

Tatjana Strugar / For Status

When, back in 1970, at the Oakland Museum, Tom Marioni staged the first gallery event in a series titled “social sculptures” — the work remembered as *“The Act of Drinking Beer with Friends Is the Highest Form of Art”* — many saw this piece as one of the key moments in bringing the then-vibrant conceptual art production closer to the public. Its immediacy, direct communication with visitors, interwoven with anti-intellectual rhetoric and a significant dose of post-hippie humor, marked the very young conceptual art scene of the American West Coast as a kind of reaction to the successes of New York colleagues, who were primarily concerned with the ontology of the artwork, paying considerably less attention to the place of art within its immediate social environment.

The work of Belgrade-based artist Tatjana Strugar, which returns to the Gallery of the Youth Center after nearly four years — her video installation *“Positions”* was exhibited at the DOB Gallery in June 2004 — and which the artist herself describes, the current work *“For Status”* represents a kind of return to a familiar “friendly” environment, both in a physical and symbolic sense. The importance of this assumption lies in its explicit capacity to recognize something that could be described as a contemporary network of relations between the artist, the institution, the artwork, the audience, and the ultimate institution to which the artist addresses her current work — in this case, the artists’ association of the Association of Fine Artists of Serbia (ULUS).

The one-day, one-off happening by Tatjana Strugar, titled *“For Status”* and taking place in the Gallery of the Youth Center, could be interpreted as a paraphrase of a series — or even an entire tradition — of Fluxus and conceptual events. From these, the artist primarily adopts the form of the event itself, which in this case resembles Marioni’s beer-drinking discipline or the performative social gatherings organized by contemporary pop-art practitioners. Nevertheless, its direct address clearly articulates the act of extinguishing the audience in relation to the aforementioned tradition. Tatjana Strugar does not aim to question the nature of the artwork, its communicative potential, or the role of the audience within its narrative-tactical mechanisms. On the contrary, the audience — as well as the institution in which the artist exhibits her work, and ultimately the author of these lines — are here exclusively those who legitimize the artwork, who advocate a form of approval that the artist then employs in further communication, and which will be incorporated into the event itself as a fundamental prerequisite for its realization.

What might be recognized as the theoretical potential of the work itself — a kind of discussion or reckoning with the mechanisms of its functioning — raises, above all, the question of the artist’s right to produce a work with the idea of direct profit, or in other words, to create a work whose use value we are able to recognize in advance. In any interpretation or reading, what remains outside the domain of possible and posed questions is the fact that this event, that is, Strugar’s work *“For Status,”* exists within the territory of contemporary art precisely due to the external and material manifestations of its nature as an event. Situated within a gallery — a gallery with a tradition of engagement with contemporary, often “semi-intelligible” art — the work brings the symbolic capital of the artist’s previous projects into the public sphere in the form of a simple dilemma: is all of this sufficient to “defend” the status of the artist?

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