

# Foreword

## Pasts, Presents, Futures... Are Intertwining

For all the eyes, hands, mouths... there is not enough bread.  
We look before, we look now and we look after.  
Do we look outwards or inwards?  
What do we see and what do we look at?  
What do we really see and what do we really look at?  
Do we live in our heads or in the world?  
Do we see and look with our own eyes or through someone else's eyes?  
Our eyes dream.  
Modernists said: it is what it is; what you see is what you see.  
Today, the opposite is true: what you see (an illusion) is not what you see.<sup>①</sup>

①

Excerpt from the artist's manifesto, 2012.

I expressed to Dr. Barbara Predan, my colleague and co-editor of this monograph, that I did not wish to deliver a mere courteous speech riddled with platitudes or simply extend a heartfelt welcome to the creators of this significant project. My brief contribution here serves as an attempt to connect and integrate our past reflections and creative work, not only in my role of educator, but also as creator and artist. It provides an integration of my work and our collective reflections over a sustained period extending to roughly eighteen years. I will attempt to produce a material, physical text—an “avatar” (which, in early computer systems, long before the advent of AI, initially referred to and took the form of a text)—and connect it to what lies ahead. In other words: a text as potential and a text as body, which is the embodiment of a subject—in this case me, and on no account just me, since as an educator, and much more so as Dean of the Academy of Fine Arts and Design of the University of Ljubljana—I think and work in the plural, within a community. It is not only “me” anymore, but “us”: the academy is plural, it is a community. We teach, create and research together, as a community, as a collective subject.

We are increasingly aware that educating, teaching and researching consist of collaboration, convergence and cohesion—the connecting of different partners.<sup>②</sup> Our vocation requires collaboration; together we build the present and imagine the future. At the Academy, this is a frequent topic of our reflections and discussions; we write and create, engage in activities, draw, model, design, photograph and paint... about shared presents, because “the historical moment is nothing other than the present understood in its genesis: an ‘after’ inseparable from the ‘before’, that is” (Virno 2015). Virno concludes that “the ‘now’ exists only in relation to the potential past.” The present is therefore something between past promises and an unfulfilled future.

The effects of the work that each of us undertakes have consequences at the level of the Academy, and, supposedly, also produce social consequences. We believe (naively, romantically (!?), in a world marked by profound inequalities) that this is indeed true—indeed! The question that is becoming increasingly important is: what to do, or rather: what not to do. Do nothing, pure nothing? ... so, to do nothing, to not do anything. But even ‘nothing’ has to be marked, shown, articulated, formulated.

②

‘Companion’ might be an even more accurate word—an expression that remains here as a footnote.

For too many words, too many thoughts have already been expressed, and many more images have been sent out into the world. How is it now and what will become of them? The answer to this multitude could be emptiness and silence; yet here they are, in this endless cycle (of information and imagery), as always and repeatedly, and again—again words, comments, statements and images, photographs and endless... selfies (perhaps—I repeat what I have already expressed several times—this narcissistic, selfish and irresponsible form should really be banned!).

We should thoroughly consider our actions (*no selfies, please*) and, perhaps, talk and say as little as possible now but also later, tomorrow; or at least, do it as briefly and quietly as possible. Minus, less, less is more, less is better for us, for nature and for the animals. This—the bells are loudly tolling—should finally be clear to everyone! And of course, minus me, too, therefore I am finishing here, I am switching off the screen... Let us only create what is necessary, not aiming for the *most* necessary, but rather *the least* necessary ('the least' in terms of the amount of pollution of the media space and environment). Although a full stop was previously placed here, let me add: may the windows—and doors—open wide for the quality creations, projects and research presented in the following pages... Let us leaf through, look, read... and reflect, collaborate, create and work together... Collectively, we hold the power to imagine and shape our present (poised between past promises and an unfulfilled future)!

(to be continued)

— Alen Ožbolt, Dean of the Academy of Fine Arts and Design,  
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## REFERENCE

Virno, Paolo. 2015. *Déjà Vu and the End of History*. London: Verso.