

Yuri Leiderman

The first and major thing to be aware of when considering Anna Jermolaewa's works is: they are not metaphors for anything, and in no case are they metaphors for 'real life' and its 'problems'. They are not aimed at representing consumer habits, violence, intolerance, and other rubbish that surrounds us 'from all sides'. Strictly speaking, they rather present all this as plain rubbish, since they are intolerance, consumerism, and permanent violence, direct action, which is not recognizing, not considering itself, and which, as such, does not even exist.

Trying To Survive... Yet to survive where, in the middle of what, in a kind of Brownian motion occurring beyond the limits of life and death? And who struggles to survive there – Matryoshka dolls, molecules, and chicken legs? Their wretched lives are engulfed in ubiquitous insensibility, pure fantasy; in mechanisms like: to switch the light on and off with one's cock. And of course, it is just the erected phallus – the naked sense aroused like a glance or senselessness in those zones of the space where violence is 'rolled up like a scroll' and turns on itself, where the same things happen again and again – the light goes on and off, and happy matrimonial Matryoshkas fall apart and crash to the ground from everywhere.

Any reference to 'reality' with regard to these works would be out of place like the oafish announcements in the videos of the Saint Petersburg underground escalators – 'Do not leave your personal belongings in the trains!' – or a barmy bargain slogan plugging 'shoes of the spring and summer fashion'. The video camera does not operate as a journalistic tool, it is not used as an instrument for some poster-like 'rough tongue' appeal. It is rather an attempt at an absolutely smooth and indifferent fixation that appears inevitably insensate, farcical, and untrue.

Comparable to the operation of photographic devices in elementary-particle physics, e.g. the Wilson chamber or the bubble chamber – at those margins where the elementary fundamentals of our world turn into hallucinations when you try to capture them with maximum precision. In accordance with the quantum-theoretical uncertainty principle, the recording device itself is involved in those endless processes of destruction and reincarnation, and, finally, the chamber has

to be demolished, shot through, smashed up. And then da capo, non-stop, ad infinitum. (This is, by the way, the only video where we set eyes on the artist herself. However, the author does not appear in order to search and capture something, but only to equate the recording device with the other objects involved: the Matryoshkas, the puppies feeding and being fed, and the chicken legs rotating on the grill.)

This actually constitutes the aesthetic appeal of these works: although they, for the most part, involve mechanical playthings¹ which can be fully controlled and manipulated, they apparently do not have a demiurge, a creator. There is no vicious, ingenious inventor turning his windup dolls and there are no unhappy gadgets revolting against their maker, but mere physical – gravitational, digestive, and 'erectile'² – forces which can be neither 'good' nor 'bad', which are not accessible for an outside observer and always reveal some absolute remains. Repeatedly, we see hands peeling off the pants of the imbecile figure of a pissing boy as if the two – these heavy, grown-up human hands and this miserable figure made, maybe, somewhere in Taiwan – were equally and inseparably united in some cosmic minuet. Likewise, the sounding playthings of Anna's Quartets and Orchestras do not seem to need any winding up, they get 'wound up' by themselves, by the energy of their own unceasing moronic monotony. 'Gravitation Department in the Ministry of Coincidence', as Duchamp would have put it, instantly correcting himself:

'Coincidence Department in the Ministry of Gravitation' – in short, butter in the Milky Way. However, 'reality', 'human problems' – who knows what that means? I have been writing this text on a Sunday evening sitting on a bench in the Hauptallee of the Vienna Prater; different subjects (most of them not speaking German) were passing by – walking, running, skating – being under the influence of gravitational, erectile, spirituous, or other forces. To what extent could they be considered 'conscious human beings' at that moment? Or were they humans just by virtue of their 'un-consciousness'?

1 Or anything comparable in its ornamental, idiotic asininity – like a penis obediently rising when sprinkled by a watering can.

2 Erectile tissue, cavernous tissue capable of dilating with blood to bring about the erection of a body part.

in: Anna Jermolaewa Big Sister / The Five Year Plan, Ausst.Kat., Herausg. v. Gerald Matt f.d. Ursula Blickle Stiftung, Wien, 2002.