

Rational Display  
Sanna Helena Berger

Galerija Miroslav Kraljević (GMK)  
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In the parallel “white cube” Berger reflects on good and bad taste, high and low brow, the temporality of cultural capital, its framings and settings. Historical and contemporary understanding and interpretation of these categories are mounted in a framed conservatism - Rational Display. Immediately legible as a known fine arts vernacular but with a subtext which can be reread against the grain as a critical examination of one's own critical position and reflection of one's own impermanence as an arts actor.

Framed and perfectly aligned works hang on the wall, lit up at a considerate eye level. A pedestal with a perspex box, both protecting and immediately allocating the art. As a centrepiece - The found object - The readymade, which even as a piece on wheels doesn't not disrupt the delivery of the entirely 'Rational Display'. It highlights the centre which is not left empty. The placements are symmetrical and pleasing. There is no confusion of where to place one's viewing body. This Rational Display is a vernacular everyone understands, my 3 year old daughter understands that the rationality of this display equals art. There is no question of *where* the art is, thus there can be no confusion of *what is the art*.

When we eliminate the question of *where* we also eliminate the uncertainty of *what* and we're left with *The art* which shows itself through an unambiguous rationale. And though I don't speak or understand the Croatian language, this is not a dialectical show, the placement and framing and systematised exhibit is a language we all speak and have in common. This is a sturdy fundament onto which other questions can be posed, perhaps in a denser language, translated into a less immediate one than the visual language learned through repetition and conservatism, tourism, academic standards and finally simply because of existing in the world of cultural exchange.

Because rational displays don't necessarily turn into reductionist views.  
Traditional framing doesn't necessarily embrace conservative thematics.

Immediately as we enter the gallery a small sculpture delivers itself as a representative for both good and bad - cheap material encased expensively, a referential conductor of many categories. Letting high and lowbrow art meet makes for a great range of expressive brow movement resulting in gestures and postures which allow for the entrance point of humour.

Here represented by Mini Billy. In the large and more commonly seen format, Billy is the absolute resolute brute. But here the function becomes ornamental and OH MY GOD SO CUTE!

This is an objet d'art symbolising and humourising the 5 categories delivered in Role (Play) as it transcends categorisation and highlights their paradoxalities even in its small format. A cute eccentric. A humoristic hyperbole. And still - Art! (Because I say so)

Known as an every-day object, Billy is the perfect readymade through my selection and presentation. We understand its transition when being placed into a gallery as we're so familiar with it as a functional element that we understand immediately its change in value, through both its placement and here in situ - its shrinking of it. But it is also the perfect Unreadymade, transforming and subverting the existing quality of a known Billy as an instrument for dialogue and critical reflection. 100% popular appeal as a miniature which we know is a category of mass fascination and satisfaction. A perfect commodity, desired by many, purchasable! Picture the scene: a gathering of the elite, where conversations are tinged with awe and admiration as your guests lay eyes upon me:

Mini Billy 13.3cm x 33.7cm  
Perspex case 40cm x 28cm x 40cm  
Eur 800

As an objet de vertu Mini Billy overwhelms any practical function, every minuscule detail meticulously achieved, a symphony of ornamental perfection, intricately assembled with careful precision. And of course as a minimal object of art it is a Juddian unadorned presence assuming a pivotal role, facilitating a particular experience of cleansing refinements, pure elegant contours and restrained palette speaking to the good taste, high brow sensibilities and serving as a testament to an intellectual elevated social status.

Ah be still my categorically beating heart!

The wall mounted frames sneak slyly into both high and low levels, because even though hanging proper and conservative, they are essentially and ultimately posters. Posters and prints trickle down as a mimicry material according to the values of the bourgeoisie culture of owning things. Things which look or remind us of highbrow things, synonymous with decorum.

Prints and posters displayed in frames are a kind of dressing up of a room's standard. Posters which reproduce or document fine arts can be bought at any large institutions, with a clear purpose as replicas, reproductions and merchandise-artefacts of the genuine article. The assigning of value to commodities within the art world is a laughable paradoxicality, of course. Grasped in thin air mostly. Cheap matter is merchandise and merch is gauche but cups and keyrings and posters are also, one by one a big income for the institution. Still... A highbrow article often becomes a lowbrow manifestation when photographed and framed.

On these posters however are a variety of women arts-actors. Women represented through my own gaze of acknowledging mine and other's impermanence as those arts actors. Women as biographical footnotes, women within a much larger male presence, represented here as negative white space, economising, perhaps as a humorous nudge, more white space in its white cube, symbolising some kind of void which

encapsulates us/them, the removal highlighted by an addition of blanks. Women in the arts; making, curating, representing (even buying or selling) moving forward, existing, presiding or presenting or in proximity to arts. Somewhat dated, of course, a slightly nostalgic aesthetic - yes, a personal preference and indeed women take up more space in the arts now than in 1982, 1996, 2003, but... Is it really not *still* worth pointing out, in some small form, this historical chasm and ongoing crevasse? One might have to look to a longer timeline theory and pre-established knowledge to objectify / justify / put into context one's subjective critique.

Should we get over ourselves? I think not. A critical examination of one's own critical position and reflection of one's own impermanence as an arts actor is not limited to that which is immediate and current. With this work I don't fear making something terrible or strive to make something fantastic, I don't consider good or bad, a work whose worth is identifiable as one or the other. It is a kind of foot in the face of delineating one's practice astutely enough to be narrowed down to it.

And The pièce de résistance found in the neighbouring socialist choir practice room! Eureka! For the last fifteen years I had a picture which I found in some online retail fit and fittings shop. It is of such poor resolution it barely makes a thumbnail. A woman stands, for the sake of proportion next to a display rack. She is another measurement, an item of comparison. I immediately think of Duchamp's bottle dryer rack and I think of this woman, clearly a worker for the company selling the item, quickly roped in as a utility. I think of women's scepticism which is held back by the male cannon, the critical agency which is based upon it. Even radical feminist theories exist in reaction to the male cannon. We are still reacting to the male who determined the centre before we had a say. The monumental gesture of defining the found object as art because of the artist selection and presentation is synonymous with a male. Thus a bold male presence manifests within it, reflecting the prevailing artistic landscape that favours the masculine gaze and exalts its inherent power. Just as so many other categories of art are invented, enforced and pioneered by the male. And they too often remain factual instead of questionable.

*Sanna Helena Berger is born in Sweden, lives and works in Berlin and works with site and situation specific installations with critical agency and auto-biographic transparency.*

*Her auto-didactic work exists as both commentary and reflection of the situation in which her work is experienced. A reflexive narrative of the established tastes and standardised systems of the art world. Through her minimal aesthetic, via her maximalist auto-biographical narrative, Berger's vernacular seeks to demystify her practice and production of art by sharing her personal circumstances of both coming to be in and considering the problematics of arts.*

*Berger has exhibited solo shows with Shahin Zarinbal, Berlin, Cordova, Vienna and Barcelona, Diorama, Oslo, Sorbus, Helsinki, Spazio ORR, Brescia, PS120, Berlin, Super, Art week Brussels, Jupiter Woods, London and others. And has taken part in duo or group shows at Skånes Konstförening, Malmö, Waf Galerie, Vienna, Kunsthalle Bremerhaven, Cittipunkt, Berlin, Kunstverein Kärnten, Modern Museum, Stockholm, Cell Project Space, London, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin, Shanaynay, Paris, Le Bourgeois / 3236rls, London, Sculpture Garden Biennale, Geneva and more.*