

Brīnumaino zināšanu fabrika attēlos

Saruna ar kuratoru Masimiliano Džoni

Miraculous knowledge factory in images

Conversation with curator Massimiliano Gioni

Barbara Feslere / Barbara Fässler

Māksliniece / Artist



Masimiliano Džoni / Massimiliano Gioni
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Foto / Photo: Giorgia Zucchiatti
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Kādā sarunā pa skaipu Masimiliano Džoni (*Massimiliano Gioni*, dz. 1973) stāsta par savu izstādi "Enciklopēdiskā pils" (*Il Palazzo enciclopedico*) Venēcijas biennāles 55. starptautiskajā mākslas izstādē. Tai pirmo grūdienu devis Marino Auriti projekts, kas – lai arī patentēts – izrādījās neiespējams un izputēja: itāļu izcelsmes amerikāņu mehāniķis un autodidakts bija iecerējis būvēt torni, kur uzkrāt visas cilvēces zināšanas. Līdzīgi Noas šķirstam, kas glābj visas zinības no izzušanas un aizmirstības, Džoni izstāde pēta iztēles augļus, kas zināšanas savieno ar attēliem, un dodas uz nezināmām zemēm, kur mīt autodidakti, amatieri, "autsaideri" un viņu fantastiskā, fantasmagoriskā, iracionālā daiļrade. Mēs ejam pavandīties pa globalizētas pasaules *Wunderkammer* jeb retumu kolekciju, kas spēj satricināt eirocentrisko, racionālo ģeogrāfiju, aizsniedzoties līdz šamaņu teritorijām, kuras jau robežojas ar neprātu. Ikviens mēģinājums stāstīt par pasauli kā veselumu kļūst murgains un ir lemts tādai pašai neveiksmei kā enciklopēdiskā pils; būtībā jāteic, ka ikviena biennāle arī ir šāds mēģinājums un ikviens biennāles kurators vaiga sviedros veļ savu akmeni augšup kalnā...

Barbara Feslere: Labdien, prieks jūs skatīt vaigā, un liels paladies, ka piekritāt intervijai. Jāsāk ar atzinības vārdiem par jūsu lielo darbu, ko esat uzsācis...

Masimiliano Džoni: Paldies! Vai nepāriesim uz "tu"?

B.F.: Labprāt. Gribētu konceptuāli parunāt par tavu biennāles

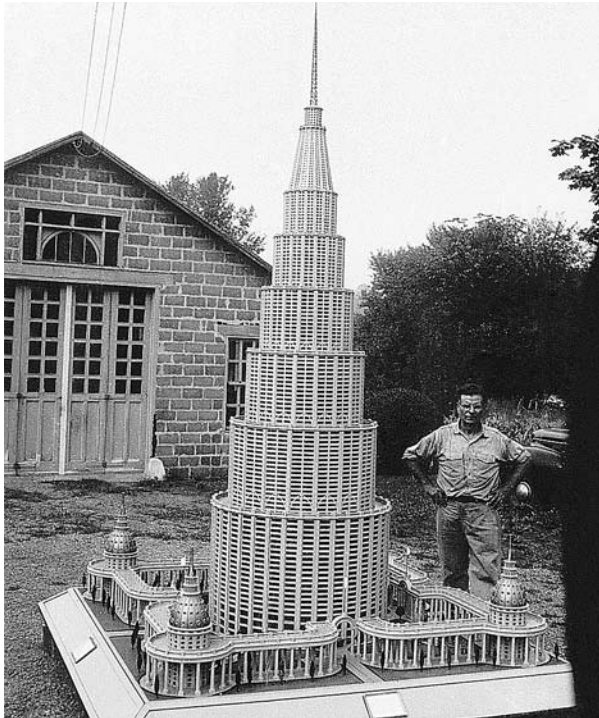
In a Skype conversation with Massimiliano Gioni (born in 1973), he tells me about his exhibition *The Encyclopedic Palace* at the Venice Biennale 55th International Art Exhibition. The initial impetus for it was provided by Marino Auriti's project which – though patented – turned out to be impossible and came to nothing: the American mechanic and autodidact of Italian descent had hoped to construct a tower for storing all of humanity's knowledge. Like Noah's Ark, meant to save all knowledge from disappearing and being forgotten, Gioni's biennale investigates the fruits of the imagination that combine knowledge with images, and departs for unknown lands where autodidacts, amateurs and outsiders live with their fantastic, phantasmagorical, irrational creative works. We're going to rummage through the globalized world's *Wunderkammer* or collection of curios, which can shake up Eurocentric, rational geography, reaching as far as the territories of the shamans which already border on the irrational. Any attempt to talk about the world as a whole becomes nightmarish and is destined for the same failure as the *Encyclopedic Palace*; basically it should be said that every biennale is this kind of attempt and each biennale's curator, covered in perspiration, rolls his stone up the mountain...

