

Dokumentiranje življenja

Domenico Quaranta

1 Amelia Jones, »Naming Power and the Power of the Name: Janez Janša Performs the Political in/for the Art World«, v: VVAA, *Name Readymade*, Ljubljana: Moderna Galerija, 2008, str. 33.

2 SDS je slovenska desničarska stranka, ki jo od leta 1993 vodi Janez Janša. Ta disident in narodni junak v času končnih let jugoslovanskega režima je pozneje stranki podelil radikalno populistični pečat. Znanstveniki, kot je Rudi

Rizman, ga obtožujejo nacionalistične in ksenofobne retorike. Glej Rudolf M. Rizman, »Radical Right Politics in Slovenia«, v: *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe Since 1989*, Penn State Press, 1999, str. 159–162.

3 VVAA, *Name Readymade*, Ljubljana: Moderna Galerija, 2008, str. 9.

4 Blaž Lukan, »The Janez Janša Project«, v: VVAA, *Name Readymade*, Ljubljana: Moderna Galerija, 2008, str. 13.

5 Inke Arns, Sylvia Sasse, »Subverzivna afirmacija: O mimezisu kot strategiji upora«, v: *Maska XXI/98–99*, pomlad 2006, str. 6.

Domenico Quaranta (<http://domenicoquaranta.com>) je umetnostni kritik in kurator, avtor knjige *Beyond New Media Art* (2013) in umetniški direktor ustanove Link Center for the Arts of the Information Age.

Prevedla Aleksandra Rekar

Poleti 2007 so trije umetniki, ki živijo v Ljubljani, Emil Hrvatin, Davide Grassi in Žiga Kariž, svoje ime spremenili v »Janez Janša«, ime slovenskega premierja in vodje SDS (Slovenska demokratska stranka).¹

Uvodna izjava iz besedila umetnostne kritičarke Amelie Jones se v podobni obliki pojavi v skorajda vsakem eseju, oceni ali razstavni besedilu, ki je bilo od takrat napisano o delu treh ustvarjalcev, znanih pod imenom Janez Janša. Še pred spremembo imena so se Emil Hrvatin, Davide Grassi in Žiga Kariž včlanili v Slovensko demokratsko stranko (SDS).² Kmalu so prejeli tri članske izkaznice SDS in pismo Janeza Janše, v katerem jim je izrazil dobrodošlico ob vstopu v stranko, in sicer s sloganom SDS: »Več nas bo, prej bomo na cilju.« Težko je reči, ali so se trije umetniki odločili zamenjati svoja imena še pred včlanitvijo v SDS – ali pa je to odločitev spodbudila dobesedna interpretacija tega slogana. Vemo pa, da so 30. julija 2007, takoj po spremembi imen, napisali pismo Janezu Janši, takrat predsedniku vlade Republike Slovenije, ki gre takole:

Naša odločitev je zavestna in je posledica tehtnega premisleka. Za nas ni meja med našim delom, našo umetnostjo in našimi življenji in menimo, da se v tem prav nič ne razlikujemo od Vas. Skupaj živimo za to, kar ustvarjamo [...].³

Pri razmisleku o njihovih umetniških karierah je nemogoče prezreti ta posebni biografski dogodek – spremembo imena, dogodek, o katerem trije umetniki nenehno govorijo kot o »osebni odločitvi, ki je ni treba javno argumentirati«. ⁴ Obenem si je nadvse težko predstavljati spremembo imena kot kaj drugega kot umetniški projekt. Toda odločitev, ki so jo sprejeli Emil Hrvatin, Davide Grassi in Žiga Kariž – da bodo zapustili svojo identiteto, sploh ni bil umetniški projekt: to je bil življenjski projekt. Želeli so vzpostaviti drugačno situacijo, iz nje začeti novo življenje ter nato analizirati njene posledice na svoje življenje in delo.

Ni umetniško delo

Že bežen pregled predhodnih del teh treh umetnikov razkrije, da s stranko, ki so se ji pridružili, niso imeli skupne ideologije in da niso bili občudovalci Janeza Janše. Toda vseeno so se včlanili v stranko in si po »tehtnem premisleku« spremenili ime. Na to odločitev bi bilo vabljivo gledati kot na dejanje »subverzivne afirmacije« ali »nadidentifikacije«. Po mnenju Inke Arns in Sylvie Sasse takrat, ko si sistem pripoji in prilasti celo najbolj kritična gledišča, subverzivna afirmacija postane edina učinkovita strategija upora.⁵ Toda četudi na spremembo imena prenehamo gledati kot na dejanje nadidentifikacije, nas še naprej mika, da bi jo razumeli kot nekakšno performativno gesto. Če zakonsko veljavno spremeniš svoje ime, to ne pomeni zgolj tega, da si, iz katerega koli razloga že, izbereš novo ime – pomeni tudi to, da zavržeš svoje prejšnje ime, skupaj z vsemi implikacijami, ki jih to prinaša. Še več, če si umetnik, ki je dolga leta trdo delal in si prizadeval, da bi svoje ime spremenil v »blagovno znamko«, in če ti je to v specializiranih krogih uspelo doseči tudi na mednarodni ravni, sprememba imena obenem pomeni vnovičen začetek tvoje umetniške kariere. In v tem specifičnem primeru pomeni vnovičen začetek tvoje umetniške kariere pod imenom, ki je že močna blagovna znamka – še posebno v državi, v kateri živiš in delaš – in ki v prvi vrsti ne identificira tebe. Če sploh ne omenjamo vnovičnega začetka kariere pod imenom, ki ga zdaj deliš s še dvema javnima kulturnima igralcema in javnima osebnostma, dejavnima v isti skupnosti, na istem področju delovanja, na katerem si prizadevaš uspeti, tako lokalno kot mednarodno. S tega gledišča se razlaga sprememba imena kot umetniškega projekta zdi zelo poenostavljena, vsaj v primerjavi z vplivom, ki ga je imela na življenje treh umetnikov ter s stranskimi učinki, ki jih ima še vedno na sprejem njihovega dela. Toda zakaj je tako pomembno, da to spremembo imena razumemo kot življenjski dogodek in ne kot umetniški projekt? Umetnost je dejanje komunikacije in ustvarjanja

