

TONI MEŠTROVIĆ

Interleaving

a closed-circuit sound installation

2–24 September 2022

MMC KIBLA / KiBela

The rise of electronic surveillance at the time of the information revolution has become one of the main topics of the critique of social surveillance. Under the guise of regulating the security of citizens, surveillance has spread from the directly surveilled and limited space to public space. In a *risky society*, an individual is under the pressure of responsibility to effectively control and manage uncertainties. As a general place of media rhetoric, the stirring of fear indirectly encourages people to believe the electronic eye. In the period of global economic changes and the adoption of new models of social segregation and polarization.

These are approximately the premises that Toni Meštrović draws on in his series of exhibitions *Hack the System* (2018), *Surveilling Surveillance* (2020), and *Eavesdropping* (2022), in which he examines video surveillance technology, either its characteristics of a technical tool or its social implications. In this, he is as much interested in the power of the surveilling gaze as in its sidetracks, delusions, and weaknesses, which are rarely discussed and not even questioned in everyday life. Because he is aware that the people monitored by street surveillance systems mainly remain unknown to the observer and that the ones looking at the screens do not have the possibility of systematically identifying and classifying people in public space, Meštrović leans towards the conclusion that, in itself, surveillance is redundant and that the real threat is not the monitoring of others. It is about something totally different, which can most easily be explained with the often quoted sentence that »discipline proceeds from the distribution of individuals in space« (M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 1977), which, among other things, explains that the power of the surveilling gaze lies in its ability to encourage conformism. Because the feeling that we are under surveillance creates the feeling that we are potential violators. The knowledge that there is information ready to testify at a future moment in time is enough for it to haunt our thoughts with the anxiety of the accused. The perceptive traps that the surveillance system constantly produces are an object of interest in Toni Meštrović's media research and the reason he questions its dead ends and ecstasies and turns the unknown into the known, all with the goal of a sensory experience of the surroundings we live in. That is why, for Meštrović, the appropriation of the structure of a surveillance system has the character of a further research of the unexplored possibilities of the *closed circuit*, but, as opposed to his previous works mentioned above, whose basis consisted of a system of surveillance cameras, the Maribor project works exclusively with the medium of sound. By using its intangibility, immateriality, and invisibility, he supports the idea of the observer's physical absence characteristic of the surveillance system. Seven directional loudspeakers arranged in two closed circuits, one of which is interleaved in the other, emit the sound they receive via microphones from the surrounding space and create the conditions for a sound experience that sustains the sound *feedback*. Despite the technical stability of the installation, the result is unpredictable. It

