

**Text for the solo exhibition *Rhythms of Presence* by Tao G. Vrhovec Sambolec , ŠKUC Gallery, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 18.11.2016 – 09.12.2016.**

**Rhythms of Presence**

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The four projects by Tao G. Vrhovec Sambolec, presented in the exhibition *Rhythms of Presence*, approach the visitor in their immediacy and closeness, although they raise a number of gnoseological questions that have been engaging us since the very beginnings of thinking about human condition. The projects use rhythm to consider how our lived experience is presented, that is, how it is experienced, and they open up these issues through an exploration of the space in between (physical) presence and absence, the material and ephemeral, contact and trace. The fierce technological development of the past decades and the universal acceleration of human existence force us to pose these old questions from new perspectives. *Rhythms of Presence* proceed from the moment of transformation of the individual in his or her physical and mental existence as well as the society and the relations defining it. The diminishing of the distances between the extremes of the old metaphysical dichotomies through the triumph of technology seems to be experienced directly as the irreversible transformation of our perceptive and cognitive faculties as well as of the noumenal world. This transformative potential, which Sambolec considers in parallel in the fields of technology and art, is the actual subject of this exhibition.

The rhythms of the everyday, which Vrhovec Sambolec uses as the entry point for his reflection on the present moment, especially the phenomenon of human movement, become the subject of translation into acoustic traces, rhythmic patterns, establishing a parallelism of separate spatial fields, while the distance between them is erased by the convergence of their temporalities, secured by technological mediation. The work *Rhythms of Presence*, which gives title to the show, is thus composed of two identical surfaces: the floor in an undisclosed public location registers human steps, which are then fed into the system of knockers beneath the gallery floor. The percussion conveys the human steps as rhythmic stomping emanating from beneath the gallery floor and establishing the invisible presence of passers-by. The work *Reading stanley brouwn* appears to reverse the process. Here, Sambolec uses as his starting point the art book by the Fluxus member stanley brouwn, *my steps 12.12.2005 – 1.1.2006*, which comprises 21 pages each featuring the number of steps made by the artist on that day. Sambolec revives these “abstract” steps and he commits his movement for 21 days to the concretisation of brouwn’s work, that is, to the changing of the numbers back into live steps. In so doing, his body becomes a concretisation of the record, reflecting the relation between the everyday in its invisible ordinariness, and its capture (and signification) through mediation and record. The reflection on this problematic relation is the age-old preoccupation of art. How to establish a relation

between immediate experience and its presentation, its capture, how to transpose the experience into meaning, without depriving it of its constitutive liveness? In this context, Sambolec's insistence on rhythm as a live, dynamic record, a phenomenon in between the concrete and the abstract, becomes a new point of fixating of this tension: Sambolec's "making-present" of brouwn's steps is rhythmically ticked by the metronome. Temporality is the field that captures in the most ontological manner the issues of the relation between direct experience and its structuring; hence, it is the axis of Sambolec's explorations. *Unheard* attempts to bridge in a Sisyphean manner the non-coincidence of the registers of time flow and its presentation; in this work, the clock is reset every time the microphone registers a sudden change in the sound ambient. By trying to "measure" our experience of time, the clock points out to the impossible parallelism between the lived and the measured time in all its radicalness. The impossible symmetry of these "encounters" is summed up metaphorically by the work *With a Passerby*, in which two loudspeakers juxtapose the rhythms of the artist's steps and the steps of the passers-by in a random composition described by the author himself as a "rhythmic non-event", a peculiar audio-landscape of social life.

In the new conditions of the primacy of the mediated, the exhibition *Rhythms of Presence* with renewed strength and from a different point of view formulates the question of the relation between formalisation, regularity, mastering, and the immediate, everyday experience. By rendering audible the unregistered everydayness of the flow of events, it creates a poetic heroicness of sorts, whose source is not a romantic neo-conceptual fascination with the spontaneity of life, but rather precisely our obsession with mediation. Vrhovec Sambolec reformulates this as a question of how the lived reality can be experienced through a work of art. In parallel with the transformative effect of technology on humans, Sambolec also explores art can be transformative for this context. In this light, the metaphysical binaries of present/absent, concrete/abstract, primary/secondary dissolve in Vrhovec Sambolec's reflection of the body as a point of their radically asymmetrical overlapping.