6 Boris Groys, »Art in the Age of Biopolitics: From Artwork to Art Documentation«, v: *Art Power*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA in London, 2008, str. 53.
7 *Ibid.*, str. 54.

8 *Ibid.*, loc. cit.
9 Prim. <http://www.aksioma.org/troika/> (zadnji dostop: 13. julij 2015).
10 Med dokumenti, vključenimi v *Troiko*, je edini, ki je nekoliko prilagojen, kreditna kartica,

ki na hrbtni strani prinaša podobo umetniškega dela Janeza Janše, Janeza Janše in Janeza Janše.
11 Razlog za to je, da se je Žiga Kariž čez čas odločil, da se vrne k svojemu izvornemu imenu; zdaj ime Janez Janša uporablja kot psevdonim,

sicer pa živi in razvija svojo samostojno kariero pod imenom Žiga Kariž.
12 Čeprav je bila, kot je pojasnil Marcel Duchamp, »ta izbira utemeljena na odzivu vizualne indiferentnosti ob hkratni odsotnosti dobrega ali

vsebine. V umetnosti ti ni dovoljeno ustvariti nečesa brez vsebine. Toda v življenju je drugače. V življenju ti je dovoljeno sprejemati nesmiselne odločitve ali početi stvari iz butastih razlogov. V življenju se lahko odločiš, da se boš preimenoval v Janeza Janšo samo zato, ker ti ugaja njegov zven. V življenju ti je na vprašanje, zakaj si to storil, dovoljeno ponuditi vsakokrat drugačen odgovor. Povedano z drugimi besedami: sprememba imena kot umetniški projekt ima lahko samo en pomen. Kot življenjski dogodek morda nima nobenega – ali pa številne. Drugi odgovor je bolj povezan z razumevanjem del, ki so jih ti trije umetniki ustvarili po spremembi imena. Večina – še posebno tista, ki so jih ustvarili skupaj – jih je tesno povezanih z njihovo novo identiteto ali pa s tem, kaj pomeni imeti identiteto v dobi biopolitike. Če razumemo spremembo imena kot umetniški projekt, je lahko namen teh del zgolj dokumentiranje v obliki performansov. In ker ima lahko, kot smo ravnokar videli, sprememba imena kot performans en sam pomen, njihova edina funkcija postane funkcija dokumentiranja, potrjevanja in pojasnjevanja tega pomena.

Umetniško dokumentiranje

O konceptu »umetniškega dokumentiranja« je v enem od esejev v knjigi *Art Power* nedavno razpravljaj Groys:

Umetniško dokumentiranje po definiciji ni umetnost, saj se zgolj nanaša na umetnost, in natanko s tem razkrije, da umetnost v tem primeru ni več navzoča in nemudoma vidna, pač pa prej odsotna in skrita.⁶

V nadaljevanju Groys razlikuje med dvema oblikama dokumentiranja: dokumentiranjem minulega dogodka, naj gre za performans, hepening ali začasno instalacijo; in dokumentiranjem umetniške dejavnosti, ki ne pripada preteklosti, vendar tudi ni namenjena temu, da bi ustvarila dokončano umetniško delo, skupaj z »zapletenimi in raznovrstnimi umetniškimi posegi v vsakodnevnem življenju, ustvarjanjem nenavadnih življenjskih okoliščin, umetniškim raziskovanjem recepcije umetnosti v različnih kulturah in okoljih ter s politično motiviranimi umetniškimi akcijami.«⁷ Če je v prvem primeru dokumentiranje oblika prilagajanja protiinstitucionalnih praks institucionalnemu okviru (in odzivanja na potrebo umetnostnega trga po fizičnih artefaktih), v drugem primeru dokumentiranje umetnosti postane edina možna oblika tega, kar Groys opiše kot umetnost v dobi biopolitike.

