

Martin Vongrej  
(4. 9. 1986, Bratislava)

The central theme in Martin Vongrej's work is the issue of human (visually decipherable?) consciousness. To examine and interpret it, to find the possibilities or rather impossibilities of perceiving and seeing it: this is what Vongrej is engaged in, using complex spatial compositions in which he combines photography, drawing and painting with textual records and objects. He acknowledges that his work results from his interest in conceptual art, notably that of Stano Filko. Although Vongrej's work represents one of the tracks of continuity of conceptual art, his own idea of consciousness is closely linked with the inner quality of the artwork.

In his installation *Self Observing Consciousness* (2010), presented at Manifesta 8 in Spain, by making an entrance into an existing space he defined an imaginary border between phenomena which a person can consciously control, such as thinking and knowing (knowledge), and those which are beyond his reach. Here he introduced a system of formal signs, to which he repeatedly returns and which characteristically defines his mode of thinking of things: this mainly involves (along with rotational movement and symmetrical or recurrent depiction) the use of mirrors, mirroring surfaces, and the symbol X. Using this apparatus, which he sets in action right before the eyes of the viewers (e.g. a slowly rotating circular mirror), Vongrej documents the impossibility of capturing the visible. Actually this depiction of his tends towards invisibility. Paradoxically (as is also the case with some other artists presented here), using principles based on a visible foundation he refers to what is invisible or even cannot be seen.

Nonetheless, through a visual understanding of the world Vongrej has reached certain limit points of perception. He perceives these limits as definite *conscious symbols*, which make it possible for a perception that becomes more profound to reach a further level. Processes that make exacting demands on comprehension (the recurring significance of invisibility, endless movement, presence in absence, likeness in diversity, relation of part to whole) meet in his system with simple natural principles. The micro- and macro-world as an arbitrary arrangement of equivalent particles (birds in the sky, reflections on the wall, lights of high-rise apartment houses, flowers in a meadow, chewing gum blobs on the street, stars, galaxies...). Via a systematic analysis of visual art Vongrej tends towards a universal communication system, where he emphasizes the equivalence between the seen (visible space) and the perceived (thinkable space), the systematic and the intuitive, observation and concentration, impossibility and duration...