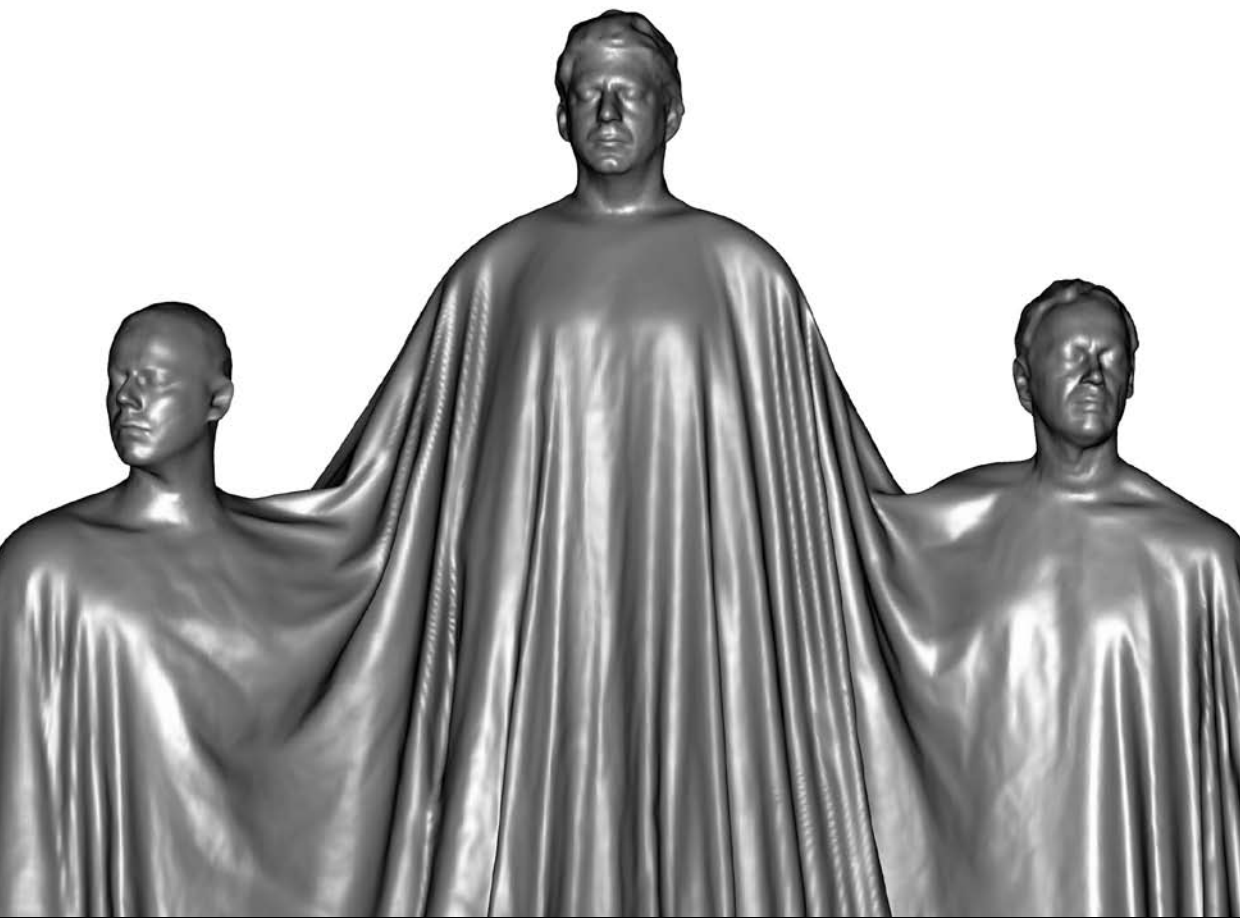


# Zdenka Badovinac

What Is the Importance of Being Janez?