[Umetniško dokumentiranje je] poskus, kako uporabiti umetniške medije znotraj umetniškega prostora, da se nanašajo na življenje samo, se pravi na čisto dejavnost, čisto prakso, umetniško življenje, ne da bi ga predstavljali neposredno. Umetnost s tem postane življenjska oblika, medtem ko umetniško delo postane neumetnost, golo dokumentiranje te življenjske oblike. Lahko bi tudi dejali, da umetnost s tem postane biopolitična, saj začne uporabljati umetniška sredstva za produkcijo in doku-

mentiranje življenja kot čiste dejavnosti. Umetniška dokumentacija kot oblika umetnosti se dejansko lahko razvije le v razmerah zdajšnje biopolitične dobe, v kateri je življenje samo postalo predmet tehničnega in umetniškega poseganja.⁸

Ta navedek pravilno oriše konceptualni okvir, znotraj katerega lahko razlagamo tako spremembo imena kot tudi dela Janeza Janše, Janeza Janše in Janeza Janše v letih, ki so ji sledila. Sprememba imena ni umetniški projekt, marveč dogodek v umetniškem življenju (»za nas ni meja med našim delom, našo umetnostjo in našimi življenji«); umetniška dela, ki so povezana s spremembo imena, niso dokumentacija performansa, marveč dokumentacija življenja kot čiste dejavnosti. Po spremembi imena so Janez Janša, Janez Janša in Janez Janša uporabili drugačne strategije »umetniškega dokumentiranja«, kot so fotografska dokumentacija, potrdila, pisma, časopisni članki in posnetki njihovega pojavljanja na televiziji. Večina drugih del se umešča v različne medijske razvrstitve: tu so performansi (pozneje so jih dokumentirali in v obliki instalacij predstavili v umetnostnih ustanovah), knjige, filmi, celo slikarska dela. Še več, nekatera od teh del so postala življenjski dogodki: torej ne gre zgolj za dokumentiranje življenja treh Janš, pač pa tudi za vplivanje nanj, česar pa model, ki ga je priskrbel Groys, ne prinaša. Tak je denimo primer dokumentarnega filma *Moje ime je Janez Janša* (2012), v katerem ni samo zbrana in v pripovedni obliki predstavljena dokumentacija, povezana s spremembo imena, pač pa je bil že pred svojim nastankom in tudi po njem ogromen medijski dogodek v Sloveniji in drugod, tudi po zaslugi nasilnega odziva medijev blizu SDS in vpliva filma na javno razpravo.

Dokumentiranje življenja

Dokumenti in dokumentacija, ki so jo ustvarili trije umetniki, se ujema z Groysovim pojmovanjem umetniškega dokumentiranja in ga hkrati izpodbija. Na eni strani je nanje mogoče gledati kot na dokumentacijo življenja treh Janš v novih okoliščinah, ki jih je vzpostavila sprememba imena. Protislovno, toda dela, ki se najbolj izmikajo Groysovemu modelu, so tista, ki uporabljajo to »birokratsko in tehnološko dokumentiranje«, torej tista, ki ga Groys opiše kot »prevladujoči medij moderne biopolitike«: osebne izkaznice, potni listi, kreditne kartice. Groysova opredelitev »birokratske in tehnološke dokumentacije« se v popolnosti nanaša na potrdila, deklaracije, pisma, posnetke nadzornih kamer in fotografsko dokumentacijo. Še več, za Groysa ima ta dokumentacija, kadar je predstavljena v okviru instalacije, zgolj pripovedno funkcijo: pove zgodbo, vendar ne z avtorsko pripovedjo, temveč s tem, da priskrbi efemerno gradivo, povezano z zgodbo. Ko gre za delo treh Janš, ta opredelitev primerno opiše dokumente, kot so kopija pisma, ki so ga poslali Janezu Janši; rojstni listi umetnikov; pisma državnih organov, s katerimi jim ti dovolijo spremeniti imena; fotografije, ki jih prikazujejo na srečanjih SDS; fotografska dokumentacija poroke Janeza Janše, na kateri sta Janez Janša in

slabega okusa – pravzaprav popolne anestezije». Prim. Marcel Duchamp, »Lecture at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, October 19, 1961«, *Art and Artists*, 1, 4, London, julij 1966. 13 Prav tam: »Se en vidik *readymadea* je

odsotnost enkratnosti ... Replika *readymadea* prinaša enako sporočilo; pravzaprav skoraj vsak od *readymadeov*, ki obstajajo danes, ni izvirnik v običajnem pomenu besede.« 14 Za videodokumentacijo dogodka prim.

<http://www.aksioma.org/name/auction/> (zadnji dostop: 13. julij 2015). 15 Prim. www.aksioma.org/name/ (zadnji dostop: 13. julij 2015).

Janez Janša v vlogi njegovih poročnih prič ter s tem povezano potrdilo. In tako naprej.

Vse to pa se spremeni, ko začnemo razmišljati denimo o osebnih izkaznicah ali potnih listih. Če bi imeli zgolj pripovedno funkcijo v kontekstu umetniške instalacije, bi jih zlahka predstavili v obliki reprodukcij. Toda ustvarjalci so se jih odločili predstaviti v obliki izvirnih, veljavnih dokumentov, s čimer so zavestno sprejeli vrsto s tem povezanih tveganj: krajo identitete, izgubo denarja, škodo ter celo tožbo zaradi zlorabe dokumentov in malomarnega ravnanja z njimi.

