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Individual Systems

A transcript of the lecture

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The idea of individual systems as presented at the exhibition *Individual Systems*, curated by myself within the frame of the previous edition of the Venice Biennale, was grasped quite differently than in the majority of the projects featured within *Ready 2 Change*, projects that deal with more practical things and take place within the society. The majority of authors presented at the exhibitions *Individual Systems* do not strive to make a direct transition from the field of art to the field of society. Quite the contrary: they remain within the field of art as the autonomous field.

While conceiving this exhibition, I was not interested in the autonomy of art *per se*, but in the autonomy of art as manifested within a broader social context; within the context where art is not a non-problematic occurrence. I remember that the day I first presented in public the concept of the exhibition, which was then still in preparation phase, the United States attacked Iraq. I found that situation quite symptomatic; it evoked a straightforward feeling of the relation between the world of art in which we act as within a closed system, and the harsh reality of “the outside world”. That is why I quoted Georg Grosz in the text I wrote for this exhibition; an author who described a similar feeling in the –’20s of the 20th century. He said that anyone who was capable of looking beyond the walls of the artist’s studio had to admit that today art was an entirely secondary matter compared to what was actually going on in society. This feeling of the lesser significance of art in the contemporary world comes out of the fact that one realises in such situations that the influence of art on true social events (as is the war in Iraq and everything that lies behind it – the interest of capital, the interest of big systems, etc.) is negligible; that the individual artistic as well as the curatorial practice seem helpless in the face of such events, as if they were on the road to nowhere. This feeling was one of the departing points of the exhibition *Individual Systems*.

In brief, the theme of the exhibition was those artists who shaped specific systems and procedures through their work; artists who penetrated into the already existing social systems

in their own indigenous and specific way and shaped up their own world within them. The very usage of the term “system” positioned the theme of the exhibition within the context of some more general concepts and relations. In my view, the idea of a system is the idea essential for the modern social and spiritual world. A modern spirit moulds systematic approaches, systematic ways of reflection and practice, in order to reach a more rational management of the world, a grasping of nature and society, as well as to establish an optimally functional, rational, ordered and all-equal social structure. Thus, the idea of system connects to the utopic dimension of the modern world; to the idea of a possibility to build a world, which would function according to rational principles, a world sensibly organised, providing for all a way of life in which they would be happy, where the essential needs and rights would be guaranteed to everybody, etc.

When we talk about the utopic dimension of the modern spirit, we walk across the slippery terrain of ambiguity. Utopia is a vision of a perfect society; yet, time and again it has been manifest, in all trials of materialisation of utopia, that the idea of ideal society turns into its opposite and ends up as a totalitarian system, with the individual being subordinated, surveyed and manipulated. It turned out that, in the name of the idea of a just, honest and perfect society, the utopic dimension might function destructively against everything and everybody who represented in one way or another a threat or an obstacle in the execution of this perfect idea.

In our modern world, the concept of system carries, together with positive connotations, which indicate a struggle to achieve a society of well-being for the individual as well as for all, also negative or threatening connotations, as are repressive systems, systems of manipulation, surveillance, etc. This is all merely the flip side of the same coin. On the one side, systems are the result of an aspiration towards the most perfect possible society; on the other side of the same structure, systems function as something that subordinates the individual. It seems that the modern spirit is essentially paradoxical – one cannot exist without the other one. This negative feature was often emphasised and particularly so in the critiques of totalitarian systems; i.e., the process in which the idea of perfect society turned into a totalitarian and destructive social machine (the example of Communist societies). On the other hand and particularly in recent times – when it seems that we live at a time when it seems that there is no reasonable political alternative to the present political, social and economic systems, as are neo-liberalism, multinational capitalism and globalisation dictated

by the international capital – the idea of utopia is once again relevant and is often cherished precisely through art. In that sense, art preserves a certain dimension of utopic thinking, not as a vision of perfect society, but as a dimension of hope; an awareness on possible cultural and even social and economic alternatives; a projection of a possibly different future. The utopia of which today's artists, critics and theoreticians speak is something quite different from Moore's utopia. The world has passed through the experience of materialised utopias and we know where that leads to. Hence in art we often encounter the idea of utopia as something consciously utopic, something which first and foremost keeps open the dimension of hope, projectivity and future, and does not imply that a perfect system should be materialised in society. This might be a slight digression from the thematic frame of the exhibition *Individual Systems*; still, the issue of utopia as the element of modern spirit was undoubtedly present also in this exhibition.

