

Jela Krečič

New Artists: Janša, Janša, Janša

When we try to remember what it was in the field of art that impressed us in the past year, we usually think of an exceptional event or artistic creation. For 2007, it seems it was something that does not belong to the usual order of artistic production but, rather, concerns art in a more fundamental sense, namely, three important Slovene artists changing their names to Janez Janša. We have already considered the significance of this artistic gesture in this newspaper, but it has also become the subject of various considerations, theoretical and otherwise. We are convinced it will also elicit various reactions and interpretations in the future.

Here we must briefly emphasize how this gesture belongs to the art sphere in a constitutional way. Art, be it traditional or contemporary, always transcends or precedes its social and political constellation and existing (artistic) values, though these conditions also determine it. Art, thus, represents that social sphere that establishes a space for its creation and effects. Or, in other words, art guarantees that something unthinkable can happen or that the impossible becomes possible.

Modernism precisely accentuates this creative characteristic of art, the groundbreaking power that also concerns the social and political universe within which it acts. Today, especially in the context of global liberal capitalism, it often seems that art has exhausted this function, that it repeats the same strategies, whereas art production, more often than not, seems to belong to the order of the already-seen – an attempt at a shocking innovation is often only a new market niche.

Contrary to this, the completely subtle and seemingly unpretentious gesture of three artists changing their names to Janez Janša fundamentally intervenes into the artistic and broader social and political space. Perhaps we can learn a lesson from this, namely, that great artistic creations are sometimes found in seemingly marginal, minimal gestures.

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