V okviru instalacije *Troika* (2013), denimo, umetniki razstavijo skupino uradnih dokumentov, ki kažejo na njihovo politično usmerjenost, pravni status in finančno delovanje: »tri članske izkaznice SDS, tri osebne izkaznice in tri kreditne kartice Mastercard z reprodukcijami njihove zgodnejše akcije *Triglav na Triglavu* [...]. Ti dokumenti so razstavljeni nasproti videa s pismom, ki so ga trije umetniki napisali politiku Janezu Janši kmalu po spremembi svojih imen.«⁹ Če umetniki razstavljajo izvirnike, namesto da bi uporabili reprodukcije, če jih zato začasno vzamejo iz svojih denarnic, verjetno hočejo, da bi jih sprejeli kot umetniška dela in ne kot dokumentacijo umetnosti. Toda kakšna umetniška dela?

Uradni dokument je nekaj, kar izda javna ustanova ali zasebno podjetje na zahtevo imetnika. Imetnik ima le malo – ali pa sploh nič – nadzora nad tem, kaj dokument prikazuje; elemente, ki so povezani z ustanovo oziroma s podjetjem (logotip, vodni žig, hologram, mikročip), nadzira ustanova oziroma podjetje, elementi, ki so povezani z imetnikom (ime in priimek, osebni podatki, fotografski portret), pa morajo biti kar se da blizu realnosti – tako blizu, da jih štejemo za »resnico«. Fotografski portret mora biti resnično podoben osebi, ki jo upodablja, podatke pa morajo podpirati drugi uradni dokumenti. Uradni dokumenti so zelo modificirani predmeti z bore malo prostora za prilagajanje;¹⁰ njihova funkcija je zgolj potrjevanje. Toda uradni dokumenti niso uporabni za vedno: imajo rok veljavnosti in po njegovem preteku jih je treba obnoviti; v nekaterih okoliščinah je mogoče uradne dokumente tudi razveljaviti. Tako je denimo srednji del *Troike* – osebna izkaznica Janeza Janše, pred tem znanega kot Žiga Kariž – prelučnjana. To potrjuje, da ta dokument ni več veljaven, čeprav prikazuje datum izteka veljavnosti »04. 07. 2018«.¹¹

Ali je *Troika* potemtakem poseg v dolgo umetnostno tradicijo *readymadea*? To se morda zdi privlačna hipoteza, vendar obstaja tudi več protiargumentov. *Readymade* je v prvi vrsti dejanje izbire in selekcije; ti dokumenti pa niso bili izbrani: razstavljeni so kot nekaj, kar pomaga povedati zgodbo treh Janezov Janš v okviru obstoječe politične, pravne in ekonomske infrastrukture. Ko je izbran, *readymade* izgubi svojo funkcijo in postane predmet estetskega oziroma filozofskega raziskovanja;¹² ti dokumenti pa so še vedno veljavni in uporabni predmeti, vsaj dokler jim ne poteče rok veljavnosti ali jih ne razveljavijo. Poleg tega *readymade* ni unikat, ne kot množično proizveden, izdelan predmet ne kot umetniško delo.¹³

Čeprav so proizvedeni industrijsko, ob pomoči šablone, so ti dokumenti unikatni – tako v vlogi dokumentov kot tudi v vlogi umetniških del; osebne izkaznice ni mogoče reproducirati, ne da bi pri tem prekršili zakon.

In končno se pri *readymadeih* izgubi tudi funkcionalnost zaradi takšnega ali drugačnega materialnega ali konceptualnega poseganja: izbiranja, razstavljanja, podpisovanja, preimenovanja, vnovičnega uokvirjanja, sestavljanja; za *Troiko* so dokumente izbrali (izmed drugih dokumentov), jih predstavili na steni v okvirju iz akrilnega stekla, v kontekstu instalacije z naslovom *Troika*, ki obsega tudi video in stensko poslikavo in ki jo spremno besedilo potrjuje kot delo Janeza Janše, Janeza Janše in Janeza Janše; toda to ne zadošča, da bi ti dokumenti izgubili svoj funkcionalni status. Lahko so »tudi umetnost«, ne morejo pa biti »samo umetnost«, vsaj dokler jih nekdo drug – javni uradnik, pooblaščen uslužbenec, ne pa ustvarjalec in nikakor ne kustos – ne odveže njihovega funkcionalnega statusa dokumentov.

Povedano drugače, obredi sveta umetnosti in njegovih uradnikov ne morejo spremeniti narave teh predmetov, ker to niso navadni predmeti. Tozadevno umetniki celo niso odgovorni za njihov obstoj. Emil Hrvatini, Davide Grassi in Žiga Kariž niso zaprosili za člansko izkaznico SDS: zaprosili so za članstvo v SDS. Zaprosili so za spremembo imena, nove osebne izkaznice pa so bile stranski učinek tega dejanja. Povedano z drugimi besedami, ti artefakti ne dokumentirajo toliko njihovih življenjskih izbir, marveč so predmeti, ki so jih v odziv nanje spontano in avtonomno ustvarili sistemi: to je utelešen odziv sistema na posameznikovo odločitev. Skorajda vse, kar človek stori v moderni družbi, proizvede podoben odziv: sistem izda ustrezen dokument. Del dela Janeza Janše, Janeza Janše in Janeza Janše obsega tudi zbiranje sledov, ki jih je proizvedel nenavaden dogodek v njihovem življenju (sprememba imena) – tako medijskih odzivov kot institucionalnih postopkov – in njihovo prikazovanje takšnih, kot so. Temu pravijo »kolateralna umetnost«, saj so te sledi ustvarili mediji ali pa politični/ekonomski/pravni sistemi kot odziv na spremembo imena in obenem kot njen stranski učinek.