When we speak of modern society and the notion of the system, I have to mention Niklas Luhmann's systemic theory. His analysis of art as a system in its own right is interesting also in the context of questioning the social function of art as an autonomous field. Luhmann featured a thesis that systems were entirely autonomous, concluded entities, functioning within themselves; whereas the limit between the system and its environment remains solid, with no over-crossing between the two realms. If something out of the environment enters the system, it is no longer the element of the environment but it becomes integrated in that system, it becomes part of the system. These are the questions that were tackled with great accuracy by the members of the group Art & Language; through the analysis of Luhmann's thesis, they sought a possible answer to the question of relation between art as autonomous system, i.e., autonomous, auto-poetic activity, and the environment, i.e., the society. They asked themselves whether there was a possibility for art to establish a relation with the environment, i.e., the social context. This possibility was manifest in their thesis, embodied in their artistic practice, as a possibility of self-description of art in its distinction from the environment. It is art that reflects its own nature, position and distinction from the environment. It is the very possibility that enables a reflective, critical relation of autonomous art towards the environment and the social world.

Why did the members of the group Art & Language run onto this particular problem; why didn't they simply make a transfer to the field of the so-called engaged art? Ever since the beginning of the 20th century, art has been evolving (roughly said) in two mutually opposing

lines. On the one hand, there is the line of the so-called autonomous art through which the artistic practice is ostensibly defined as something absolutely closed within itself, self-sufficient and not subject to any non-artistic criteria and/or goals. On the other hand, we find the so-called engaged art, which strives to get rid of this limitation and reach as directly as possible into the social tissue as a kind of practical social force. The development of Western art unfolds as a tension between those two poles; they are at once opposite to one another and yet somehow complementary. Here we encounter still another paradox. Those authors who try to transgress from art as an autonomous field to the immediate social practice are repeatedly faced with the impossibility to make this transgression; there is always a certain essential distance between what is still considered to be art and the immediate social practice. Even the politically engaged art – to the extent to which it is art – remains in a kind of representative relation towards the physical and social reality and is thus “fictional” in the sense that art is always somehow “fictional” in its relation towards the world and the everyday living. Art & Language turned this question upside down; they took autonomy as their point of departure and asked themselves how it was possible, i.e., how a certain autonomous practice could establish a relation towards its environment, towards the society.

These are the initial questions that I was faced with in the exhibition *Individual Systems*. I have to emphasise that I do not think that there is one answer to the dilemma “autonomous v. engaged art”. Each social constellation requires a different answer. In some situations, it makes more sense or it is more productive for art to try to transcend its autonomous “limitations”; in others, it seems that the artistic autonomy is the one that is more capable to obtain a political position than the engaged art. Here I should point your attention to Adorno’s essay in which he noted that it was the autonomous art, and not the so-called engaged art, that may function as a true political art. Adorno criticised the engaged art and its political messages, claiming that such art essentially implies an adjustment to the world. For instance, he reproached the artistic works that tackled in a critical way the experience of the destruction and suffering during World War II, noting that they assigned to this experience a certain sense and, by that, incorporated it in the culture and made it acceptable. Adorno maintained that, on the other hand, emphasising autonomous art could not be by its very own nature anything but social-political. In his opinion, straightforward political art was impossible at that time; politics have moved to autonomous art, which could utter that which the openly engaged art could not. Autonomous art could thus open those radical contradictions that the engaged art essentially concealed. Of course, Adorno’s answer cannot be an all-encompassing answer to

the question of engaged or autonomous art; it is relevant, on the one hand, for that particular moment in time and its social, cultural and political circumstances; on the other hand, it is in itself based on the contradiction between the engaged and the autonomous art as the fundamental frames of modern artistic practice.

If I might indicate at least approximately a general thesis on this subject, I would say that the very dilemma – engaged or autonomous art – is erroneous. In practical terms, it is always the question of how art establishes its strategy towards the outer world, the society, and not whether it is going to decide “for one or the other side”, as both sides are complementary and cannot exist one without another.

The exhibition *Individual Systems* featured fifteen very individual and firmly defined positions and I think that it makes sense to introduce each one of them.