Barbara Fässler: Good day, I'm happy meet you face to face and thank you for agreeing to the interview. I have to start with some words of appreciation for the huge job that you've started...

Massimiliano Gioni: Thank you! Can we speak informally?

B.F.: Gladly. I'd like to speak conceptually about your biennale project, especially the relationship between art and knowledge which touches on an important question in philosophical history, namely, the role of the senses and the mind in the cognitive process, a question on which the empiricists and rationalists are divided. But recently a growing interest can also be noticed about this in the art field, for example, Bice Curiger's 2011 Biennale with the title *ILLUMInazioni*¹ cited enlightenment, and as part of Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev's *DOCUMENTA (13)*, situations were created in which art overlapped with knowledge, at the centre of which was an extremely tight space called the *brain* and packed with various significant objects and works. The brain is also portrayed in your biennale logo... This theme seems very current to me, and I'd like to understand how you look at all of this, and how your "knowledge theory" operates.

M.G.: (*Laughing*) Actually I don't think that we can talk about my "knowledge theory", I am more interested in the opportunity of



Marino Auriti pie "Pasaules enciklopēdiskās pils" / Marino Auriti with the *Encyclopedic Palace of the World* 1950

Foto no publicitātes materiāliem / Publicity photos Patekība / Courtesy of the American Folk Art Museum, New York

projektu, it īpaši attiecībā starp mākslu un zināšanām, kas skar būtisku filozofijas vēstures jautājumu, proti, jūtu un prāta lomu izziņas procesā, jautājumu, kurā empiriķu un racionālistu domas dalās. Bet arī mākslas laucīnā pēdējā laikā manāma aizvien lielāka interese par šiem jautājumiem, piemēram, Bičes Kurigeres 2011. gada biennāle ar nosaukumu "ILUMInācijas" (*ILLUMInazioni*¹) citēja apgaismību, bet Karolīnas Kristovas-Bakardžijevs *DOCUMENTA (13)* tika radītas situācijas, kurās māksla pārklājās ar zinātni un kuru centrā bija ārkārtīgi blīva, dažādiem nozīmīgiem priekšmetiem un darbiem piepildīta telpa, kas tika nosaukta par "smadzenēm". Arī tavas biennāles logo ir attēlotas smadzenes... Šī tēma man šķiet ļoti aktuāla, un es gribētu saprast, kā tu uz to visu skaties, kā darbojas tava "zināšanu teorija".

M.Dž.: (*smiedams*) Patiesībā nedomāju, ka varētu runāt par manu "zināšanu teoriju", drīzāk mani interesē iespēja palūkoties uz māksliniekiem un viņu darbiem kā paņēmieni, kas ved tuvāk zināšanām. Vienkāršāk sakot, gribēju panākt, lai šī izstāde atspoguļotu dažādas aktuālas problēmas. No vienas puses, lai redzam alkas pēc zināšanām, bet tieši brīdī, kad tās kļūst gandrīz par murgu vai paranoju un pārvēršas par savveida neprātu. Visu zināt gribēsi, līdzsvaru zaudēsi. No otras puses, vārds "iztēle" (*immaginazione*), piemēram, uzrāda ciešu etimoloģisku saikni starp zināšanām un attēlu (*imagine*), proti, doma ir tāda, ka mūsu prāts veidojas un darbojas attēlu režīmā. Viena no izstādes pamatnostādnēm ir tāda, ka izziņa ir bilžaina, attēli palīdz mums iztēloties neredzamo, konceptualizēt abstrakcijas. Attēli un iztēle kalpo izziņai un ļauj mums izziņāt to, kas rādās neiespējams vai atrodas ārpus izziņāmā robežām. Šeit jāpiebilst, ka izstāde daudzējādā ziņā ir saistīta arī ar

taking a look at artists and their works as a method which brings us closer to knowledge. To put it more simply, I wanted this exhibition to reflect a variety of real problems. On the one hand, so that we can see the desire for knowledge, but at the exact moment when it becomes almost a nightmare or paranoia and turns into a kind of madness. If you want to know everything, you'll lose your balance. On the other hand, the word *immaginazione* [imagination], for example, shows a close etymological connection between knowledge and *imagine* [image], namely, the idea is that our minds develop and operate in an image mode. One of the exhibition's basic premises is that cognition is in pictures, images help us to imagine what we can't see, to conceptualize the abstract. Images and imagination serve cognition and allow us to find out about what appears impossible or is located outside the borders of the cognizable. Here I should add that in many respects the exhibition is also connected with the surrealist tradition and the concept of the fantastic. Thirdly, one more aspect is connected with how we view these searches – we try to take in the widest possible field of vision, trying to keep in view not just artists and writers, but also marginal figures, the so-called amateurs, autodidacts or outsiders. I'd like to make us think about the definition of art, which risks being too narrow if it only applies to professional artists and excludes other episodic points of view.