Ti dokumenti so v resnici rezultat sodelovanja, njihova dvoumna narava pa je njegova posledica: kot uradni dokumenti omogočajo, da sistem, ki jih je ustvaril, z njimi upravlja in manipulira; kot umetniško dokumentacijo pa jih je mogoče prikazati v umetnostnem kontekstu. Kot dokumenti pripadajo vsakemu od treh umetnikov posebej; kot umetniška dela pripadajo vsem trem, vendar pa je druga raven lastništva šibkejša, dokler so še vedno veljavni. Ko je bil novembra 2010 na dražbi prodan PBO241891 (*Passport*), v dražbenem katalogu (predmet št. 12) pisalo »veljaven tudi kot identifikacijski dokument z veljavnostjo do: 06. 07. 2017«, kupec pa je moral ta pogoj sprejeti.¹⁴ Ko so se umetniki leta 2008 odločili, da bodo dokumente razstavili,¹⁵ so morali zaprositi slovenske oblasti, da so jim izdale začasne osebne dokumente, ki bi jih nadomestili, pri čemer so jim priskrbeli izjave in mnenja umetnostnih izvedencev, ki so »potrdili«, da jih je treba prikazati,

LIFE DOCUMENTATION

Domenico Quaranta

Domenico Quaranta (<http://domenicoquaranta.com>) is a contemporary art critic and curator. He is the author of *Beyond New Media Art* (2013) and the artistic director of the Link Center for the Arts of the Information Age.

saj so obenem umetniška dela. To tudi pokaže, da so morali umetniki, če so želeli priti do priznanja dvojnega statusa svojih osebnih dokumentov, zahtevati izdelavo nadaljnjih dokumentov, sodelovati z institucijami in sklepati »zavezništva« z drugimi institucijami. Leta 2011, ko je skušal Muzej sodobne umetnosti v Ljubljani tri osebne izkaznice Janeza Janše, Janeza Janše in Janeza Janše vključiti v svojo zbirko, je dvojni status teh predmetov povzročil, da je moral muzej pri ministrstvu za notranje zadeve vložiti vlogo za njihov nakup – skupaj s priloženo dokumentacijo, ki govori o njihovem umetnostnem statusu. Ministrstvo je zatrjevalo, da gre za veljavne dokumente in da zato ne morejo imeti nobenega drugega namena od zakonsko določenega. Leta 2013 je muzej zaprosil ministrstvo za kulturo, naj posreduje v tej zadevi, ki pa še vedno ni rešena. Soobstoj in občasno navzkrižje teh dveh ravni v delih Janeza Janše, Janeza Janše in Janeza Janše, ki temeljijo na uradnih dokumentih, nista stranski element prakse »umetniškega dokumentiranja« v Groysovem smislu; sta natanko tisto, zaradi česar so ta dela nekaj več kot zgolj dokumentacija življenjskega dogodka. Dokler bodo obstajala kot veljavni dokumenti, bodo živa protislovja, dvoumni artefakti, ki lebdi med domeno življenja in domeno umetnosti ter dokazujejo, da ni mogoče naseljevati obeh kontekstov hkrati. Ko bo njihova uradna veljavnost potekla, ne bodo izgubila statusa umetnin, ampak se bodo pridružila stabilnejšemu, običajnejšemu statusu umetniških del, statusu, ki ga imajo kot *readymade* in tudi kot običajna dokumentacija umetnosti.

Povzetek

Poleti 2007 so trije umetniki iz Slovenije uradno spremenili svoje ime v Janez Janša. Ta življenjski dogodek je vnesel prelom v njihovo umetniško prakso, ki se je razvila v eno od najradikalnejših raziskav življenja v dobi biopolitike. Esej razpravlja o njihovem novejšem delu, o kontinuumu, ki so ga podjetja in institucije ustvarile v odziv na njihovo življenje, včasih z izoliranjem in dokumentiranjem posameznih trenutkov njihovega življenja. Osebne izkaznice, potni listi in bančne kartice postanejo sredstvo raziskovanja, ki spodkoplje koncepte »umetnosti« in »umetniškega dela« ter izziva ekonomski, pravni in umetnostni sistem, obenem pa si dejavno prizadeva za njihovo zavezništvo, da bi sploh lahko obstajalo.

Ključne besede

Umetniško dokumentiranje, dokumentiranje življenja, biopolitika, *readymade*, subverzivna afirmacija, dvoumni artefakt.

In the summer of 2007, three artists living in Ljubljana, Emil Hrvatin, Davide Grassi, and Žiga Kariž, changed their names to "Janez Janša", the name of the Prime Minister of Slovenia and leader of SDS (Slovenian Democratic Party).¹

This incipit, quoted from a text by art critic Amelia Jones, appears in a similar form in almost every essay, review or exhibition caption written since then about the work of the three artists known under the name of Janez Janša. Some time before the name change, Emil Hrvatin, Davide Grassi, and Žiga Kariž joined the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS).² What they got in return were three SDS membership cards and a letter from Janez Janša welcoming them to the party, with the SDS slogan: "The more of us there are, the faster we will reach our goal." It's hard to say whether the three artists had already decided to change their names before joining the SDS or whether the decision was prompted by an over-literal interpretation of this slogan. What we do know is that on July 30, 2007, right after the name change, they wrote a letter to Janez Janša, then prime minister of the Republic of Slovenia, saying:

Our decision was a conscious one and it came about as a result of careful consideration. For us, there are no boundaries between our work, our art, and our lives, and, in this respect, we believe we are no different from you. We live for what we create [...].³

1 Amelia Jones, "Naming Power and the Power of the Name: Janez Janša Performs the Political in/for the Art World", in VVAA, *Name Readymade*, Moderna Galerija, Ljubljana 2008, p. 33.