The first author I am going to introduce is **Roman Opalka**. Opalka belongs to the generation of conceptual artists of the '60s. Since 1965, when he began his project named *OPALKA 1 – ∞, 1965 – ?*, he developed and meticulously defined a system that he still holds onto and that he will hold onto until his death. His work consists of writing (he says: painting) numbers, i.e., counting. He began with a black canvas onto which he wrote the number 1 with white paint; ever since then, he has been counting further. He covers canvases with rows and rows of tiny numbers. Each detail of his process is minutely defined: all canvases are of the same dimensions, he always uses the same type of white paint and brush; the only thing that changes is the background; it becomes brighter with each new canvas, he gradually adds more and more whiteness to it, so that eventually, at a certain point, he is going to write white on white. At present, the canvases are already very pale and the numbers are hardly discernible. This process is accompanied by yet another constant: upon finishing the painting, the author always takes his picture with the same camera, in the same shirt, in an identical frame and he makes all the photos in an identical format. Hence a line of minimal changes of his face is developing through decades; the passage of time becomes very visible in the line of photographs.

The fundamental problem in his work is the problem of time – numbers on canvases indicate the irreversible experience of time; the fact that he defines even the slightest detail of his work, all that obsessiveness, on the other hand, serves to demonstrate in a most direct manner

the passage of time – that most elementary dimension. Another important aspect of his process is that, while writing numbers on the canvas, he pronounces them out loud (in Polish) and records this pronunciation. The audio recordings thus created are the integral part of the installation, together with the canvases and self-portraits. Once he writes white on white, there will be left only the sounds of numbers.

Another kind of obsessiveness is expressed in the work of a young Italian photographer **Luisa Lambri**, who photographs only one type of architecture – modernistic architecture. She tackles her work always in the same manner: lingering in the chosen space alone for a long time. During that time, she establishes an intensive relation towards this space and makes dozens, sometimes even hundreds of shots. Her series are, on the one hand, quite objective and speak of the experience of modern architecture but, in a way, also of the experience of the modern spirit, for architecture is precisely the field where the modern spirit manifests itself in a most efficient and obvious manner. On the other hand, she develops a lively, personal relation towards the place, the situation, towards the emotional and also the contemplative traits that she encounters during such process in the space which she photographs. Those two aspects stand in mutual tension. She personally claims that her photographs always deal with some sort of loss, with the lack, whether it is the loss of objective reality of the space or the emotional intensity of experience.

The next artist, who also deals with the experience of modern architecture, is the Israeli artist **Nahum Tevet**. Tevet uses architectural elements and modules to build an architectural entirety, which is actually dysfunctional as architecture. It is the architecture that uses merely our gaze as we may only move on its outskirts. Nonetheless, the precise and extremely meticulously established relations between shapes, colours and spatial situations, often indicate some practical functionality, but these indications are deceiving. The only usage of Tevet's spaces is of sheer aesthetic nature.

The work of Roman Opalka was one departing point in conceiving this exhibition; the other one was the work of the group **Art & Language**. They also derive out of the experience of conceptual art, but the line they represent is different from that of Opalka. Their crucial work is their first "index", which established the fundamental method, the paradigm of all their work to come. Their first index was created in 1972 when they were invited to the 5th Documenta exhibition in Kassel, Germany. They collected their various texts – which were

also physically accessible at the exhibition in special closets –, read them, extracted the principal theses and determined the relations between the theses in regard to three major aspects: agreement, disagreement, indifference. Hence they interpreted their work in retrospect and at once created a new work. Thus, they established their essential paradigm; a procedure, which they perpetuated in one way or another in their consequent work. This procedure – the indexation – appeared also when they made the shift from conceptual art in its strict sense to painting. According to them, conceptual art is not about the academic strictness of sticking to certain forms – e.g., the form of text, scheme, etc. – but it may materialise even through visual arts. Various media and genre appear in their work, such as text, visual arts, objects, music, performance, and they are all connected by the principle of indexation. Their work is an incessant re-interpretation of their previous work, a ceaseless reflection on the status of their production in regard to the social environment and a permanent process of indexation. In the index, created for the 10th Documenta, where they were invited by Catherine David, they referred to their first index from 1972; they took their texts, made paintings of them, then made furniture out of them (what comes out of a remark that paintings are part of the mental furniture). One of the most interesting and most efficient materialisations of their process of indexations lies in the principle of links and of hypertextuality, which proved to be the ideal way of indexing. A large quantity of mutually connected data forms an opaque network, which is not an already concluded, closed, surveyed whole, but a field where one point leads to three, ten or even more points.