Janez Janša, Janez Janša, Janez Janša  
Study for the *Monument to the National  
Contemporary Art (Golden Triglav)*,  
Ljubljana, 2008  
Goldened sculpture, 115 x 123 x 45 cm  
Courtesy: Aksioma

## A SYSTEM OF (No) NAMES

Imagine if all artists shared the same name. When going to, for instance, the Venice Biennale or documenta, we'd enjoy the art without endeavoring

to commit to memory a multitude of new names from all over the world. It may sound like an impossible flight of fancy, but is it really so far removed from reality? As the world of art expanded in the 1990s, legions of new names from the world over started popping up at big international shows – names impossible to remember, particularly when they appeared only once. Having, for decades, gauged the import of big-scale shows by the number of “big” names featured, we now saw this become a sign of an uncreative and non-research-oriented approach, of playing it safe and repeating the familiar. Big-scale shows seem to be finding it increasingly imperative to discover new names and, by the same token, to adopt anti-market attitudes. At the same time, non-commercial research programs can be found at the very heart of the art market, represented by art fairs such as Basel, Arco, or Frieze. Thus, projects

that aspire to distance themselves from the market and those that enrich it with non-commercial content have similar consumers, and they are all part of the same art system: a system in which the prices commanded by blockbuster artists in the contemporary art market seem to be indirectly helping the artists without a made name to try and establish themselves at least in the framework of non-commercial programs. The current complexity of the art system and its market simply requires the tension between the initiatives that support the existence of big names and the initiatives that promote themselves on the basis of their anti-market orientation. Critical attitudes only make the system more vibrant and attractive. No matter how profoundly oppositional its individual components may seem, they are mutually supportive, since this is the only way the system can function as a whole. The true differences can be found between the spaces that are part of the system and the spaces that are excluded from it for one reason or another. After all, there is no avoiding the fact that most of the new names that the system embraces – and sometimes spits out overnight – come from non-Western spaces, and becoming a *name* in the West is what is still coveted by non-Western artists.

### A NAME THROUGH LOCAL TRADITIONS

In socialism, the greatest names were the so-called state artists. Today, as the art market is also developing in Eastern Europe, these names represent a potential that might someday achieve results matching those in the West. Currently, Eastern European artists live between such potential possibilities and the echoes of the times in which individual glory was often more of an encumbrance than an advantage. There is an enduring



tradition in Eastern Europe, especially in the territories of former Yugoslavia, of neo-avant-garde artists commenting in various ways on the position of the individual artist and his or her name. Not only in terms of the modernist myth, produced by Western art, of the artist as creator, of originality and individuality, but also of them commenting on the artist whose position was quite anonymous in socialist times. In socialism, the principle of equalization and the spirit of collectivism counterbalanced the fame and marketability of the individual artist in the West. Obviously, there is a rich history of collective work also in the West, serving – among other things – as a platform for a critical stance toward an artist's name being transformed into a trademark by the market. Parallel to the history of that art which saw itself as autonomous creative production, throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century there existed a line of doubt concerning such authorship, propagated mostly by collectives or groups of artists. Starting with the historical avant-gardes, numerous groups of artists were critical of manipulations with public space, be it by politics, ideology, or capital. Some examples are the Russian revolutionary artists' collectives, the Dada, CoBrA, Lettrism, Situationist International, and many other movements, and they have served as inexhaustible sources of inspiration for countless collective and socially critical actions to this day. Here we should emphasize the differences between groups that (used to) work in different geopolitical contexts. Boris Groys<sup>1</sup> pointed out the difference between Eastern and Western European art groups or collectives: while the forming of artists' collectives in the West is tinged

<sup>1</sup> Boris Groys, "Back from the Future," in *2000+ Artest Collection: The Art of Eastern Europe: A Selection of Works for the International and National Collections of Moderna galerija Ljubljana*. Bolzano/Vienna: Folio Verlag, 2001.

Installation views from the exhibition Triglav in Second Life.