2 SDS is Slovenia's right-wing party, and since 1993 it has been led by Janez Janša. A dissident and national hero during the final years of the Yugoslavian regime, he later gave his party a radical populist revamp, and was accused by so-

cial scientists such as Rudi Rizman of nationalist and xenophobic rhetoric. See Rudolf M. Rizman, "Radical Right Politics in Slovenia", in *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe Since 1989*, Penn State Press, 1999, pp. 159–162.

3 The translation of the original version of the letter in Slovenian is available in VVAA, *Name Readymade*, Moderna Galerija, Ljubljana 2008, p. 9.

4 Blaž Lukan, "The Janez Janša Project",

in VVAA, *Name Readymade*, Moderna Galerija, Ljubljana 2008, p. 13.

5 Inke Arns, Sylvia Sasse, "Subversive Affirmation: On Mimesis as a Strategy of Resistance", in: *Maska*, Spring 2006, vol. XXI, nos. 98–99, p. 6.

6 Boris Groys, "Art in the Age of Biopolitics: From Artwork to Art Documentation", in *Art Power*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts / London, England, 2008, p. 53.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 54.

When considering their artistic careers, it seems impossible to disregard this particular biographical event of the name change – an event to which the three artists repeatedly referred as “an intimate, personal decision, which requires no public rationalization.”⁴ At the same time, it seems extremely hard to consider the name change as something other than an art project. However, the decision made by Emil Hrvatin, Davide Grassi, and Žiga Kariž to leave their identities behind wasn't an art project at all: it was a life project. They wanted to set up a difficult situation, start a new life in that situation, and analyse its consequences on their life and work.

Not an Artwork

A quick look at the previous works of the three artists suffices to reveal that they did not share the ideology of the party they joined, and that they were not big fans of Janez Janša. However, they joined the party and, after “careful consideration”, they changed their names. It would be tempting to view this decision as an act of “subversive affirmation” or “over-identification”. According to Inke Arns and Sylvia Sasse, when the system manages to co-opt and appropriate even the most critical viewpoints, subversive affirmation becomes the only effective strategy of resistance.⁵ But even if we stop viewing the name change as an act of over-identification, we might still be tempted to see it as a performative gesture of some kind. Legally changing your name doesn't mean just picking out a new name for whatever reason – it also means rejecting your former name, with all its implications.

Furthermore, for an artist who has worked hard for years trying to turn his name into a “brand”, and has succeeded in making it recognisable in specialised circuits internationally, changing your name also means restarting your artistic career. And, in this specific case, it means restarting your artistic career under a name that is already a strong brand, especially in the country where you live and work, and that doesn't identify you in the first place. Not to mention restarting your artistic career with a name you now share with two significant cultural players and public figures active in the same community, in the same field you are trying to succeed in, both locally and internationally. In this way, interpreting the name change as an art project seems reductive compared to the impact it has had on their lives, and the side effects that it keeps having on the perception of their work.

But why is it so important to view this name change as a life event, and not an art project? Art is an act of communication and content creation. In art, you are not allowed to do something without a meaning. In life, it's different. In life, you are allowed to take meaningless decisions, or do things for stupid reasons. In life, you can decide to change your name to Janez Janša simply because you like the sound of it. In life, you

are allowed to give a different answer every time somebody asks why you did it. In other words, as an art project, the name change can only have one meaning. As a life event, it's free to have none, or many.

The second answer is more related to the understanding of the works that the three artists developed after the name change. Most of them – especially the ones they worked on together – are strongly related to their new identity, or to what it means to have an identity in the age of biopolitics. If we consider the name change as an art project, these works can only be intended as performance documentation. And since, as we have seen, the name change as performance can only have one meaning, their only function becomes that of documenting, certifying and amplifying that meaning.

Art Documentation

The concept of “art documentation” was recently discussed by Boris Groys in one of the essays in *Art Power*. According to Groys:

Art documentation is by definition not art; it merely refers to art, and in precisely this way it makes it clear that art, in this case, is no longer present and immediately visible but rather absent and hidden.⁶

Groys goes on to distinguish two forms of art documentation: the documentation of a past event, be it a performance, a happening, a temporary installation; and documentation of an artistic activity that doesn't belong to the past, but that doesn't serve to produce a finished artwork either, including “complex and varied artistic interventions in daily life, lengthy and complicated processes of discussion and analysis, the creation of unusual living circumstances, artistic exploration into the reception of art in various cultures and milieus, and politically motivated artistic actions.”⁷ If, in the first case, documentation is a form of adapting anti-institutional practices to an institutional framework (and responding to the art market's need for physical artefacts), in the latter, art documentation becomes the only possible form for what Groys describes as art in the age of biopolitics.

