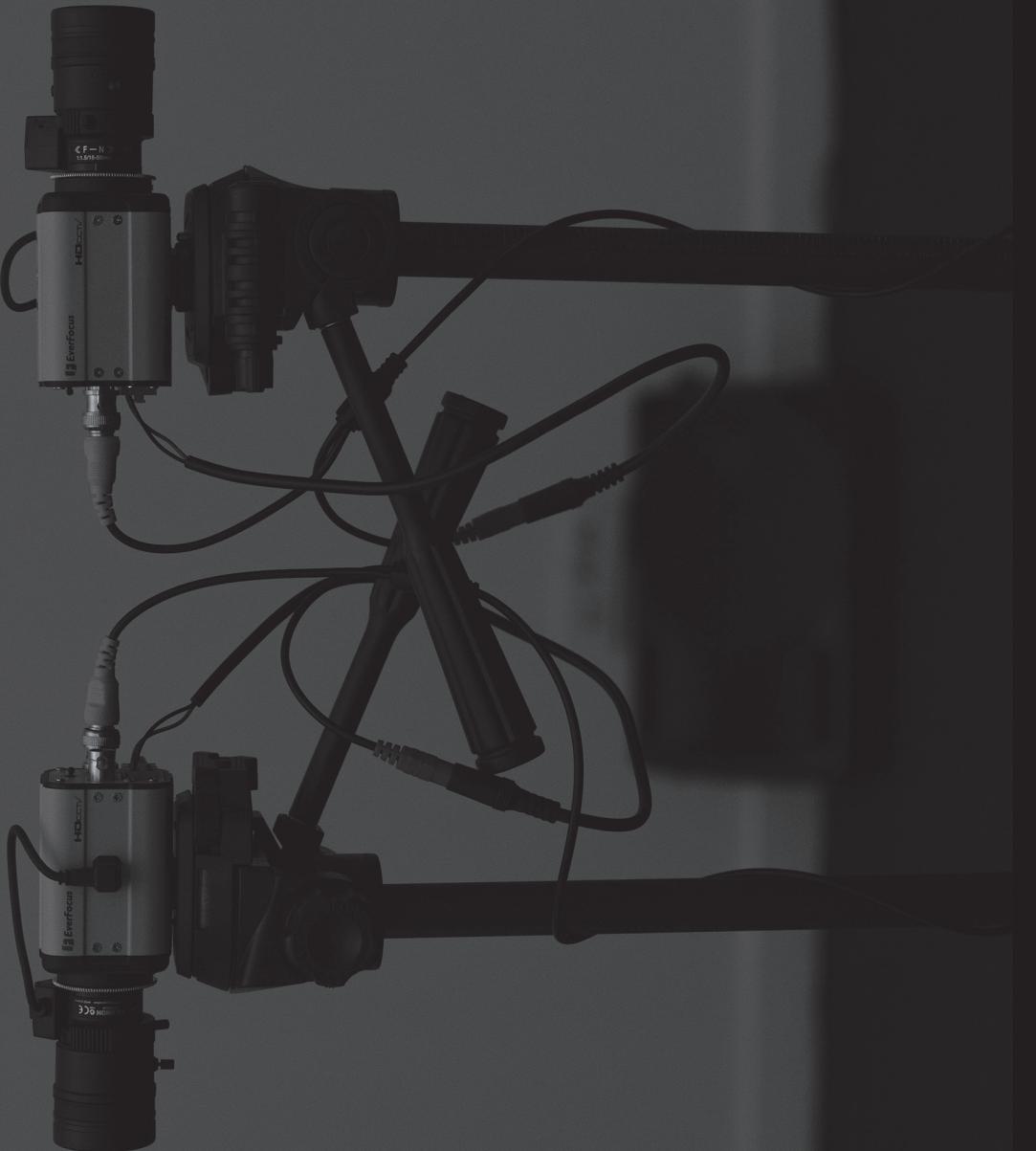


POETIKA ZATVORENOG KRUGA  
AUDIOVIZUALNA INSTALACIJA  
14. 4. – 26. 6. 2022.