Top - OHO, *Mount Triglav*

Middle - OHO, *Mount Triglav*, right Janez Janša, Janez Janša, Janez Janša, *Mount Triglav on Mount Triglav*

Bottom - Janez Janša, Janez Janša, Janez Janša, *Mount Triglav on Mount Triglav*

Projeto Noema, Second Life, 2007

Photo: Coney Burt

Courtesy: Aksioma

with nostalgia for early avant-garde or socialist traditions, collective creativity in the East is almost a rule. Groys does not speak only of groups in this context, but rather of a certain general penchant for collective activities. Typical of Eastern European neo-avant-garde artists is a group habitat that reaches beyond the concrete group work and makes up for the absence of an art system and Western-type networking. I would say Eastern European collectivism understood in this way replaces the modern Western type of association and of a common historical narrative. As an art system comparable to the Western one has still not (been) developed in this region, the search for local traditions is becoming all the more relevant. Eastern Europe knows highly evolved and ramified forms of collective work, which must be viewed in terms of specific contexts and traditions. Here, tradition is not meant as something familiar, but as something that remains yet to be discovered in full and then perform confronted with canonized history.

Since the late 1970s, reinterpretations of canonized history and its problematic character have been the subject of a group of artists-copyists from the former Yugoslavia going by the names of Mondrian, Malevich, Benjamin. Linked to them is the unusual Salon de Fleurus in SoHo, New York City, which has copies of early modernists such as Cézanne, Matisse, and Picasso on display. The artists-copyists are anonymous, their identities sacrificed to the consistency of their art. Their anonymity is carried over from the field of aesthetics to their personal lives, and their choices are often in stark contrast to the steps ordinarily taken by artists striving to make a name for themselves on the market. A group of five Slovenian artists who have adopted the name Irwin included the Belgrade Kazimir Malevich in

the genealogical diagram of their work, a wall installation entitled *Retro-Avant-Garde* (2000), wherein they retrogressively mapped the history of Yugoslavian avant-gardes, from the groups comprising the Neue Slowenische Kunst (Irwin included), Malevich, Mangelos, Braco Dimitrijević, and Mladen Stilinović, to the “classic” avant-garde of Zenitism and Avgust Černigoj. Believing that art is a collective act, the members of Irwin find it essential to focus on one’s own tradition, both in the frameworks of former Yugoslavia and that of Eastern Europe (for example, in the project *East Art Map*). I see such mappings as processes of self-historicizing in that they fill in the blanks left behind by the inadequate work done by institutions, and also because the main points of reference in such genealogies are the artists themselves, who are sifting through history and making different selections in order to find the roots of their work and place it in a broader context.

A year before the three artists assumed the name of Janez Janša, one of them (then Emil Hrvatin) had reconstructed a Slovenian cult neo-avant-garde theatre piece from the late 1960s, *Pupilija, papa Pupilo pa Pupilčki* (Pupilija, Papa Pupilo, and the Pupilceks). However, the contemporary production was more than merely a reconstruction of the original *Pupilija*, it was also its contextualization: what happens on stage is accompanied by projections of the responses engendered by the original production as well as contemporary commentaries. The promotional material stated that the show aimed to test how a historical event would be received in our times, when both rebellion and experiment have either lost their edge and been relegated to the margins of social and cultural life or else are let loose among the public at large as a quickly consumed

media scandal.<sup>2</sup> The Janez Janša's project aspires to diagnose this tradition of scandal and to see what scandal can mean today. Part of what was scandalous about the original 1969 production of *Pupilija* was the live chicken that was slaughtered on stage; back

<sup>2</sup> "Pupilija, papa Pupilo pa Pupilčki – rekonstrukcija", *Maska*, no. 100, summer 2006, p. 3

then this was an artistic choice, but today the director of the reconstruction

leaves it up to the spectators to decide by vote at the end of the show whether the chicken should live or not.