Art documentation [...] marks the attempt to use artistic media within art spaces to refer to life itself, that is, to a pure activity, to pure practice, to an artistic life, as it were, without presenting it directly. Art becomes a life form, whereas the artwork becomes non-art, a mere documentation of this life form. One could also say that art becomes biopolitical, because it begins to use artistic means to produce and document life as a pure activity. Indeed, art documentation as an art form could only develop under the conditions of today's biopolitical age,

8 Ibid.
9 Cf. www.aksioma.org/troika/
10 Among the documents included
in *Troika*, the only one with some degree of

customization is the credit card, which features
an artwork by Janez Janša, Janez Janša, and Janez
Janša as a background image.
11 The reason is that, after a while, Žiga

Kariž decided to return to his original name, and
is now using the name Janez Janša as a pseud-
onym, while living and developing his solo career
as Žiga Kariž.

12 Although, as Marcel Duchamp ex-
plained, “this choice was based on a reaction of
visual indifference with at the same time a total
absence of good or bad taste – in fact a complete

in which life itself has become the object of technical
and artistic intervention.⁸

This quotation correctly outlines the conceptual framework
in which we can interpret both the name change and the work
produced by Janez Janša, Janez Janša, and Janez Janša in the
years that followed. The name change is not an art project,
but an event in an artistic life (“for us, there are no boundaries
between our work, our art, and our lives”); and the artworks
related to the name change are not the documentation of a
performance, but the documentation of life as pure activity.

After the name change, Janez Janša, Janez Janša, and Jan-
ez Janša employed different strategies of “art documentation”,
such as photographic documentation, certificates, letters,
articles on magazines or TV appearances. Most of the other
works fall under different media classifications: performanc-
es (that were later documented and presented in institutions
in installation form), books, movies, and even paintings. Fur-
thermore, some of them became life events in themselves: so,
not only documenting the life of the Janšas, but also having
an impact on it that is not considered in the model described
by Groys. This is the case, for example, with the documentary
film *My Name is Janez Janša* (2012), which not only collects and
presents in narrative form the documentation related to the
name change, but became, before and after its release, a huge
media event in Slovenia and elsewhere, also thanks to the vi-
olent reaction of the media close to SDS and the film’s impact
on the public debate.

Life Documentation

The documents and documentation produced by the three
artists both fit into and challenge Groys’ notion of art docu-
mentation. On one hand, they can be seen as the docu-
mentation of the life of the Janšas in the new circumstances
introduced by the name change. Paradoxically, the works that
are most resistant to Groys’ model are the ones that make use
of that “bureaucratic and technological documentation” that
Groys describes as “the dominant medium of modern bi-
opolitics”: ID cards, passports, credit cards. Groys’ definition
of “bureaucratic and technological documentation” applies
perfectly to certificates, declarations, letters, CCTV camera
records and photographic documentation. Furthermore, for
Groys, when this documentation is presented in installation
form, it has a mere narrative function: it tells a story not by
means of an authored narrative, but by means of providing
ephemeral material related to that story. With regard to the
work of the Janšas, this definition aptly describes documents
like the copy of the letter they sent to Janez Janša; the artists’
birth certificates; the letters from the state granting them
permission to change their names; the photos showing them
at SDS meetings; the photographic documentation of Janez
Janša’s marriage, where Janez Janša and Janez Janša were
invited as his best men, and the related certificate; etc.

Everything changes when we start considering ID cards
or passports, for example. If these only had a narrative func-

tion in the context of an art installation, they could easily be
presented in the form of reproductions. But the artists choose
to present them as original, valid documents, consciously
accepting a series of related risks: identity theft, money loss,
damage and even being sued for misusing the documents and
leaving them in an “unsafe” place.

In the installation *Troika* (2013), for example, the artists
display a set of official documents indicating their political
orientation, legal status and way of operating financially:
“three SDS membership cards, three ID cards and three Mas-
tercards with the reproduction of their earlier action *Mount
Triglav on Mount Triglav* [...]. These documents are displayed
in opposition to a video showing the letter the three artists
wrote to the politician Janez Janša soon after changing their
names.”⁹ If the artists are showing the originals instead of
using reproductions, temporarily removing them from their
wallets, they want to make us accept their status as artworks,
rather than art documentation. But what kind of artworks?

An official document is something released by a public
institution or a private company upon request of the hold-
er. The holder herself has little or no control over what the
document displays: the elements related to the institution or
company (logo, watermark, hologram, microchip) are con-
trolled by the institution or company; the elements related to
the holder (name and surname, personal data, photo portrait)
have to be as close as possible to reality, so close to be consid-
ered “the truth”. The photo portrait must bear true likeness of
the person depicted; the data provided must be backed up by
other official documents.