# prisluškivanje

TONI  
MESTROVIĆ



Sabina Salamon

Prisvajajući sustav nadzora u svrhu istraživanja njegovih tehnoloških kapaciteta, Toni Meštrović je u posljednjih nekoliko godina temu nadziranja učinio svojom omiljenom temom. U seriji od nekoliko izložbi razvijao je mogućnosti *zatvorenog kruga*, najprije kroz interaktivnost s posjetiteljima u splitskoj Galeriji umjetnina, zatim u Salonu Galić, gdje proučava tehnologiju nadzora kroz situaciju gdje ona nadzire samu sebe, te u aktualnom predstavljanju u riječkom MMSU. Ovdje se Meštrović još čvršće usmjerio na ovaj alat, uključivši komponentu greške kao sustavne mogućnosti koja drastično mijenja ishod – videoslika postaje zvuk i, obrnuto, zvučna informacija (u TV monitoru) proizvodi sliku. „Greška“ u ovom slučaju podrazumijeva nestandardno spajanje video i audio signala, koji su nekompatibilni i time nefunkcionalni za primarnu namjenu, no upravo je to prostor umjetnikova interesa. Postaviti sustavni okvir unutar kojeg se razvija poetika prevodenja signala na principima slučajnosti i greške.

Budući da je rad izložen u kontekstu izložbe *Riječi za gledanje* koja iz fundusa bira radeve u kojima se prožima tekstualno i slikovno, treba napomenuti da se Meštrovićeva instalacija može sagledati kao prenošenje vizualne informacije u zvučnu i nadovezati se na središnju problemsku nit izložbe. U terminima medijskog istraživanja koje s jezično-slikovnog prelazi na zvučno, i gdje središnje mjesto pripada paradoksu: sustav nadzora koji upravlja slikovnom informacijom, proizvodi zvučni okoliš u kojem opažajnu ulogu umjesto oka preuzima sluš, na što navodi i sam naslov *Prisluškivanje*.

Osim što krivo spajanje signala i njihova uzajamna konverzija (slika u zvuk i natrag) unosi nered u poredak očekivanja, Meštrović odbacuje svaku mogućnost narativnog razumijevanja slike, a zauzvrat modelira zvučni prostor u zamračenoj dvorani gdje jedini izvor vidljivosti dolazi s TV ekrana koji prenose asketski nesugestivne crno-bijele apstraktne površine. Samim time vizualna komponenta rada postaje sekundarna, a prepuštenost zvuku oslobađa proces slušanja. Za razliku od slike, zvučna struktura otkriva se u svojoj kompozicijskoj punoći zahvaljujući procesuiranju računalnog algoritma kojim kontrolira kretanje zvuka i tu Meštrović nastupa kao autor, nadilazeći suhoparnost tehnološke datosti. U konstelaciji dviju nadzornih kamera s pridruženih dvaju televizijskih monitora koji se uzajamno aktiviraju, slike pretvorene u zvuk distribuiraju se na multikanalno zvučničko okruženje raspoređeno u oblik elipse koja nema estetsku, već akustičku funkciju.

Sasvim je izvjesno da se Meštrović zalaže za autonomiju zvuka na račun slike, jer slika sama ne prenosi nikakav eksplicitan sadržaj, pa bismo parafrazirajući ideju *vizualnog ili slikovnog obrata*,

mogli pripomenuti da je ovdje riječ o stanovitom zvučnom obratu  
što nam daje pravo da *Prisluškivanje* zovemo zvučnom slikom.