In 2007, soon after their renaming, the three Janez Janšas staged their first exhibition, dedicating it to the local tradition of collectivism. In their show *Triglav* at the Mala galerija they presented the 1968 performance *Mount Triglav* by the group OHO and two reenactments: one by the group Irwin in 2004 and their own 2007 version, entitled *Mount Triglav on Mount Triglav*. Crucial to all three groups of artists was the significance of Mount Triglav (which means "three-headed mountain") as a Slovenian national symbol. Three members of the OHO group "enacted" Mount Triglav by draping black fabric over their bodies so that only their heads jutted out. Just as is the case with the three peaks of the mountain, the middle head was higher than the lateral two, which were more or less level. The action was carried out in the centre of Ljubljana, and affected the passersby primarily with its absurdity in comparison to ordinary day-to-day socialist life. Irwin chose the same location for their re-enactment of the performance, but their action was intended primarily for the lens of the camera: for them what was important was the artifact – a high-quality, well-framed photograph. More than simply redoing OHO's performance, what interested Irwin was the idea of providing it

with higher quality documentation, which in itself represents a unique commentary on the poverty of documentation for Eastern European art and its non-inclusion in the international circulation of art works. The three Janezes were photographed in a similar manner: they wrapped themselves in a black cloth, but they did this on the mountain itself. The photographic prints displayed at the Mala galerija were blow-ups of this photograph published in the three main Slovenian dailies (*Delo*, *Dnevnik*, and *Večer*). Newspapers always record major state/national anniversaries, which in the process of annual reproductions most often become empty rituals or instruments of the politics du jour. Repeating history in an artistic action, on the other hand, underscores tradition as well as the loss of original meaning, since the latter is inextricably tied to the specific context of time and place.

Their performance *Signature Event Context* from early 2008 also commented on our attitude to the collective past. Outfitted with GPS devices, the three Janezes followed three different prearranged routes through the maze-like Holocaust Memorial in Berlin,<sup>3</sup> and combined, the paths they traveled traced a signature only visible on the Internet. While walking, the three artists kept repeating the same mantra: "I am Janez Janša, I am Janez Janša, I am Janez Janša, I am Janez Janša ..." This performance is also fascinating as a recontextualization of a setting with very binding symbolic weight. By structuring the memorial as a labyrinth, its architect Peter Eisenman stressed a person's individual experience of history; as he put it: "we can only know the past through its manifestation in the present."<sup>4</sup> The labyrinth has become a

<sup>3</sup> The project was invited to the show *transmediale 08*, from which it was subsequently excluded, and then partly re-included. More at [www.aksioma.org/sec](http://www.aksioma.org/sec). See also images on pp. 134 - 137

<sup>4</sup> Peter Eisenman, "Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Berlin." <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/germans/memorial/eisenman.html> (accessed 21 July 2008).

kind of metaphor for historicizing, wherein only the individual experience of the

past is possible. Even in the context of our local tradition, the choice of the Holocaust Memorial is not a negligible reference, in which, for instance, the groups comprising the Neue Slowenische Kunst see the confrontation with the traumatic experiences from our national history as crucial to the processes of self-identification.

#### NEW COLLECTIVISMS

Like the three artists' individual work before it, their joint Janez Janša project does not aspire to undermine the powers that be, but

only to enhance the visibility of their actions by repeating some of their actual processes. The work the three artists did before their name change makes it evident what interests have led them to join in action.

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The reconstruction of the show *Pupilija, papa Pupilo pa Pupilčki* ended with a vote – a sort of commentary on our present democracy and collective decision taking. This was also the subject that another of the Janez Janšas (when still Davide Grassi) focused on in his 2004 project *DemoKino*, an interactive series of eight short films, in which the protagonist confronted eight topical ethical dilemmas: abortion, cloning, genetic manipulation, same-sex marriage, the privatization of water resources, copyright/copyleft, euthanasia, and therapeutic cloning. As the individual films ended, viewers voted

Janez Janša and Janez Janša signing at the location of deported Roma family Strojan near the village Ambrus, 2007  
Photo: Janez Janša



pro or con by pressing voting buttons next to their seats, thereby also determining which door in his apartment the protagonist should open next. The last episode of the film ends with a shot of a clown and a caption reading, "What if I tell you it is all predefined?" The virtual agora in *DemoKino*, as Bojana Kunst writes,<sup>5</sup> relates to the infamous "pianist

<sup>5</sup> Bojana Kunst, "Virtual Biopolitical Parliament, Davide Grassi's *DemoKino*" in *DemoKino – Virtual Biopolitical Agora*, edited by Ivana Ivković and Janez Janša, Maska, Aksioma, Ljubljana, 2006

scandal" in the Italian Parliament that revealed the degree of autonomy in the democratic procedure – responsibility and connection are lost

in its self-sufficiency. As Kunst says, the perfection of the procedure leaves no space for position or opposition, so new stands must be taken towards agreement and rebellion.