B.F.: *Auriti's Encyclopedic Palace reminds one a little of an atlas, and of course, also an encyclopaedia, Malraux's "imaginary museum", Richter's "Atlantis", but, if we take some older examples, also the Tower of Babel and Tatlin's tower which was dedicated to the Communist Third International. In brief, many different attempts to collect humanity's knowledge together in some way can be found in history. Diderot maintains that the purpose of the encyclopaedia is to collect knowledge in one place and to pass it on to the next generation, as "we should not die without having rendered a service to the human race in the future years to come".*

M.G.: First of all we have to take a step back, because, in quoting Diderot, it is important to emphasize that the exhibition is called *The Encyclopedic Palace*. However, in its own way, it contains nothing of an encyclopaedia of enlightenment, nor does the title of Bice Curiger's exhibition you mentioned, either. It is more an exhibition where attempts at cognition can be viewed in baroque, mediaeval versions, namely, as encyclopaedias in which facts, legends and myths are wound together and the concept of knowledge is more along the path of association which actually is also the contemporary experience of knowledge: the exhibition not so much shows how it is possible to properly systematize knowledge, but rather – the kinds of means, and the kinds of channels we use to communicate. In my view, the exhibition speaks about certain irrational motifs, not about something like a new enlightenment, so to speak.

B.F.: *Should we look for harsh criticism of the current crisis, especially in relation to Italy, in The Encyclopedic Palace?*

M.G.: When working on an exhibition of this scale, I always try to find arguments which will take us a little further than immediate, directly accessible reality. I like it when references to contemporaneity can also be read "against the light", but I still hope that the arguments posed in this exhibition will rise, even a little, above this reality and will unravel the knots in which our artists and the average person have been caught up more than once. It's clear that an exhibition about knowledge and knowledge through images is very real – at

sirreālisma tradīciju un fantastiskā ideju. Treškārt, vēl viens aspekts ir saistīts ar to, kā mēs aplūkojam šos meklējumus, – mēs cenšamies aptvert iespējami plašāku redzeslauku, paturēt acis ne vien māksliniekus un rakstniekus, bet arī marginālas figūras, t. s. amatieru autodidaktus jeb autsaiderus. Es gribētu likt mums aizdomāties par mākslas definīciju, kas riskē būt pārāk šaura, ja tā attiecas tikai uz profesionāliem māksliniekiem, izslēdzot cita skatījuma epizodes.

B.F.: *Auriti "Enciklopēdiskā pils" nedaudz atgādina atlantu, protams, arī enciklopēdiju, Malro "Iedomu muzeju", Rihtera "Atlantu", bet, ja ņemam senākus piemērus, arī Bābeles torni un Tatļina torni, kas veltīts Komunistiskajai (III) Internacionālei. Īsi sakot, vēsturē atrodami daudzi un dažādi mēģinājumi kaut kādā veidā sakopot cilvēces zināšanas. Didro apgalvo, ka enciklopēdijas uzdevums esot savākt vienkopus zināšanas un nodot tās nākamajām paaudzēm, jo "mēs nedrīkstam nomirt, ja neesam krietni papūlējušies cilvēces labā".*

M.Dž.: Vispirms jāspers solis atpakaļ, jo, citējot Didro, ir svarīgi uzsvērt, ka izstāde saucas "Enciklopēdiskā pils", tomēr savā ziņā tajā nav itin nekā no apgaismības enciklopēdijas, arī tevis pieminētā Bičes Kurigeres izstādes nosaukuma. Drīzāk tā ir izstāde, kur aplūkojami izziņas mēģinājumi barokālākās, viduslaicīgākās versijās, proti, kā enciklopēdijas, kurās fakti, leģendas un mīti savijas kopā un zināšanu jēdziens drīzāk iet pa asociāciju ceļu, kas būtībā ir arī mūsdienu zināšanu pieredze: izstāde ne tik daudz rāda, kā zināšanas iespējams pamatīgi sistematizēt, bet drīzāk – ar kādiem līdzekļiem, pa kādiem kanāliem mēs sazināties. Manā skatījumā izstāde runā par zināmiem iracionāliem motīviem, nevis par tādu kā jaunapgaismību, tā sacīt.

