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*Irena Lagator Pejovic: What We Call Real*, atelier DADO, gallery for contemporary art, National Museum of Montenegro, 2008

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“What we know is a drop.

What we don't know is an ocean” . - Sir Isaac Newton

Modern social and cultural anthropology deals with the relationship of man, as an individual and as a social being, with the reality that he or she belongs to, creates and develops, i.e. towards a new world that is invisible to the natural environment of other living beings. This concept became the *raison d'être* for many post-modern artists, including Beuys, Warhol and others. Philosophical anthropology deals with human existence. It is “epistemological” in that it considers meanings and symbols.

Scientific anthropology, on other hand, includes a varied multitude of references from bio-physical, social, structural (history, ethnology, semiology) to cultural anthropology. Antonina Kloskowska argues that *global anthropological understanding of culture includes diverse phenomena. These objects are the product and outcome of human activity, the activity itself and, finally, psychological states: opinions, dispositions and habits that result from previous activity and are the cause and condition of future activities.*<sup>1</sup>

It is not pure coincidence that I mention anthropological concerns in contemporary arts in this introduction to Irena Lagator's installation, *What We Call Real*. Specifically, this is the primary attribute of her work in which man is positioned as an individual, possessing will, feelings and thoughts, while phenomenological concepts of consciousness and experience manifest themselves as springs of creative exploration. How to visualize feelings and thoughts as abstract categories in the process of creation of art is one of questions that interests Lagator. In speaking of man, we speak of a being that is in absolute conscious relation with him/herself, others and otherness. This is the relation on which the essence of human existence is based: *the nature of man as a social being because it is only in the relation Me-You that unique human experience unfolds...*

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<sup>1</sup> Antonjina Kloskowska, *Sociology of culture*. Belgrade. 2001.

*Philosophers such as Levinas remind us that ethical relations that include concern and responsibility for the other is, within the essence of a human being, a necessity on which should rest knowledge, art and social life in its entirety.<sup>2</sup> ...*

Lagator's installation *What We Call Real* in Atelier DADO is close to the ideas of Brechtian theatre and his concept of estrangement for the sake of criticism; here, reality is not represented as what is but as a starting point for further development.<sup>3</sup> This installation takes up almost the entire gallery and is conceived as two units of space that co-exist in both conceptual and physical terms. The first unit, an empty arched space, is the area in which the viewer moves. Defined as an orchestra from the classic Greek theatre, it can be related to the concept of a "play" since this is where real action unfolds, bringing the protagonist-viewer into an unknown "dramatic situation". The dialogue between the viewer and the new reality takes place on a stage that separates the existential habitat of the viewer from a work of art that gains meaning only through the viewer's presence.

The artist makes this possible via the material she uses – wave-like strings that start from the floor, then reach a zero "imaginary" point and fall back towards the floor. Aristotle held that *materia prima* is free from actuality, from determinedness. Being indeterminate, it does not have life, energy or entirety and becomes actual only when connected to form, which Lagator defines by a network of linear structures. Instead of interacting in the traditional way, these structures actually materialize in a space that is made concrete primarily by freed emotions and the subjectivity of both the artist and the viewer. This correlation brings the two units of the piece into one visual entity – a psychological and physical whole. Seemingly, the dialogue established between the viewer and the piece is reflected in the work, with the middle layer in "alchemic dialogue" between silver (right) and golden (left) in a symphony of linear cadenzas. In this specific space they gain characteristics of architectural tactility. Here another kind of materiality is formed, a different, or possible, reality that projects our experiential or learned mythologems through spatial counterpoints and harmonious and wave-like threads of silver and gold ...

In a space that contains many "pauses" and "silences," we encounter creations emerging from the real and virtual, the material and immaterial that are conceived as knowledge, mind-power, a subject's capability of having a responsible relationship with its surroundings. If mastering matter has been a key achievement of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the power of the immaterial is considered the value of the future, replacing capital and gold.<sup>4</sup>

Irena's subtly "fertile" silver and gold "rain" tempts us to merge with it, to enter the eternity that provokes fear or anxiety of the unknown. This in fact represents a reality

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<sup>2</sup> Sonja Tomović Šundić, Prof. Dr, Journal "Prosvjetni rad" br. 5-6, *Umjetnost je sveobuhvatna istina*, interview with Jovanka Vukanović; "Eseji i ogledi iz antropologije", 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Bertolt Brecht, *Neue Technik der Schauspielkunst*, in: *Schriften zum Theater* 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Bauhaus 3: Designing the Immaterial*. [www.mind21.com](http://www.mind21.com)

that can be penetrated only by the mind, not our material dimension. It operates as a projector of our real image into virtual reality. Here we encounter a Hegelian concept that represents unity of being as the most abstract idea devoid of content, which can be expressed only by ideas and the essence that gives the character of real to the representation. *When we connect the category of being as something that “in itself exists”, and the category of being as a reflection of the mind, we arrive at a higher synthesis. This can be expressed through the concept of a “mediator” between the mind and the world. And it is only in terms of identity and difference that the existence of an entity is determined.*<sup>5</sup>

The space in Atelier DADO and the installation within it are formed to the principles of music as equivalent to inner harmonies, sculptural-spatial existence defined by line and “molecular particle” as the sculptural visualization from line to particle in space and architecture of space as a category in which construction figures as a physical connection to reality. Specifically it is the *psychological closeness to the form and not abstract proportionality that turns “neo-plastic” architectural space into a space tailored to the scope of man.*<sup>6</sup> This transformative, concave continuum stretches to the edges of the space it occupies, deconstructing it, dematerializing it and rending its physical borders impossible to comprehend.

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<sup>5</sup> Vladimir Filipović, *Classical German idealism*. Philosophical chrestomathy VII, Zagreb. 1983.

<sup>6</sup> Giulio Carlo Argan, *Modern Art 1770-1970-2000, II*. Belgrade. 2004.