Similar to the spectators sending the protagonist of *DemoKino* from one room to another, the third Janez Janša artist (then known as Žiga Kariž) also intervened in a private space. In 2003, he presented his series *TERROR=DECOR: ART NOW* at the Venice Biennale: he hung paintings with built-in cameras in several private apartments and transmitted the signal to the gallery. The surface of these paintings, which presented images of explosions from Hollywood movies, sought to fascinate prospective buyers, but hidden under the surface was the technology that enabled a communication network between the paintings hanging at various sites throughout the city. Kariž questioned the relation between terrorism and art; art remains the space of a mediated

<sup>6</sup> Petja Grafenauer, "Hitrost, Alkatraz & Teror=Dekor." <http://www.ish.si/~ljish8/files/PDF2002-2004/Grafenauer-P-Hitrost-2004.pdf> (accessed 21 July 2008)

statement, it is not direct action that would bring about social change.<sup>6</sup>

The three artists do not determine the "object of rebellion" in their work beforehand, and they themselves are not clearly defined as the subject of the action either. Their common identity is in the name change, which triggers performative actions with unforeseeable end results and durations. The threesome goes through the formal processes of identification based on political and national categorizing; they problematize the fixed nature of citizenship and underscore the emerging need for other forms of participation. By adopting the name of a local politician, the three Janezes have highlighted the context of Slovenian society, which had shrunk after the disintegration of Yugoslavia and become rather xenophobic. With the artists' name change, the number of Janez<sup>7</sup> Janšas in Slovenia went up to a dozen,

and, at the same time, the group's national structure was diluted, since two of the three

<sup>7</sup> People from other parts of former Yugoslavia often refer to Slovenians simply as "Janezes," as this is one of the most frequent Slovenian male names.

artists were not natural-born Slovenians. The participation of non-Slovenians in Slovenian culture, art, and politics is still an exception rather than the rule, and there is a dearth of artistic projects in Slovenia assuming any sort of critical position toward Slovenian nationalism.<sup>8</sup>

The tradition of artists' collectives is related to rebellion against the predominant forms of social collectivism, which has undergone a variety of mutations throughout history. For example, there has been a resurgence of nationalism in response to

<sup>8</sup> One such example is the case of 18.305 people being struck from the register of citizens and permanent residents of the Republic of Slovenia. In 1992, these people, who were primarily from other ex-Yugoslavian nations, had – for a variety of reasons – missed the deadline to apply for Slovenian citizenship, and this error of omission subsequently jeopardized their existence.



increasingly close international bonds, the processes of globalization, and, last but not least, the growing standardization of the world. Collectivism continues to be determined not only by collective emotions and truths, but increasingly also by formal procedures. Ideologies, religions, nations, and leader figures that are now in conflict with the new collectivism do not exactly represent the same things as they did in other historical circumstances. The traditional forms of collectivism, with their promises of more harmonious relations and a less alienated life, now promote and transform themselves using media channels, just like all other modern world phenomena. At the processual level, where greater mobility of identities is enabled, any differences are growing more and more similar. With his autocratic image, the Prime Minister Janša calls to mind ghosts from the past; at the same time, the three artists point out his “multiplicability”. The present-day forms of collectivism are related to seriality without clearly defined content: on the one hand, we are defined by the media, and on the other, by the standards of various formal systems. The scandal around the people struck from the public register was started by a Liberal Democrat minister and it has continued unresolved for fifteen years under a variety of political options who all fail the test of the formal rule of law. True anachronism lies in this disregard of the form – at least to the same extent as it does in nationalism – and today, various formal systems are stronger than ever before, such that individuals – be they artists or politicians with their names – are becoming part of an increasingly self-sufficient system.

