

***Beautiful.* Izabela Maciejewska**

curator: Alicja Cichowicz

Documentation (excerpt) submitted for the competition
for the curatorial project for the exhibition
in the Polish Pavilion at the
59th International Art Exhibition in Venice in 2022

Title: BEAUTIFUL
„Beauty is shaped by love”
Cyprian Kamil Norwid

Concept, description, and justification of the project:

The project "Beautiful", is an original concept of the visual artist Izabela Maciejewska, created in 2016 and proposed for the 2017 Venice Biennale. In 2021, the artist expanded the project to include an installation inspired by the life and work of Krzysztof Penderecki. Izabela was inspired by the garden, which Penderecki had been creating for the most part of his life, bringing plants from all over the world, which was, together with music, his great passion. The installation merges these passions: the music and the garden, as they influence each other and the viewer. By touching plants, and even just by approaching them, viewers trigger sounds of Penderecki's compositions. Viewers generate music or create new compositions in interaction plants, which are the similar to those in Penderecki's garden, by just moving among them. New, unwritten symphonies are created on the basis of existing compositions, with subtle and gentle sounds, with a low level of decibels. Contact with nature enhances harmony and the feeling of emotional unity with nature, and the sonic character of the installation makes the aleatorism of modern music appear here as a tangible experience of the viewer and results from his activity. Viewers become thus creators.

The vegetation is sprinkled every hour - the viewer can participate in this ritual of love and care, remaining in its space. The flooring made of absorbent concrete plates, after moistening, reveals previously invisible signs, executed by using a transparent hydrophobic substance. The word "love" appears in different languages.

An interactive installation becomes a vegetative temple, the culmination of which is the "living photography".

The project explores the conflict between objective side of beauty and subjective one, reflecting the image we have of our nearest and dearest person and presenting humanity as one big family.

An experiment, based on using photographs of loved ones (introduced by volunteers via a special app on the website of the project), and digitally processed through especially created computer program, will generate a "live photograph". However, modifications will not purely rely on interfusion of one face with another, but rather on merging added qualities. The final picture will be an ideal, yet collective concept of beauty – the mix of all races. Hindu eyes, Slavic mouth, Semitic nose, Asian chin... Will the consolidation of pictures create the Universal Ideal and possibly eliminate "The Stranger" image? A photography compiled from the first, ten received photos will be the point of departure of the project.

The searching for ideal beauty has always been one of the most running theme in art throughout the centuries. But should it be only brought to formats or whether it is measurable? What exactly is the beauty? What canons, tastes or ethnic customs decide what is and what is not beautiful?

In the "Beautiful" project the beauty mutates every now and then – is elusive, inconsistent. It is a kind of resultant reminding of resultant character of human DNA passing from generation to generation.

The concept of beauty is subjective and individual. Every person has his or her own. Due to our own senses and experiencing the pleasure we find beauty in our family members: wives, husbands, children, parents. People we love are beautiful to us.

The idea of this exhibition results from intensifying world's conflicts and divisions between populace. It is also artist's resistance against questioning humanistic values and it recalls the archetypical "friend-foe" category, yet with an equal sign in it, emphasising the fact we are all one big family.

The work, which is an original combination of the fascination with the work of outstanding Polish artists: Cyprian Kamil Norwid and Krzysztof Penderecki, and the emotional bond between man and nature, constitutes also a remarkable combination of the world of nature, human passion and sensitivity with the achievements of science and culture, modern technology of artificial intelligence, the algorithms of which are harnessed into the eternal search for beauty, deconstructing at the same time the myth of a stranger, the Other. The installation creates a new, beautiful and harmonious world in which nature, art and the viewer become one.

The exhibition points at a need to change the self-awareness of people in the 21st century, a need for a dialogical attitude towards the world - the Me-You relationship - in the words of Martin Buber, to live in harmony with oneself, with other people and with nature. The love referred to in the title aims at a broad understanding of this concept - as the principle of respect and empathy towards all living creatures.

Human, a thinking particle of the Universe, guided by rationalism, paradoxically ceased to understand his place on Earth, losing the sense of unity with the world as a result of treating it only materially. Rationalism has separated nature from culture and human consciousness, showing us a flat, one-dimensional, physical world only, which we have classified and broken up into a gigantic laboratory. In this way, we killed the entire planet, forgetting about the ecosystem, the creatures inhabiting it, the inner sphere of human life - his emotions, feelings, morality, spirituality.