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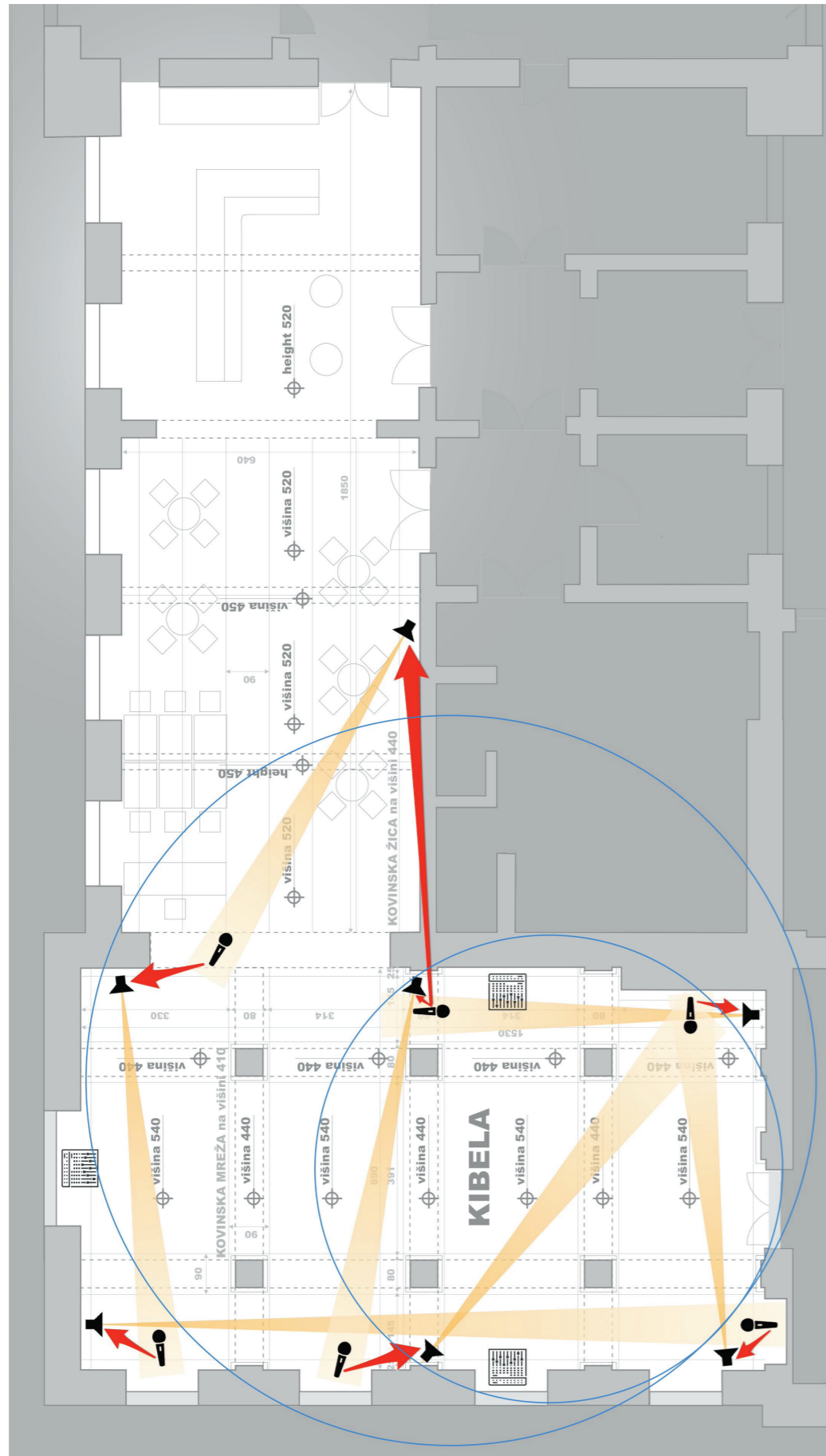
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Opening hours: Monday–Friday 10 a.m.–6 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m.–2 p.m.



is probable that *microphonics* will emerge, which should keep the sound form alive without the help of the visitors who assume the role of a listener-observer. It remains uncertain, however, whether the installation will be able to break through the limits of the conceived scheme and exceed expectations. Will it surprise us?

- Sabina Salamon

BIOGRAPHY

Website



Toni Meštrović (b. 1973, Split, Croatia) is a multimedia artist working predominantly in form of video and sound installations. He graduated with a Graphic Arts degree from the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb in 1999, where he produced graphic arts, sculpture and installation. Due to his interest in electronic audio-visual media, he studied Video/Digital Imaging with prof. Valie Export at the International Summer Academy for Contemporary Art in Salzburg in 1997, and completed a two-year postgraduate diploma in Media Art with prof. David Larcher and prof. Anthony Moore at the Academy of Media Arts, Cologne in 2004. Video, sound, and audio-visual installations produced during Meštrović's postgraduate studies explore his personal perception of the sea, and the island where he grew up. After his return to Croatia in 2004, his work deals with themes of cultural heritage, identity, and the transformations that have occurred in Dalmatia due to the period of transition. Some of his continuous thematic preoccupations are the assimilation of the linear and cyclical time and the exhaustion of a type of narrative that we are used to and expect in our quotidian lives, as well as a wide range of the topic of change, either as a record of evaporation of water like in a closed circuit video installation, or as a commentary of social change. Since 1992, he has taken part in group and solo shows, as well as video festivals, in Croatia and internationally. He has been awarded scholarships and awards, such as the Young Artist Award by the Croatian Artist Association and the Second Prize at the T-HTaward@MSU.hr exhibition in 2013. He lives and works in Rijeka and Kaštela, Croatia, and is an Associate Professor at the Arts Academy University of Split, Department of Film and Video.