#### JANEZ JANŠA FOR PERSONAL REASONS

When asked why they had officially changed their names, each of the three artists answered in the same way: for personal reasons. Despite the fact that we cannot but interpret their act as a critical stand to Janez Janša's administration, the artists themselves have not even once publicly confirmed this popular assumption. At the beginning of 2008, the trio opened a public correspondence in the Saturday supplement of the daily *Dnevnik*, in a section of the newspaper that is otherwise reserved for correspondence between pairs of Slovenian public figures. The three Janezes shared benign personal epistles, interspersing casual information about their work with travel impressions, culinary advice, their children's adventures, and the like. Essentially, the whole Janez Janša project is based on the artists toying with their privacy. What will remain after this joint project, and may end up exhibited in a museum of contemporary art, will be largely composed of documents, testifying not only to the official change of the artists' names and to their membership in the Slovenian Democratic Party, but also to Janez Janša being present at the birth of his child, Janez Janša paying insurance and household bills, Janez Janša having a contract with the Ministry of Culture, and so on. In their case, the boundary between art and life has been lost in advance.

After the three Slovenian artists changed their names to Janez Janša and became namesakes of the Slovenian Prime Minister, nothing special or eventful seemed to happen; the Prime Minister did not react in any way, the three new Janezes were not excluded from the Prime Minister's political party (the Slovenian Democratic Party), which they had joined just prior to their

name change, the grants awarded to them by the Ministry of Culture were not withdrawn,<sup>9</sup> and the three artists were able to stage quite a few collective and individual presentations. Fairly soon after the name change, they were even rewarded for their collective gesture with the group exhibition *Triglav* at the Mala galerija, an exhibition venue of Moderna galerija, the principal Slovenian institution

<sup>9</sup> After this text had been written, the applications submitted to the Ministry of Culture by two Janez Janšas were rejected.

for modern and contemporary art. The media followed the entire affair with pronounced interest,

verging on sympathy. There were a number of critical comments, too, claiming that the artists had failed in their intended political provocation but succeeded in attracting the great media attention that had, allegedly, been their main goal in the first place.

What happened actually? We can say that – at least in our part of the world – the times when governments came close to falling as a result of artistic provocations are definitely over. Likewise, the era of censoring socially critical artists is evidently over too. But neither of the above is entirely true. There are many reasons to criticize Slovenian cultural policy; in recent years the control of public space has increased, with particular impact on the media, and contemporary art has been marginalized even more than before, to the benefit of time-proven traditional art forms. However – at least in terms of contemporary art – there has been only one instance of censorship, and it caused a public outcry.


In 2007, at the demand of the Ministry of

<sup>10</sup> The exhibition *United in Victory* was organized by the National Museum of Contemporary History to commemorate the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Slovenia's independence.

Culture, the portrait head of national hero Jože Pučnik was removed from the exhibition *United in Victory*.<sup>10</sup> And the

reason? The portrait's face was "clawed out". The sculptor, Metod Frlic, explained that this was how the incessant struggles had marked the face of this dissident who, upon his return to Slovenia, greatly contributed to the processes of democratization and a greater sense of nation-state. The Minister of Culture stated publicly that the sculpture had been removed because portraits of this type should be executed in a realistic manner. Interestingly, it seems that the deformed face of Slovenia's right-wing ideologist upset the Prime Minister more than the fact that three artists had officially assumed his name.

