

## **Interview of Dalibor Martinis**

The interview took place on 11-12. of July 2023. The questions were asked by Slavko Kacunko.

The interview was conducted in English.

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### **Beginnings: first tests, first experiences, first works**

\_ When did you start to get interested in video? What was the nature of your artistic work before switching to video? How / with whom did you train?

I have heard about it around 1970. Then, I think it was 1971, Willoughby Sharp, a curator from New York came with a friend who brought portable video camera/recorder. That was the trigger, obviously I was looking for a medium outside the classic art disciplines.

\_ What is your first work, and what year does it date from? Can you describe it? Where and under which conditions was it shown?

The first video I did with Sanja Iveković. We were invited to take a part at the *Audiovisuelle Botschaften* in Graz (1973), one of the first video exhibitions organized in Europe. We had a chance to make a video work there because it was sponsored by Sony and there was plenty of equipment there. Our video was about time, especially the power of television to manipulate with it, just like with everything else. So, we shot about 10 short videos that imposed particular time which did not correspond with the real time of the shooting but in these videos we claimed that our time is the real time. Then, for the show, we installed a tv monitor controlled by a timer which would start particular video at the time which we established as real.

\_ Are there any sketches or preparatory notes?

Yes, I have a sketch showing our interventions in the real timeline.

### **Access conditions / Technical issues**

\_ Did you seek access to TV studio facilities? What equipment was available? Who owned this video equipment?

Few years later the owner of the Galeria del Cavallino in Venice bought the portable equipment and came to Zagreb with the idea of collaboration of Italian and Yugoslav artist in the event called *Motovun Meetings*. So, again few of us interested in video had a chance to make new works there. ("Open Reel", 1976, "Video Immunity", 1976, "Manual", 1978)

\_ What was the involvement of the state and of art centers and art schools in the purchase or provision of technical equipment?

There was no portable equipment at the time in Yugoslavia. I managed to make video piece in a class of an elementary school which, for its achievements got the video camera and recorder through a Multimedia Center that was formed in Zagreb. ("Still Life", 1974)

\_ Where did you eventually borrow or purchase it?

I bought, with Sanja, Sony Betacam portapack at some point, but that was later.

\_ How did the access to technical material affect your practice?

We got used to look for a chance at then regularly organized video festivals in Europe and by applying for art residences abroad. In 1978 we were invited to show our work in Toronto and Vancouver (The Pumps Gallery, Western Front Society) and in WFS I did a media

performance “DM Talks to DM”, better to say the first part of the media project consisting of publicly posing the questions to Dalibor Martinis from the year 2000.

### **Relationship to Broadcast TV**

\_ What looked like the TV broadcast in your country? \_ Was it state TV or private channels? At that time television was state owned and party controlled, but that control was not anything comparable to the control of media in so called Eastern bloc countries. Also, film making in Yugoslavia was author oriented and with very little intervention by the state.

\_ What was your relationship to TV broadcast?

In the 80-es television started to show interest in new media. There were tv programs that enabled production of art videos and these works were then showed on tv. I did few works during that time, mostly with Belgrade Television.

\_ Did you consider your work to be in some way oppositional to mainstream television?

Of course, it was not of any existing tv genres. Also, in 1986 I did a 50-minute video piece (“Dutch Moves”) produced by German tv station ZDF. This was the time when my work attracted certain international attention, but also the international art scene already fully recognized the significance of video in the context of contemporary art.

\_ Were you interested in having your work shown on television? Was any of your work broadcast, either within your own country or internationally?

Yes, of course, but it happened only now and then. In the early eighties in New York there were cable tv channels which used to show programs of video art and I had my work shown there.

### **Development and continuation of the work in video or installation**

\_ How has your work with video or installation evolved?

From very early I was interested in using video as an element in the media performance and also as video installation. The combination of moving images and a space in which the viewer can move freely interested me. Being a visual artist I did not perceive video medium as an alternative to film.

\_ Have you stopped working with video, and if so, what year and why?

No, I did not. It is not the only medium I use in my work but, I would say it is still dominant.

### **The choice of video as a specific medium or as one of several experimental tools**

\_ What were your uses of video: experimental or artistic tapes; installations; performances, theater pieces or musical concerts archiving? Why did you use video specifically? How does this technology relate to your work? What did video allow in comparison to other mediums? Has the tool of video changed your thinking about artistic practices? Do you consider yourself as a video artist?

My work most often deals with time, or our perception, concepts of it, and our lasting in it. Movement and time are very well represented by moving images. From the moment video became a digital medium the field the artist finds himself in became much, much larger. We are living in the Technosphere and we had to adapt to it our concepts of art and media. So, I would call myself a media artist (among other naming) than strictly video one.

### **Sound/Audio**

\_ How important was the audio track in your work? \_ Did you explore the potential of sound or the relationship of image to sound within your video work?

Yes, I treat sound as inseparable part of my media works. Often there is talking in the video.

### **The status of the works**

\_ How would you define your work at the time?

At the time a series of my most recent works carries the title "I HAVE NO TIME".

\_ How did you choose your titles?

Difficult question

### **Influences**

\_ Have other artists influenced your switch to this technology? And more directly your practice? Have other sources (newspapers, magazines, books, events, personalities, etc.) influenced your artistic practice at that time?

Yes of course, in the earliest stage: Nam June Paik, Bruce Nauman, Vito Acconci, among others.

### **Collective**

\_ Did you work with other artists? Musicians, performers, visual artists, etc.?

In the early times I did several video works with Sanja Iveković.

### **The artistic scene: exhibition and performance venues (self-managed art spaces, festivals, institutions, magazines). In connection with other places/cities?**

\_ What were the famous national or international places for the presentation or exhibition of video art?

*Video Laboratory*, Galleria del Cavallino, Venezia

*Works and Words*, De Appel, Amsterdam

*Video*, MoMA, New York

Galerija SKC, Beograd, P.S.1, New York

Video Roma, Rome

Video festivals: *World Wide Video*, Den Haag

*International Video Encounter*,

Video festivals: San Sebastian, Locarno, Ljubljana, Roma, Montreal, Montbeliard

\_ Was the question of conservation and collection of works raised? By whom? What actions were taken in that direction?

The museums which included video works in their collections started worrying about the technical aspect of the medium, especially since the changes in video standards became something that was happening more and more often.

### **Distribution**

\_ Was the issue of distribution of your work important to you when you first began working with video?

Yes, and there were several places which devoted their activity to the distribution of art video.

\_ Was your work distributed and if so, by whom and on what basis?

New York Public Library/Donnel Center, New York

V-Tape, Toronto

Heure Exquise, Mons en Baroeul

London Electronic Arts, London

Video Inn, Vancouver

Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie, Karlsruhe

\_ Did the issue of distribution have an impact on the way that you worked or the kind of work you made?

Yes, some of my works were included in the distribution at these places, some made it to museums. Festivals were very good places for spreading the information about my works.

**Links with art schools: teaching, teachers, students**

\_ When did art schools start training artists in video practices in your country? Who led these courses and how were they imagined?

Only in the nineties, the art schools included video and new media in their curricula.