B.F.: *Vai "Enciklopēdiskajā pili" vajadzētu saskatīt skarbu pašreizējās krīzes kritiku, it īpaši saistībā ar Itāliju?*

M.Dž.: Kad nodarbojos ar šāda mēroga izstādēm, vienmēr mēģinu atrast argumentus, kas vestu mūs nedaudz tālāk par tūlītēju, tieši pieejamu aktualitāti. Man patīk, ka "pret gaismu" ir nolasāmas arī atsauces uz mūsai ciešu, tomēr ceru, ka šajās izstādēs paustie argumenti kaut nedaudz pacelsies pāri šai aktualitātei un šķetinās samezģlojumus, kuros ne reizi vien ir sapinušies kā mākslinieki, tā parasti mirstīgi. Ir skaidrs, ka izstāde par zināšanām un zināšanām caur attēliem ir ļoti aktuāla – vismaz man tā liekas –, jo tā rāda apstākļus, kādos mēs visi dzīvojam. Mēs dzīvojam t. s. attēlu un zināšanu sabiedrībā, kur informācija, ekonomika un vara ir aizvien ciešākām saitēm sietas. Refleksijā par autodidaktu un amatieru lomu izstāde pievēršas arī iekļaušanas un izslēgšanas kritērijiem. Kam ir tiesības izstādīties, kam ne? Un, ja tu jautā, vai izstāde konkrēti atsauca uz Itālijas tautsaimniecības stāvokli, es sliecos atbildēt noraidoši, pat ja tajā apskatāmi darbi, kas pieskaras dažām ar to saistītām problēmām, piemēram, Marko Paolini (*Marco Paolini*) performances, kuras vēsta par izzūdošām profesijām. Vai Rosellas Biskoti (*Rossella Biscotti*) darbs, kura strādā ar cietumniecēm, lūdzot tām izstāstīt savus sapņus. Tātad ir darbi, kas pārklājas ar aktualitāti, tomēr ceru, ka ne viens pret vienu, bet pa diagonāli.

B.F.: *Tad varbūt šeit ir vērojams izmisīgs mēģinājums darināt Noas šķirstu cilvēces zināšanām?*

M.Dž.: Noas šķirsts kā tēls ir kalpojis mums par iedvesmas avotu, jo es biju iedomājies Arsenālu kā vietu, kur tiek būvēti kuģi, un arī vietu, kur ir dzimusi doma par brīnumaino. 16. gadsimtā uz kolonizācijas radītās ģeogrāfiskās ekspansijas fona rodas doma par

least I think so – because it shows the conditions in which we all live. We live in a so-called image and knowledge society, where information, economics and power are ever more tightly bound together. In the reflection about the role of autodidacts and amateurs, the exhibition also focuses on the criteria for inclusion and exclusion. Who has the right to exhibit, and who doesn't? And, if you ask whether the exhibition specifically refers to the state of Italy's economy, I'm inclined towards a negative answer, even if one can see works in it that touch on some related problems, for example, Marco Paolini's performances which portend of disappearing professions, or Rossella Biscotti's work where she works with female prisoners, asking them to talk about their dreams. So there are works which overlap with reality, however, I hope that it's not face-to-face, but across the diagonal.

B.F.: *Then perhaps a desperate attempt to manufacture a Noah's Ark for the knowledge of humanity can be seen here?*

M.G.: Noah's Ark as an image has served us as a source of inspiration, as I'd imagined the Arsenale as a place where ships are made and also as a place where the idea of the miraculous was born. The idea of the miraculous and fantastic, connected with Venice, and the Arsenale in particular, which was once called the *La fabbrica delle meraviglie* (Factory of Miracles), occurred in the 16th century against the background of the geographic expansion fostered by colonization. This era of miracles returned in the 20th century with Borges and all of this fantastic and phantasmagorical tradition, which I thought would be interesting to investigate.

B.F.: *You once maintained that you place personal cosmology and cognitive nightmares in opposition to an all-encompassing dream about universal knowledge which "tries in vain to fashion an image of the world that will capture its infinite variety and richness". Are irrational, nightmarish and crazy images able to lead us out of the world's impasses, muddled by an overload of information? Art, therefore, has a utopian, social or educational objective? If so, then what sort?*

M.G.: This irrational aspect that you mention, which I wanted to see and on which more than one of the exhibited works focuses, becomes revealed in an individual's interaction with this sea of information, *mare magnum*. Even in the most nightmarish instances, situations arise where the individual arrives in the midst of a flow of images – there are examples from which we can learn about how this sea of information can be navigated. I say this, while looking at you and my computer at the same time. Maybe the space needed by digital society makes us empathize with the collector, imagining him sorting his *Wunderkammer*, where he places all the objects around him, on the one hand harbouring illusions that he is the master and decision-maker, but, on the other, historically living in an era where the centre is disappearing. The idea about the *Wunderkammer's* miraculous, heterogeneous nature arises at the moment when a checkmate has been declared on Eurocentric geography and history. I hope that in some of these works you'll be able to see this desperate attempt to manufacture an ark, and also an individual's need to find themselves at the centre of an ever wider, more confused and less comprehensible world.

B.F.: *What are the functions of art, then?*
M.G.: Without number, aren't they? I think that two points will crystallize out of this exhibition. One is art as the expression of our internal image externally, exteriorization. At the base of this is an