When the three artists changed their names to Janez Janša, they in fact adopted a critical stance toward the Slovenian government, in which – until recently – it seemed as if all posts were occupied by a single person: Janez Janša. For a while, fear was rife that our young democracy would slide back into one of the harsher forms of government, but about the time when Janša's name appeared on the art scene, the power of capital became more manifest in our country, and in the last six months capital has subjugated even those media sources that had been perceived as being in Janša's hands. The countries in transition have seen quite a few situations where social anachronisms of various types seemed to jeopardize their budding contemporary democracies. It is now becoming increasingly obvious that the neo-liberalist processes predominate, market mechanisms are de-centering the positions of power, and the state is growing weaker. Michel Foucault wrote that the state may be nothing more than an imagined reality, a mystified abstraction whose importance is much more limited than many of us think. The state is becoming only one of the agents of governmentality, which Foucault describes as a contemporary form of the

1	REPUBLIKA SLOVENIJA RÉPUBLIQUE DE SLOVÉNIE	2	MATIČNA SLUŽBA SERVICE DE L'ÉTAT CIVIL DE	LJUBLJANA	OBRAZEC FORMULE <b>B</b>
3	IZPISEK IZ MATIČNEGA REGISTRA O SKLENJENI ZAKONSKI ZVEZI ŠT. EXTRAIT DE L'ACTE DE MARIAGE N°				MR 2008
4	DATUM IN KRAJ SKLENITVE ZAKONSKE ZVEZE DATE ET LIEU DU MARIAGE		Jo 11	Mo 05	An 2007
7	PRIIMEK PRED SKLENITVJO ZAKONSKE ZVEZE NOM AVANT LE MARIAGE		Ljubljana		ŽENA FEMME
8	IME PRENOMS		Janez		Marcela
9	ROJSTNI DATUM IN KRAJ DATE ET LIEU DE NAISSANCE		Jo 07	Mo 12	An 1970
10	PRIIMEK PO SKLENITVI ZAKONSKE ZVEZE NOM APRES LE MARIAGE		Bergamo, Italija		Buenos Aires, Argentina
11	DRUGI PODATKI IZ IZVIRNE LISTINE AUTRES ENONCIATIONS DE L'ACTE				
12	DATUM IZDAJE, PODPIS, PEČAT DATE DE DÉLIVRANCE, SIGNATURE, SCEAU		Jo 31	Mo 07	An 2008
					
OZNAKE / SYMBOLES / ZEICHEN / SYMBOLS / SIMBOLOS / ΣΥΜΒΟΛΑ / СИМВОЛЫ / SIMBOLU SVYMAEN / SIMBOLOS / ISARETLER – Jo: Dan / Jour / Tag / Day / Dia / Ημέρα / Giorno / Dag / Dia / Gün – Mo: Mesec / Mois / Monat / Month / Mes / Mijev / Mese / Maand / Més / Ay – An: Leto / Année / Jahr / Year / Año / Έτος / Anno / Jaar / Ano / Yr – Sc: Ločitev / Séparation de corps / Trennung von Tisch und Bett / Legal separation / Separación personal / Χειρισμός από το σώμα – Div: Razveza zakonske zveze / Divorce / Scheidung / Divorce / Divorcio / Διαζύγιον / Divorzio / Echtscheidung / Divórcio / Bosañma – A: Razveljavitev / Annulment / Nichtigerklärung / Annulment / Anulación / Άκύρωση / Annullement / Neitigverklaring / Anulação / Iptal – Dm: Smrt moža / Décès du mari / Tod des Ehemanns / Death of the husband / Defunción del marido / Θάνατος του συζύγου / Morte del marito / Overlijden van de man / Obito do marido / Kocanın ölümü – Df: Smrt žene / Décès de la femme / Tod der Ehefrau / Death of the wife / Defunción de la mujer / Θάνατος της συζύγου / Morte della moglie / Overlijden van de vrouw / Obito da mulher / Karının ölümü					
DP0008516					

Janez Janša, Janez Janša, Janez Janša  
 DP0008516 (International Marriage Certificate), Ljubljana, 2008  
 Print on paper, 29,7 x 21 cm  
 Courtesy: Aksioma



Installation view from the exhibition *Triglav*. Left OHO, *Mount Triglav*,  
right Janez Janša, Janez Janša, Janez Janša, *Mount Triglav on Mount Triglav*  
Curated by Zdenka Badovinac  
Mala galerija, Ljubljana, 2007  
Photo: Dejan Habicht  
Courtesy: Moderna galerija, Ljubljana



“art of government”, no longer limited to state politics and applying also to the control of others and one’s control of the self. The various positions of power, which are not only concentrated in politics and capital but also in knowledge produced by the various systems of social life, have long colonized the private sphere. The three Janezes have, in effect, established a situation that makes evident the fact that a part of the governance of society is also based on the construction of auto-regulating and auto-correcting selves. It only seems that our names – together with our documents and our fingerprints – are proof of our individuality.

