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## **Evolution of a Motif**

The series on the artistic action *Triglav* has held the fascination of the nation for the past four decades and is one of the most interesting in the Slovene arena. It started with the OHO group in the socialist 1960s, then the Irwin group extended it to the end of the transition period, and the last part (for now) came about recently, in this period of relaxed capitalism, and was performed by three artists recently renamed to Janez Janša. Although all three episodes have a common thread, each of them also has its own special meaning as regards emphasis and the artistic and social context of its time.

The OHO performance – or happening – that started it all, took place in Ljubljana's Zvezda Park, at the end of the turbulent 1968. Young, hippy-inspired artists etymologically interpreted – and in a special way, materialized – the national myth and primary symbol in one, anchored probably already in the Ur-Slavic past, and presented it as a “New Year's” present to the bewildered inhabitants of Ljubljana. At the exhibition, the happening was documented by two photos and a short film. From today's point of view, the event – although part of the broader context of OHO's activity – comes off as roguish above all, but, in its time and in that social constellation, it must have had a provocative effect or at least a mischievous one, in any case, enough to be inscribed into historic memory.

A lot of the credit for making sure that that winter performance (and the group's other work) did not fall deeper into obscurity goes to the Irwin group. While searching for their artistic predecessors and establishing the retro-principle and an alternative interpretation of the history of Slovene art, they looked to the heritage of the OHO group, and thus contributed the second part of the *Triglav* series. At the exhibition, there is a photo of the reconstruction of the original event that the three Irwin members performed as part of their project *Like to Like*, in Zvezda Park, in the winter of 2004. Their episode comes off as serious, intellectualistic, and visibly burdened by the weight of a “glorious past”.

The reason for the exhibition is probably the last, and most current, part of the series made this summer by three renowned artists who conceived their action somewhat more broadly than their predecessors. They, too, reconstructed the original OHO *Triglav*, but at the same

time they officially changed their names to the name of Slovenia's current Prime Minister, joined his party, and devoted their action to certain – more or less – patriotic anniversaries.

They set up their *Triglav* precisely at the foothills of the homonymous mountain, thus symbolically transferring it to a higher ground and giving it additional meanings. With various artistic implications, their act is exceptionally socially-committed and subversive while imaginative and original at the same time. In addition, by sacrificing an important part of their own identity for the purposes of redefining the identity of someone else, the authors have personally exposed themselves greatly which is why their gesture functions accordingly, as binding. The action of the three Janezes is not limited only to *Triglav* since – with their names appearing in public – it continues alongside their other work and has thus become a sort of artistic and political reality show with an unknown running time.

We can look on the three-part series *Triglav* as an unconventional reflection of the particular state of the spirit, the social and artistic tissue, and the processes within it, as proof that art always finds a way to respond relevantly to the challenges of its time.

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