

Art Review. Hybrid Spaces: Digital and Physical in Rural Context

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The House Turned Inside Out

Imre Bukta's exhibition *We Must Cultivate Our Garden!*¹ opened on 26 November 2022 at Godot Institute of Contemporary Art in Budapest, and attracted over 10,000 visitors as of 26 April 2023. Given the interest for the *Exhibition of the Year* at Godot Institute, organizers have extended it until 27 August 2023. The artist turned 70 in 2022 and this is his second anniversary exhibition, after the 60 year's anniversary in 2012² at Kunsthalle Budapest: both were curated by Gábor Gulyás. He explains: the message of the 2022 exhibition is the experience of rurality, sacrality, and the difficulty of feeling at home.

Photo 1

The artist explaining the *House Turned Inside Out* on the guided tour, 16 April 2023



Both exhibitions' iconic piece was the house as a space of clashing values, habits, and generations. While in 2012 *The House* was a monumental art installation presenting the space of rural dwelling from the outside, in 2022 the *House Turned Inside Out* gives us a different perspective: not as a clash, but rather as a contemplative endeavour (Radnóti, 2023). While in 2012 the house had four very different sides in terms of social standing and values, in 2022 there is an archetypal space imagined around the stove, pots, and tomato soup.

¹ <https://www.godot.hu/post/bukta-imre-muveljuk-kertjeinket>

² <https://mucsarnok.hu/kiallitasok/kiallitasok1.php?mid=561c352617416>

As Radnóti (2023) put it, “the new exhibition did not bring a thematic or fundamental stylistic change, but calmness, the contemplative registration of the sights, the dominance of the *vita contemplativa* over the *vita activa*.” The artist explained at his guided tour: before 2000 I was swept away by avant-garde, now I have returned to realism. What kind of realism though?

Real and virtual, physical and digital

Contemporary rural life as reflected in Bukta’s exhibition is a mix of spaces and paces, from rusty pots to Larousse encyclopedias (Hornyik, 2023). There is a recurring motif of books, either piled as a doghouse, offered for sale, or serving to trap water overflow: a failed utopia of people reading, the end of an era (Radnóti, 2023). On the other hand, here comes the digital in a rather grotesque form, at the Pensioners’ Club: old wax ladies scrolling pictures on their tablets, in disco-light—gen Z’s favourite, instagramable place of the exhibition.



Photo 2

The Pensioners’ Club
(installation)

A mix of “fairy realism” and grotesque, so much in line with Central-American and Central-European culture. Not the magical realism of Garcia Márquez, but rather the “realism” of folk tales mixed with the nitty-gritty details of rural life (Hornyik, 2023).

Perhaps the most humorous element of the exhibition was the “intelligent hoe” or iHoe, an installation combining the traditional agricultural instrument with so-called digital features. The ad-video of the iHoe turned out to be so authentic, that many visitors thought it was for real, and called to order one, the artist explained on his guided tour.

Photo 3

The Intelligent Garden Hoe



Mezőszemere, the rural space where Imre Bukta lives, seems like the Hungarian Macondo, with a twist: its realism is not magical, but rather grotesque. Gabriel Garcia Márquez made the imaginary Macondo very real through its magical stories, whereas the artist portrayed the real Mezőszemere in a harsh, yet poetic light.

References

- Hornyik, S. (2023). Életkép láncfűrészszel és sarlós boldogasszonnyal. Bukta Imre „tündéri” realizmusa [“Life picture with a chainsaw and a reaper’s scythe. Bukta Imre’s ‘fairy’ realism.”]. *Exindex 1*, 18. <http://real.mtak.hu/160551/1/18.pdf>
- Radnóti, S. (2023). Bukta Imre: Műveljük kertjeinket! / Godot Intézet. *Revizoronline*, <https://revizoronline.com/hu/cikk/9971/bukta-imre-muveljuk-kertjeinket-godot-intezet>