Art should be an effective tool in achieving the desired harmony in the world, in acceptance and love also in the face of what seems impossible to love. Respect for the planet, all people inhabiting it without exception, regardless of gender, origin, race, worldview, religious and sexual orientation, and for our "lesser brothers".

Today, through their works, artists are trying to return to a state in which boundaries between the "I" and the environment have not yet been drawn. Show viewers that contact with the world should be based on direct participation, a sense of love and unity of all living things, and that contacts between people should result from empathy, which is a condition for acceptance. Persuade to see existence in a different light, to reach the state of direct observation of it, without intellectual deformation, to achieve the balance of the heart and mind. Abandoning the separated being of the "I" and realizing one's relationship with the universe. Aligning psycho-physical energy with energy of the Universe. Being here and now. Experiencing the eternity of time and space.

Scenario for the project: „Beautiful” – short version

To fully exhibit the project following items are required: a computer, a scanner, website, mobile smartphone app, computer program especially created for compressing photographs, Microsoft Cognitive Service and Microsoft Azure cloud computing, two multimedia projectors, 100 digital photo frames, one large format screen (6x5m) and one person supporting the computer.

Depending on conditions in the exhibition room, images could be projected directly on exhibition room walls.

The project is at an advanced image processing using morphing. With the help of algorithms and using a cloud computing, the program should create a single photo of a man and one of a woman with several thousand images of the project participants (visitors of the exhibition). Additionally, it should allow for the process of creating the final image.

The project will be co-created by all persons willing to input photographs of their beloved ones with use of an mobile and generally accessible application. The photographs can be added through the project website or a mobile phone to enable people all over the world to participate.

The experiment based on processing images will generate a „live photograph”, evolving with introduction of each new face. The effect will be visible immediately after introduction of a new image.

The computer program will generate the ideal picture of a beautiful man and a woman out of received data and project it on screens. The final picture will be an ideal, yet collective concept of beauty – the mix of all races, depending on every one walking into the gallery and leaving the preferred type.

The consolidation of pictures will create the Universal Ideal, possibly eliminating “The Stranger” image.

An advertising campaign (leaflets, social media, website, specialist’s magazines, advertorial, etc.) is required before the project starts to acquaint future attendants with the concept and to enable them to become co-authors of the project by adding photographs. It is estimated that over 120 thousands visitors will attend the exhibition during six months.

An integral part of the concept is placement of screens which should be symmetrical on both sides, left and right, starting from the main entrance.

A photography compiled from the first, ten received photos will be the point of departure of the project.

The main theme of the exhibition, annexing the space of the building, will be a plant installation inspired by Krzysztof Penderecki's garden, which will be created from plants analogous to those in the great artist's arboretum. Selected species will be purchased domestically and transported to the exhibition site. Larger specimens can be purchased on site. The installation should have its own water-absorbing base, insulation from the building's base, a light structure made of aluminum elements for suspending plants, an irrigation system,

a set of motion sensors synchronized with multimedia players and sound system. The object can also be placed outside the building if needed.

The installation merges Krzysztof Penderecki's passion to music and nature, influencing each other and the viewer. Touching plants, and even just approaching them generates music composed by Penderecki. Plants, which are the same as in Penderecki's garden, play music or create new compositions together with a viewer moving among them. New, unwritten symphonies are created on the basis of existing compositions, with subtle and gentle sounds, with a low level of decibels. Contact with nature enhances harmony and the feeling of emotional unity with nature, and the sonic character of the installation makes the aleatorism of modern music appear here as a tangible experience of the viewer and results from his activity. Viewers become thus creators.

The vegetation is sprinkled every hour - the viewer can participate in this ritual of love and care, remaining in its space. The flooring made of absorbent concrete plates, after moistening, reveals previously invisible signs, executed by using a transparent hydrophobic substance. The word "love" appears in different languages.

An interactive installation becomes a vegetative temple, the culmination of which is "living photography", from simultaneously executed "Beautiful" project.

The work, which is an original combination of the fascination with the work of outstanding Polish artists: Cyprian Kamil Norwid and Krzysztof Penderecki, and the emotional bond between man and nature, constitutes also a remarkable combination of the world of nature, human passion and sensitivity with the achievements of science and culture, modern technology of artificial intelligence, the algorithms of which are harnessed into the eternal search for beauty, deconstructing at the same time the myth of a stranger, the Other. The installation creates a new, beautiful and harmonious world in which nature, art and the viewer become one.