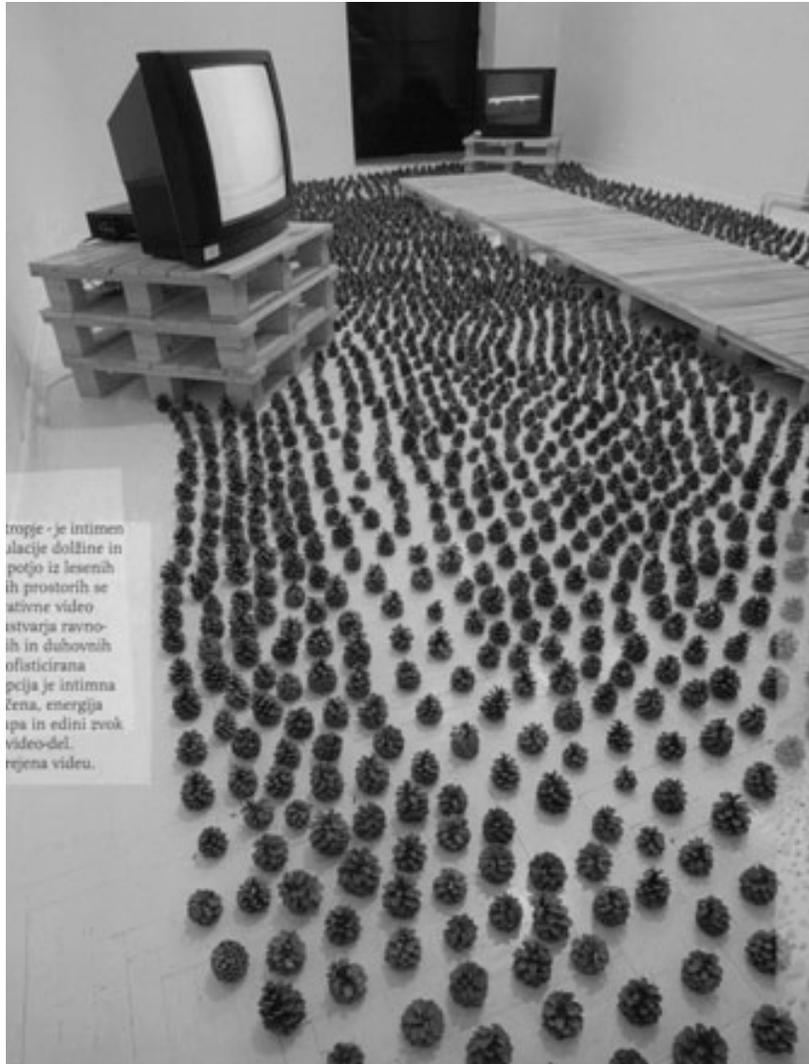


Fig. 8. Zimski salon 1999/Winter salon 1999. Dominik Križan, Samo, Bor Turel. Prostorj onkraj hitrosti in hrupa/Spaces beyond speed and noise. City Art Gallery/Mestna galerija, Ljubljana, 1–30 March 1999. Exhibition creators: Samo (exhibition atmosphere), B. Turel (music, sound) and D. Križan, (concept of video works selection) (Photography: B. Dolenc. Documentation of the City Art Gallery/Mestna galerija, Ljubljana).



Fig. 9. Mestno pohištvo/Urban Furniture – Oprema javnega prostora/Public Urban Furniture, Ljubljana 1800–2000, Jakopič Gallery/Jakopičeva galerija, Ljubljana. 1 December 1999–30 January 2000. Exhibition creator: G. Zupan, setup: G. Zupan. M. Tasič Demšar (Photography: G. Zupan. Documentation of the Jakopič Gallery/Jakopičeva galerija, Ljubljana).

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POVZETEK**RAZSTAVE KOT VIZUALNI NAGOVORI
ZGODOVINA RAZSTAVLJANJA V SLOVENIJI V 20. STOLETJU**

Raznolikost sodobne umetnosti lahko spoznavamo preko razstav, saj pomenijo tisto ključno dejanje, ki zaokrožuje ustvarjanje likovnega umetnika. Niso samo prikazovanje umetniških del, projektov in njihovih udeležencev, pač pa so zapleteni sistemi ter diskurzi umetnosti, ki zahtevajo razmišljanje o postavitvenih načinih in soustvarjanju umetnosti. Izdelani modeli razstavljanja običajno pomenijo sklenjene celote, z izrazitim poudarkom na samostojnem vizualnem nagovoru oziroma sporočilu razstave. Skozi pregled postavitvev razstav 20. stoletja v Sloveniji, ko se razstave dokončno organizirajo kot celoviti vizualni organizmi z določenimi značilnostmi, lahko ugotovljamo, kako se razvija komunikacija med javnosti izpostavljeno umetnostjo in obiskovalci. Postavitvev razstave v galeriji je gotovo že od nekdaj pomenila privilegiran način recepcije, ko se gledalec neposredno sooči z umetniškim delom in prav za ta neposredni stik je pomembna postavljenost eksponatov v razstavnem prostoru. Razpravljanje o postavitvah razstav torej nakazuje na spremembe v razumevanju umetnosti, saj le-ta s poudarjanjem postavitve in oblikovanja razstav spreminja odnos do umetnin, ki sedaj postajajo del soodvisnih medsebojnih povezav in ne več le individualne ustvarjalne energije.