The work of **Pawel Althamer** is very different. By intervening in the reality around us, Althamer establishes an individual system in order to point out certain things in that reality. In his work, he exploits the fact that art is capable of organising a situation in which one observes and watches in order to direct our gaze to that which is otherwise invisible to us. One of the works paradigmatic for understanding his approach is the astronaut who leaves to a “foreign planet”, which is a city in this case. He moves through the city and shoots with a camera as if he has entered an unknown world in which he tries to find his way and determine some basic relations – what is important, what is not important, etc. One of his best known works is from the year 2000. One evening, Althamer organised all inhabitants (neighbours) in a big building block in a Warsaw suburb, where he also lives, to write the number 2000 with lit windows on the dark building façade. The building block itself embodies some of the essential contradictions of modernity: it unites, on the one hand, the utopic idea of building a good world for all (that vision of a better future was resurrected, so to speak, by the glowing

number 2000 on the façade) with, on the other hand, the unbearability of living in the grey reality of such suburbs. This dualism of utopic and anti-utopic aspects of modernism does not account merely for the Eastern, but also for the Western world. Let me just remind you of “Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo”, all falling for drugs and prostitution and all coming from Gropius’ town. Although Walter Gropius was one of the crucial representatives of modernistic architecture of the 20th century and its social and aesthetic utopias, eventually a contradiction became manifest that Gropius’ town was perceived as a machine for producing such tragic destinies as are those of “Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo”.

The next project that I would mention Althamer created for a gallery in Trieste. He distributed to visitors glasses with empty frames, which, in turn, entirely changed their perception; they could walk through the empty gallery with them but also through gallery spaces otherwise closed to the public. We could summarise it by saying: art is therefore the glasses that we put on in order to see things in a different way.

The exhibition *Individual Systems* included his work *Tree House*. One of the possible interpretations of this complex project is that this is a space of both distance and contemplation; climbing the tree house, we may step away, dissociate ourselves from the everyday life, and through this distance obtain a sharper view (of everyday life and ourselves); thus we are capable of a better inner as well as outer focusing.

The video of two young Russian artists, **Victor Alympiev** and **Marian Zhunin**, in the form of performance and consequently a digitally processed film, represents the analysis of the processes of the production of social roles and the perception of social roles through the media. The title of the film is *Ode*, which is also the genre definition of the work, only the traditional genre is transformed by the new context determined by technological production and reproduction of images, mass media and advertisement strategies. In their film, the authors practically glorify various insignificant, ephemeral actions and raise them to the level of general norm or habit. As the ode in its literary form once established the understanding of social roles and, for instance, established the public image of a person, now this task is accomplished by the media.

Simon J. Starling is an author who deals meticulously and systematically with individual aspects of modernity as featured in design, architecture, music, science, etc. I will mention

here his project presented at the Manifesta 3 in Ljubljana. But first a few words on the story: a Swedish biologist found in Spain a new species of rhododendron. Following that discovery, the plant began to spread across Europe as a decorative plant and thus reached as far as Scotland. Over there, its expansion grew to the extent of becoming uncontrollable and started endangering protected territories, plant life, etc. In order to protect the “genuine” Scottish flora, rhododendrons were eradicated in those areas. Starling thus took a few uprooted trees, loaded them in his red Swedish Volvo and drove them back to Southern Spain. He documented this story in a series of photographs and films and, together with the action, created a complex story – a metaphor – in which he interweaves the questions of migration, national and cultural identity and its transformations, as well as the role of science and technology in all that. The project featured at the Venice exhibition was similar: Starling took a red Fiat 125, known here as “the flea” (*Bolha*) and drove to Poland in that car, made in Turin in the '70s. In Poland, where, at the time, they were still manufacturing this car (whereas in Italy they had ceased with its production), he replaced certain parts – the red Italian for the white Polish. Hence he created a red-and-white Polish flag. Now he presents this car by mounting it on a wall, as some kind of abstract, Modernist or Constructivist painting. Through a simple story, he built a complex metaphor, which tackles the relations between the East and the West, the questions of national cultural and economic identity, the issues of the role of industrialisation and modernisation, the power balance in production, etc.

Austrian artist **Florian Pumhoesel** also deals with issues of modernity, modern world and modern concepts in an equally intensive way, although not in the form of sociological analysis but by combining elements of modern art, architecture and design; through seemingly formal questions and relations, he points to unconscious presumptions that have to do with ideological systems and power relations. This is manifest also in his project *Humanistic and Ecological Republic*, featured in the Viennese Secession; the project made for Venice is sort of its continuation, another version of that project. An apparently minimalist layout is full of allusions and contents as well as mutual references. The Venice version was based on the black-and-white contrast along with their mutual exchanges (e.g., in the form of a photographic negative). This is not a merely modernistic formalism and the fundamental contrast as one of the key elements of modernistic formal language; the black and the white also implicate the relations of racism and colonialism and the general question of relations between the autonomous (Western) modernistic production and its forms, and the role of

those cultural and artistic forms and contexts in the colonial and neo-colonial subordination of the Second and the Third World.