Official documents are highly codified objects, with little
or no room for customisation;¹⁰ their function is to certify
something. However, they are not functional forever: they
have an expiry date, after which they must be renewed; and
they can, under certain circumstances, be revoked. For exam-
ple, the centerpiece of *Troika* – the ID card of the Janez Janša
formerly known as Žiga Kariž – has a hole in it. This certifies
that this document is no longer valid, despite the fact that it
displays the expiry date “04.07.2018”.¹¹

Is *Troika* then an intervention in the long contemporary
art tradition of the “readymade”? This might be an appeal-
ing hypothesis, but there are several counter-arguments. A
readymade is, first of all, the result of an act of choice and
selection; these documents have not been chosen: they have
been put on display as something that helps tell the story of
the three Janez Janšas in the framework of the existing polit-
ical, legal, and economic infrastructure. When it’s chosen, a
readymade loses its function and becomes the subject of an
aesthetic or philosophical investigation;¹² these documents
are still valid and functional objects, at least until they expire
or are revoked. Also, a readymade is not unique, neither as a
mass produced, manufactured object nor as a work of art.¹³
Although industrially produced according to a template,
these documents are unique, both as documents and as
works of art: an ID card cannot be replicated without break-
ing the law.

anesthesia." Cf. Marcel Duchamp, "Lecture at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, October 19, 1961". Published in *Art and Artists*, 1, 4, London, July 1966.

13 Ibid., Duchamp: "Another aspect of the 'readymade' is its lack of uniqueness... The replica of the 'readymade' delivering the same message; in fact, nearly every one of the 'ready-

made' existing today is not an original in the conventional sense."

15 Cf. www.aksioma.org/name/

14 Cf. www.aksioma.org/name/auction/ for video documentation of the event.

Lastly, with readymades functionality is lost by means of some kind of material or conceptual intervention: selection, display, signature, re-naming, re-framing, assemblage; in *Troika*, the documents have been selected (among other documents), presented on wall in a Perspex frame, in the context of an installation called *Troika* that also includes a video and a wall-painting, and certified by an exhibition caption as the work of Janez Janša, Janez Janša, and Janez Janša: but this isn't enough to make these documents lose their functional status. They can be "also art", but they can't be "just art" – at least, not until somebody else – a public official, an authorised employee, but not the artist and definitely not a curator – releases them from their functional status of documents.

In other words, the rituals of the art world and its officials can't change the nature of these objects because they are not plain objects. In this respect, the artists are not even responsible for their existence. Emil Hrvatin, Davide Grassi, and Žiga Kariž didn't ask for an SDS membership card: they applied to become members of SDS. They applied for a name change, and the new ID cards were a side effect of that. In other words, rather than documenting their life choices, these artefacts are objects that were spontaneously and autonomously produced by systems in response to them: the objectified reaction of the system to an individual's decision. Almost anything you do in modern society produces a similar response: the system delivers the corresponding document. Part of the work of Janez Janša, Janez Janša, and Janez Janša consists in collecting the traces produced by an unusual event in their life (the name change), in terms of both media reaction and institutional procedures, and showing them as they are. They call it "collateral art" because these traces are produced by the media or the political, economic or legal systems as a response to and a side effect of the name change.

These documents are, in fact, the result of a collaboration, and their ambiguous nature is a consequence of it: as official documents, they can be handled and manipulated by the system that generated them; as art documentation, they can be shown in the art context. As documents, they belong to one of the three artists; as artworks, they belong to all three of them; but the second level of ownership is weaker while they are still valid documents. When, in November 2010, *PB0241891 (Passport)* was sold at auction, the auction catalogue stated that the artwork (Lot Nr. 12) was "valid also as identification document, expiry date: 06.07.2017", and the buyer had to accept this condition.¹⁴ For their part, when the artists first decided in 2008 to put the documents on show,¹⁵ they had to ask the state of Slovenia to issue temporary personal documents to replace them, providing statements and opinions from art experts "certifying" that they had to be shown because they were works of art, too.

This also shows how, in order to have the double status of their personal documents recognised, the artists had to request the production of further documentation, collaborating with the institutions and seeking the "complicity" of other institutions. In 2011, when the Museum of Modern Art in Lju-

bljana tried to include the three identity cards of Janez Janša, Janez Janša, and Janez Janša in its permanent collection, the double status of those objects led the museum to approach the Ministry of Internal Affairs for permission to purchase them – including the documentation that demonstrates their artistic status in the request. The ministry claimed that they were valid documents that should not have any other purpose than that prescribed by the law. In 2013, the museum appealed to the Ministry of Culture to intervene in the situation, which is still ongoing.

The co-existence and occasional clash of these two levels in the works of Janez Janša, Janez Janša, and Janez Janša that are based on official documents is not a side element in a practice of "art documentation" in Groy's terms: it is exactly what makes them something more than simple documentation of a life event. For the duration of their existence as valid documents, they will be living contradictions, ambiguous artefacts hovering between the realms of life and art, and proving the impossibility of inhabiting both contexts simultaneously. When they expire as official documents, they will not lose their status as artworks, but will join a more stable, common status of artwork: the one enjoyed by both readymades and plain art documentation.

Abstract

In the summer of 2007, three artists from Slovenia legally changed their names to "Janez Janša". This life event introduced a break in their artistic practice, which evolved into one of the most radical explorations of life in the age of biopolitics. This essay discusses their recent work, a continuum that is sometimes produced by companies and institutions as a reaction to their life, sometimes by isolating and documenting specific moments in their life. ID cards, passports and bank cards become the means of a research that undermines the very concepts of "art" and "artwork", and that challenges the economic system, the legal system, and the art system while actively seeking for their complicity in order to exist.

Keywords

Art documentation, life documentation, biopolitics, readymade, subversive affirmation, ambiguous artefact.