

Martin Vongrej

Spaces of Thoughts

In his all-encompassing exhibitions Slovak visual artist Martin Vongrej (b: 1986) combines photography, painting, text, and objects. Within his words, the image and the word are complementary components of spacetime animations of the relationships between the acts of perceiving and thinking, realised through reversing, cyclical, mirroring, or repetitive systems. Over the years, Vongrej has developed a befitting symbolic structure for this purpose that he has based on geometry. *"The human body, each particle of it, is arranged in a geometrical system – it is the law, purity and order of form. And so, every creator is inevitably (whether he likes it or not) a carrier of geometry. If we make an effort using various means of discipline and imagination to achieve brightness, unity and certainty of a pure form, we always approach the geometric system of art."*¹

He introduces various points and straight lines into his photographic reproductions, creating collages from his pictures with minimal intervention in the composition of images and dividing their space. He often segments a picture of exhibition space using simple but extremely forceful symbols, where it is important for optical experience to resonate within the spiritual system of the observer. This is why the use of the term "animation", in the sense of bringing to life. Vongrej is not concerned solely with the visual representation of the tense relationships between the senses and consciousness, but also with the interactions between them as well as the activation of specific mental processes. *"Through a visual understanding of the world I arrived at certain borders, laws or the simple limits of visual conditions and the possibilities of human perception. I started to understand these phenomena as conscious symbols; by following them, I can increase perception to the next levels of what means these symbols – limits – contain that guide them to overtake themselves. For instance, everything that is repeatable or multipliable through a mirror – visible representation – 'speaks' in this visual language about that unrepeatable, certain space of thought. Inner quality. The next phenomenon is, for instance, a rotating circular mirror – and the impossibility of seeing its rotation."*²

With his last sentence Vongrej refers to one of his objects – a revolving round mirror installed with its front to the ceiling. Although the spectator knows about the mirror's movement, he is not able to observe it. This impossibility is not in conflict with our "certainty" that the movement is happening, our idea of reality is however separated from observation. In the text accompanying another set of works entitled *Seven Uncountable Lines*, Vongrej notes the following regarding observation: *"The quest is to develop not exactly a subjective logic as the opposite to shared common logic, but a certain logic based on the duration of an artwork and the observer, whatever it is, whoever it may be, and wherever situation is happening."*³

The artist does not describe reality; however, he does distil from it laws of visuality that correspond with the reality of expanded consciousness and not predefined perception. He installed his exhibition *Waiting for Final Present in Absence* (2014) at the Fotograf Gallery working in an irregular pattern, alternating four hours of sleep with four hours of wakefulness, which was intended to provide him with a proper distance from the tendency to control the presented material. *"The principle of the non-recording (non-describing) of events of reality, rather*

*the principle of integrating/mirroring its laws – the visual laws on which it is based – and so it is a matrix that bears recordings of mentioned events of reality. Through the repetition of these matrices I give freedom to the origin of new events – I do repeat / I do reflect a playing field that has already been created, its rules, and, at the same time, I do observe the possibilities of different rules that might appear – demonstrate themselves – in the given situation."*⁴ The title "Self-Observing Consciousness", which he used for, amongst other things, his presentation at Manifesta 8, leads us to a more precise realization of what is subject to human control and, conversely, what cannot be subject to it because it is a manifestation of the influence the universe has on human consciousness. *"The laws of the functioning of the universe do not consider human morality; however, from the perspective of human morality, to give up temporariness leads to an understanding of unlimitedness. To give up that which I own leads to the acquisition of a larger whole – gradation – infinity – inseparability, of that which is a demonstration of the effect of the laws of the functioning of the universe on human consciousness that are entangled within our temporary human morals in order to be gradually released. Consciousness of this law is above that which it causes - one galaxy absorbs another; absorption, fusion = consciousness (the law does not recognize the borders of a place in the universe, but a galaxy, in its physical presence, does) – not as a guide for others, but just as a reference about what flows through me."*⁵

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- ¹ Vongrej, Martin. *Alphabet of Senses*. Accompanying text to the exhibition *Pre-Nature*. amt_project, Milan, 2016.
 - ² http://www.martinvongrej.com/files/martin_vongrej_artist_statement.pdf (last accessed 10 May 2017).
 - ³ Vongrej, Martin. *Seven Uncountable Lines*. Unpublished text, 2017.
 - ⁴ See note 1.
 - ⁵ Ibid.
- p. 59 *Pre-nature*, installation view, laser prints, pedestals, rotating circular mirror, amt_milano, Milano, 2016
- p. 60 *Waiting for Final Present in Absence*, installation view, Fotograf Gallery, Praha, 2014
Frequency of Visible Space, digital photograph, laser print, cut, 8 3/10 × 11 7/10, 2015
Thought Space, digital photograph, laser prints, cut, 11 7/10 × 8 3/10, 2016
Necessity of Secret (The Impenetrable Consciousness of Others), digital photograph, laser print, drawing, 8 3/10 × 11 7/10, 2016
- p. 61 *Shift*, double exposure of a digital photograph, laser print, drawing, 11 7/10 × 8 3/10, 2016
Present Medium, glass, digital photograph, laser print, 2 3/4 × 8 3/10 × 11 7/10, 2015
IT IS, founded psycho-geometry, coincidence of visible space and thoughts, digital photograph, laser print, drawing, 8 3/10 × 11 /10, 2015
Pre-depiction, digital photograph, laser print, drawing, 8 3/10 × 11 7/10, 2015
Thought Space (definition of thought space, potential inverted space, made by the repetition of the same item around a visible space), digital photograph, laser print, three pages in six angles, freely rotating object, string, glue, 8 3/10 × 8 3/10 × 11 7/10, 2014
- p. 62 *Uncountable*, india ink, cotton, bed, 2017
Man – Orgasm – Woman, digital photograph, 2017