Marko Peljhan's *Makrolab* was also part of the Venice exhibition. It was placed on the island of Campalto; a communication point/console was positioned in the gallery, where one could follow the results of researches and the events on the island. Peljhan is mostly interested in the dimension of the world determined by technology, where the big power systems play the key role. Modern technology creates a territory entirely different from physical territory, as the former is invisible; it is a territory of the information flow, a space of telecommunication and all sorts of migrations. That unlocated space is not merely a medium for an easier and better communication; it is also a space exploited and manipulated by political, economic and military powers. Several of Peljhan's works repeat the identical basic structure. It consists, on the one hand, of *topos*, a location in which a physically present individual is limited in the actual space and time and, on the other hand, of the invisible territory of waves and information. Technology is the intermediary between the two fields; the interface of physical nature and at once a means of penetrating the signal world, shape its map ("to turn the invisible into the visible", as the artist repeatedly states) and also intervene in it. This operation requires something else: a possession of fundamental strategic and tactical skills. The most complex and the most ambitious embodiment of Peljhan's approach is precisely *Makrolab*. It is a closed laboratory field connected with the outer world through communication technologies through which *Makrolab* records and analyses the environment (especially the invisible territory of communication and information waves, as well as other aspects of the environment such as ecological data, migration flows, etc.) and communicates with the outer world. The idea is that this isolated laboratory environment enables a situation in which it is possible to analyse and develop practically applicable solutions; something which might also be used in practice. This is a counter-game of a closed system, the autonomous situation and the environment, the external reality.

One of the key figures featured in this exhibition was also **Andrei Monastirsky**, the leading figure of Collective Action, a group of Moscow conceptual artists. Their actions were some kind of "excursions" outside of Moscow, in nature, where they have had occasional actions, sometimes very minimal. The essential part of these actions was the fact that everything was very powerfully conceptualised and that it derived out of meticulously produced schemes, reflections, analysis; based on this, an action takes place, that triggers new analysis and texts,

which in turn bring new suggestions for actions, etc. Collective Action is thus a kind of factory of endless interpretations, re-interpretations and analysis of their own work.

Monastirsky made for the Venice exhibition a series of A4 papers with numbers on them, which marked the time from one action to another. His thesis was that, for Collective Action, the direct happening during the action was not essential; the time that passed between two actions was equally important and sometimes even more important; the time when the participants would reach the end of the action, when they would wait and leave; the time of analysis and interpretation.

Yuri Leiderman also took part several times in the actions of the group Collective Action. Leiderman is an artist who incessantly builds his own entirely particular hermetic systems, linking individual projects into even more hermetic systems of higher order. He participated in the exhibition with a project in which he tried to communicate with electrons. In his opus, he developed several projects with this idea (one of them was some years ago presented at his exhibition in Škuc Gallery in Ljubljana). For the Venice exhibition, he created an installation out of three huge drawings of Eskimos: they had tattoos made of copper on their faces (otherwise, Eskimos do not wear tattoo on their faces but that fact didn't seem to bother anyone); those tattoos were connected through wires with a light bulb in the middle. Each of the Eskimos had Walkman earphones on his ears. The idea of the project was that Leiderman would enchant the electrons by singing arias from Wagner's "The Flying Dutchman"; delighted and pleased, they would begin to move about and eventually light the bulb in the middle.

We may distinguish two levels, i.e., two lines, in the art of **Mladen Stilinović**. One group consists of works in which he deals with the analysis of social and ideological symbols, the analysis of procedures of power in society connected to the practice of Modernist and Avant-garde art. There is however another level in his work, where he doesn't deal concretely with the elements of power and social power strategies but with the elementary experiences of pain. This level is usually denoted by the whiteness, the void. We might also say that this level is practically the other side of relations of power and ideological systems. The project *Dictionary of Pain* belongs to this level; in this project, he took a dictionary of over 360 pages, painted in white all definitions of terms and wrote across them "pain". The pain was already in the very act of making this. Stilinović wrote himself about this project: "In my art, I

demonstrated the cynicism of authorities, convinced that, in comparison to this cynicism, art is nothing, absolutely nothing. A manifestation of helplessness, of the lack of sight, of blindness and deafness ... a pain that lasts ... until zero. If I say 'pain', questions immediately arise: what pain, whose pain, pain from where, as if pain were something that ought to be explained and analysed. There is nothing to explain. The pain is here. 'Together with the language, you learned the notion of pain,' says L. Wittgenstein; I double that – pain and the language of pain. Pain is not in the language. It is the language that causes pain.”