Onda se pitajmo, je li Meštrovićeva sklonost neprikazivanju zapravo kritika proizvodnje slika u općoj vizualizaciji svijeta? Neosporno je da zanemarivanje vidljivog, kao i autoreferencijsko propitivanje materijalnih (hardverskih) odlika alata, nosi implikacije ikonoklastičkog pisma neoavangarde koja je nepresušnu žđ za iznalaženjem novih mogućnosti tehnologije gasila s bezbroj eksperimenata s električkom opremom. Izvorna namjena elektroničke opreme nije bila umjetnička, stoga su predstavljali neistraženo polje novih znanja.<sup>1</sup> Dok se *zatvoreni krug* u pravilu koristio za prijenos slike i omogućavao zrcalnu konfrontaciju sa samim sobom (umjetnika ili posjetitelja), gdje se u pravilu prizivao proces identifikacije, *Prisluškivanje* otvara prostor disocijacije gdje zvuk nastaje kao digresija, zbog na početku napravljene greške krivog spajanja.<sup>2</sup> U osnovi nesenzualan, fluksusovski nespektakularan, ali konceptualno poetičan, rad ne ovisi o posjetiteljima, ali ih uključuje, bilo kao promatrače i svjedoke trajanja, ili kao slučajne prolaznike uhvaćene okom kamera.

Nagađam: *zatvoreni krug* na kojem se *Prisluškivanje* zasniva, prototip je situacije *vidim i viđen sam*<sup>3</sup> s kojom ne zarezuje toliko u temu privatnosti koliko u poredak smisla i učinka nadzora u kulturi u kojoj je proizvodnja slika dostigla nesaglediv broj. Tako dolazimo do toga da je princip *zatvorenog kruga* upisan u strukturu sustava koji se iscrpljuje u svojoj samodostatnosti. Naznačuje krizu i poziva na obnovu smisla.\*

1 Nekolicina glazbenika i likovnih umjetnika kasnih pedesetih, šezdesetih i sedamdesetih godina 20. st. eksperimentirala je s električnim napravama, od radara, osciloskopa, radio i TV prijemnika, do konstruiranog video sintesajzera, čime su se bitno omekšavale usvojene granice između vizualnog i nevizualnog, umjetničkog i neumjetničkog. Među njima su Benjamin F. Laposky, Norman McLaren, John i Whitney, Karl Otto Götz, Nam June Paik, Shuya Abe, Steina i Woody Vasulka, Steve Rutt, Bill Etra, Stephen Beck, od kojih su mnogi za uzor imali umjetnike iz razdoblja povijesnih avantgarda koji su bili pioniri takvog promišljanja kao što su Naum Gabo, članovi Bauhausa.

2 U radovima premijerno pokazanim na izložbi u galeriji Parnassus u Wuppertalu 1963. koja se smatra prekretnicom video umjetnosti, Nam June Paik koristio je obrнутu situaciju – TV setovi bili su spojeni mikrofonima preko kojih se mijenjala slika na ekrani. Vidi: Edith Decker-Phillips, *Paik Video*, Station Hill Arts, Barrytown LTD, New York, 1998., str. 32-40.

3 Willibald Sauerlaender smatra da izvornost te misli pripada filozofu Georgeu Berkeleyu i njegovoj izjavi *Biti znači biti opažen* (*Esse est percipi*), Willibald Sauerlaender: „Iconic Turn? – molba za ikonoklazam“, *Europski glasnik*, 10 (2005), Zagreb, 589-601.

\* Projekt je razvijan u suradnji s Hannesom Hözlom, SuperCollider sofverskim programerom.



LINE A

By appropriating a surveillance system for the purpose of exploring its technological capacities, Toni Meštrović has made surveillance his favorite topic in recent years. In a series of exhibitions, he was developing the possibilities of a *closed circuit*, first through the interaction with visitors at the Split Art Gallery, then in Galić Salon where he examined the technology of surveillance in a situation where the technology monitored its own self, and now in MMSU Rijeka. Here, Meštrović focuses even more firmly on this tool, incorporating the element of error as a systemic possibility that radically changes the outcome – video image becomes sound and, vice versa, sound information (in the TV monitor) produces image. The “error” in this case is a non-standard combination of video and audio signals, which are normally incompatible and thus non-functional for the intended purpose – and this is precisely the space of the artist’s interest. To create a setting where the poetics of translating signals on the principles of coincidence and error can take place.

Since the work is shown in the context of exhibition *Words to Be Seen*, which includes artworks from the Museum’s collections that combine image and text, Meštrović’s installation can be interpreted as a transfer of visual information into sound, which relates it to the main theme of the exhibition. To put it in the words of the media research that moves from the area of language and image to the area of sound, with paradox as its pivot: a surveillance system operating with image produces an audio environment where we look with our ears, instead of our eyes. This is suggested by the title itself – *Eavesdropping*.