The fact that no eyebrow was publicly raised at this artistic appropriation of Janez Janša’s name also tells us that art is less and less able to serve as a representation of the state. The images of politicians are now shaped by the media, and the goal is a polished look. It is a rare occurrence in Western democracies when the abuse of the name or the image of a politician has serious consequences and understandably so, as the space of contemporary art is in the hands of the market rather than any one ideology. In those countries, however, where neo-liberalism has not yet occupied all pores of public life, art is still subject to state monopoly. Not surprisingly, our three artists still deal with the questions of their own creativity in the context of the nation-state and its phenomena. It is, then, also understandable that the most socially conscious artists strive to make contemporary art and its traditions an equal part of national history. Slovenia’s politics, with all its parties and protocols, is unjustified in pushing contemporary art to the margins. The official cultural program for the period of the Slovenian presidency of the EU Council was based on national

tradition, rather than contemporary art or even projects focusing on intercultural dialogue. Having headed the EU Council presidency for half a year, Prime Minister Janez Janša delivered a politically correct speech on intercultural dialogue being one of the fundamental EU values. None of the renowned Slovenian or foreign guest speakers at the official ceremony emphasized the fact that every dialogue is controlled by the relative positions of power and that we can never, in reality, speak of a dialogue between equal partners. With the Schengen border, culture will now be more easily divided into “European” and “non-European”. Engaged contemporary art has long been trying to get the message across that intercultural dialogue also has a dark side, the game of inclusion and exclusion. Our contemporary society could almost be described as divided into larger or smaller collectives of different cultures. On the one hand, we see numerous anachronisms triggered by, say, a caricature of Mohamed with a bomb, which is ostensibly offensive to the entire Muslim world, while, on the other hand, the Western world is full of distorted figures of American and European politicians circulating in the art market without causing any problems. In the face of such phenomena of the neo-liberal world, there still exist various anachronisms on the global and local levels, and artists deal with them in one way or another. The Janša project proves that nowadays artists are forced to function in different spaces, where the same rules do not apply. Thus the three Janezes function on the one hand as artists of a nation-state – a concept which is on its way out and which has long ceased to represent the plurality of various interests – and, on the other hand, they work in the international context, where they are already established and where a new name that nobody is

familiar with is only a drawback.<sup>11</sup> The three artists are thus investigating, first-hand, how the two spaces – the one still controlled by traditional national values and the other exposed to international market mechanisms – function. The Janša project is caught between various contexts and differing strategies.

Throughout history, socially critical collectives have employed the approach of adopting roles from formal societal life. In this way, artists create situations that generate a variety of (controlled and uncontrolled) responses. Artistic projects serve as social laboratories of sorts, where some kind of new and not yet instrumental knowledge is being produced. Assessing the Janša project by the success or failure of the provocation would be senseless since the provocation was just one of the many strategies in the varied process of experimentation. The measure of the quality of the artists' work is their search

for truth that has not yet been classified. It does make a difference if the media report on the wedding of Janša the Primer Minister or Janša the artist; the former would be plain news with probably some political PR thrown in, and the latter, a contemporary art strategy in an incessant search for its true frame of activity. The three artists absolutely legitimately explore strategies that suit their context and measure the artistic provocation of the government with carefully thought-out public relations actions aimed at conveying the message that Janša is in all of us. Collective gestures of artists can no longer focus on a single possibility, but must be structured around de-centered forms of government and identities. We can definitely say that the three Janezes have constructed a framework for exploring new forms of resisting the enemy, though who that enemy might be is no longer clear-cut.

Translated by Tamara Soban