The group **Irwin** also took part in the Venice exhibition, featuring a project with icons, a re-interpretation of their own work. Analysing their work in retroaction, they realised that the motives shaped in the works from the series *Was ist Kunst* were repeating and passing from one work to another. The series *Was ist Kunst* demonstrates an endless fluctuation of various forms and languages, from the ideologically significant density to pure formal, “vacated” emergence – and back. Of course, this flexibility is essentially connected to the process of circulation of individual elements in the group, as the members of the group take over elements from their colleagues, transform them, charge them with additional significance and bring them back to circulation. This is precisely the process, which is the basis of the introduction of the concept of icon. The principle of icon is based on the idea of the existence of Holy Original; by copying this original from one icon to another, the line of connection to the Holy Original is preserved along with the Holy Presence. Irwin understands the circulation and re-interpretation of individual motives as the equivalent of the chain of copying, which conveys to the icon the direct presence of the original. Therefore, the way in which the Irwin paintings have developed into icons differs at least in one aspect from the traditional concept based on the unbroken chain starting with the original. According to the Irwin icons, namely, the original source doesn't exist at all. Naturally, the series of images has a beginning, but it is in itself unimportant and often incidental; as it were, the motive does not obtain its significance from the connection to this beginning but from the long-lasting process of collective work, which ultimately confirms the vitality of the initial impulse by entering into circulation among the members of the group who overtook it, varied it, enhanced and brought it back into circulation. Hence the ever-increasing complexity of significance and function of motives within the overall work of the group; even more, as the idea and significance of a motive would be constantly growing in its circulation, this would also influence older works that gained in retroact additional levels of signification and connections. This doesn't mean that the Irwin icons are deprived of the original ideal

presence, occurring in traditional icons as the consequence of the unbroken line of copies. There is also “the original” of Irwin icons; even better, their ideal ur-image, present in individual works. Yet this ur-image does not stand at the beginning of the line but in its end, as the ideal form that derives out of all offered executions and variations. Each new execution inevitably refers to this ur-image, at once changing it and re-establishing it. In this case, the production of the series *Was ist Kunst* consists of five iconic lines, where the original is not in the beginning but in the end of the series as it is derived out of the interpretation of their work. The exhibition featured the original – the non-existing, conceptual original – that comes in the end of the series, in the form of five audio recordings of the description of those motives.

Josef Dabernig is lately involved mostly with film but his obsession is also architecture (which is more than obvious in his films). Modernism, modern architecture, modern urbanism – they all attract him in their duality: on the one hand, as something monumental, impressive; on the other hand, as something threatening, something that expresses an implicit or explicit totalitariness. He is interested both in the significant achievements of such architecture and in the impersonal buildings, e.g., projects. One encounters this ambiguous relation in works in which he deals with questions of modernistic architecture; on the one hand, the enchantment with spectacle and the discourse of the order (and the implicit power and the authority that are embodied through it); on the other hand, the ironic distance from it.

Envisioning Bucharest is a utopic project made for Bucharest. Following the call for participation in preparation of a proposal for the urbanistic plan of Bucharest, Dabernig took as the departing point of his project the Ceausescu palace, which caused the total disruption of urbanistic relations in the city by its megalomaniac dimensions and the fact that an entire city quarter was torn down because of it. He envisioned a kind of modernistic rostrum, based on the idea of ever higher structures, which he laid over the city. Each level of this rostrum was marked by some accordingly big and high building; thus an increasing rhythm of mega-architectures rises over the urban level of the city, where the beginning, that is, the lowest point, is precisely Ceausescu’s megalomaniac palace.

Dabernig also made a plan for the layout of the exhibition where he directly refers to this project. The exhibiting architecture was shaped as an escalating rhythmical sequence of full and empty spaces. The walls became ever lower and thus increased the perspective effect of this elongated space; naturally, the effect was reversed from the other side. At the same time,

the architecture was conceived so that it nested in the existing space without concealing it. Wherever it was possible, it didn't even touch it.