

The 4th Edition of T.I.C.A.B – Tirana International Contemporary Art Biennial

THE SYMBOLIC EFFICIENCY OF THE FRAME

September - October 2009

We take this notion as a starting point to enter a discussion about the complex and manifold nature of “the real” and its many “appearances”, and the various ways how we perceive reality and relate to our history. Independently from which angle we look or what methodology we employ – be it scientific, aesthetic, or philosophical - what interest us are the inherent gaps that manifest themselves in this constantly shifting process of perception. A “frame” or its notion is something we use in order to define, discern or cut off in order to highlight. In other words, a frame or the process of enframing is our way to relate to the ungraspable essence of the reality that surrounds us. The frame thus is not merely a physical construction, but most of all a mental one, a way that helps (or hinders) our perception of the world and the society.

When talking about the reality and its appearance in his book “The Parallax View”, Slavoj Žižek mentions the example of the theatre-like structure built in the South Korean border, where a large screen-like window opens out onto the North Korean part, and he asks: “Is this not a pure case of the *symbolic efficiency of the frame* as such? A barren zone is given a fantasmatic status, elevated into a spectacle, solely by being *enframed*. Nothing substantially changes here – it is merely that, viewed through the *frame*, reality turns into its own appearance.” He continues further down by saying that: “...it is not enough to display the mechanism behind the frame, the stage effect within the frame acquires an autonomy of its own.”

How are we then to read our overall current condition and recent past? Are we to believe the jolly promise of a forthcoming “consensual world”, depicted by many as the unavoidable future of a post-political world, or should we reluctantly try to “re-frame” the picture put in front of us? How far can cognitive sciences take us in such processes as knowing of the self, identity formation and other ontological problems? What possible “frames” can we use to enable a more multilayered reading of reality?

As a physical departure point informing our endeavour we shall take the empty, vandalized building of the former Hotel DAJTI. Located in the Tirana city centre the once grandiose Hotel DAJTI lies in decay waiting for its eventual future transformation. A historical and architectural landmark, a silent but vivid witness of ideologies and power structures that built it and used it during the years, Hotel DAJTI with its ravaged walls and floors presents a perfect “symbolic frame”. Inviting the artists to interact with it, we aim at interrupting the linear flow of time to which DAJTI has succumbed. This interaction we hope, will create the necessary gaps through which we’ll be able to step out of a one dimensional reading of history, opening up to critique and analysis of our historical past and seemingly non-ideological present, encouraging imagination and aiming for a deeper understanding of our contemporary condition.

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