The “mismatching” and mutual conversion of the signals (image to sound and vice versa) disrupts the order of expectations, but in addition to that, Meštrović rejects any possibility of a narrative understanding of the image. Instead, he molds the sound space in the darkened hall, where the only source of light comes from TV screens transmitting ascetic, non-suggestive, black and white abstract surfaces. With this, the visual component of the work falls in the background, and the immersion into sound liberates the process of listening. Unlike image, sound reveals itself in all its compositional fullness, thanks to the processing of the computer algorithm that controls the movement of sound: this is where Meštrović takes the stage as an author, outperforming the dryness of the given

technological structure. In the constellation of two surveillance cameras connected to two mutually activated television monitors, the images converted to sound are transmitted to a multichannel speaker system arranged in the form of an ellipse that does not have an aesthetic but acoustic function.

Meštrović undoubtedly advocates the autonomy of sound at the expense of image, because image itself does not convey any explicit content, so by paraphrasing the idea of a *visual or pictorial turn*, we may say this is a *sound turn*. For this reason, we can justifiably call *Eavesdropping* an audible image.

Let’s ask ourselves, then, is Meštrović’s tendency for not showing the image actually a critique of image production in the general visualization of the world? There is no doubt that a disregard for the visible, as well as a self-referential questioning of material (hardware) characteristics of the tool, carries the implications of an iconoclastic letter of the neo-avant-garde. The neo-avant-garde quenched its raging thirst for new possibilities of technology with countless experiments with electronic equipment; since the original purpose of the equipment was not artistic, these experiments represented an unexplored field of new knowledge.<sup>1</sup> While *closed circuit* was generally used to transmit image and allowed for a mirroring confrontation with self (artist’s or visitor’s), invoking a process of identification, *Eavesdropping* opens up a space of dissociation where sound comes out as a digression, due to the error of miss-connection made at the beginning.<sup>2</sup> Fundamentally non-sensual, unspectacular in a fluxus-like manner, and yet conceptually poetic, the work does not depend on visitors, but includes them, either as observers and witnesses to duration, or as random passersby captured by the eye of the cameras.

<sup>1</sup> Some musicians and visual artists in the late 1950s, 1960s and 1970s experimented with electronic devices, from radars, oscilloscopes, radios and TV sets, to constructed video synthesizers, which has redrawn the traditional boundaries between visual and non-visual, artistic and non-artistic. Among them were Benjamin F. Laposky, Norman McLaren, John and Whitney, Karl Otto Götz, Nam June Paik, Shuya Abe, Steina and Woody Vasulka, Steve Rutt, Bill Etra, Stephen Beck. Many of them looked up to artists from the period of historical avant-gardes, who were pioneers of such reflections, such as Naum Gabo and members of the Bauhaus.

I’m guessing: the *closed circuit* on which *Eavesdropping* is based is a prototype of the situation “I see and I have been seen”<sup>3</sup> which Meštrović uses not so much to deal with the topic of privacy as to deal with the order of meaning and effect of surveillance in a culture where production of images is endless. Therefore, we come to the conclusion that the principle of a *closed circuit* is written into the structure of a system exhausted in its self-sufficiency. It points to a crisis and calls for a renewal of sense.\*

\* The project was developed in collaboration with SuperCollider software programmer Hannes Hözl.

<sup>2</sup> In his works that premiered at an exhibition at Parnassus Gallery in Wuppertal in 1963, which was considered a turning point in video art, Nam June Paik did the other way round – he connected TV sets to microphones that altered the image on the screens. Cf: Edith Decker-Phillips, *Paik Video*, Station Hill Arts, Barrytown LTD, New York, 1998, p. 12. 32-40.

<sup>3</sup> Willibald Sauerlaender believes that the thought originally belongs to the philosopher George Berkeley and his statement “to be is to be perceived” (*Esse est percipi*), Willibald Sauerlaender: “Iconic Turn? – molba za ikonoklazam”, *Europski glasnik*, 10 (2005), Zagreb, 589-601.



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