

San Diego to Belgrade by Vladimir Konecni

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In the past two years, I participated in three Digital Arts Guild (DAG) and PhotoArts Group (PAG) shows in the San Diego area. The first of these was Homage (DAG 2010, curated by Joe Nalven and Jim Respass); this was followed by Cross-Pollination (DAG 2010, curated by Will Gibson); finally, there was the PAG exhibition Insight on Metal (2011, curated by Joe Nalven). The different themes of these group shows posed complex conceptual and technical questions for each participating artist.

As I worked through the challenges of creating and choosing works responsive to the three themes, the notion gradually crystallized of a fairly large solo show that would underlie the conceptual commonalities and extend my treatments of the themes. Eventually, the title of the show became In Shadows and Reflections & Self-Portraits and Other Experiments.

To pursue this project, I took part, in 2010, in an annual competition run by the City of Belgrade (where I was born) for free use by qualified artists of its art gallery spaces. I was awarded a two-week slot (July 1-15, 2011) in the gallery Magacin, which has gained a great deal of prestige and notoriety in Serbia for staging important counter-culture shows and (or but) is open-minded and eclectic. In this large, post-industrial, complicated space of some 1,300 square feet, with excellent lighting, stone floors, high ceilings with cables showing, some pillars and nooks & therefore reduced wall space & I could nevertheless very comfortably hang, single-stacked, 28 images (on paper, canvas, and metal), the largest of which were 26 x 36" (66 x 91.5 cm). Here are photographs of three aspects of the gallery taken on the day of the hanging by our 15-year-old son Dušan:

The link to the Serbian/English Catalog (3.2 MB) is: <http://www.vladimirkonecni.net/photography/katalog.pdf>

The works in the exhibition were spatially divided into two groups. In the Shadows and Reflections & Self-Portraits... part, there were 17 works (Catalog pages 3-22), five of which were in the Cross-Pollination show. An example is Corfu (Catalog page 22, paper). Among the new self-portraits were The Vatican (Catalog page 16, metal/MagnaChrome) and Chiesa della Santissima Trinità dei Monti, Rome (Catalog page 18, canvas).

In the ... and Other Experiments part, there were 11 works. One was from the Homage show, Homage to Electricity (Catalog page 24, metal/Pixel2).

However, five of the works in this part were devoted to the concept of the universe - specifically ancient Rome and mediaeval China. Two of these came from the Insight on Metal show, Center of the Roman Universe & The Pantheon, Night (Catalog page 29, metal/Pixel2) and The Flag of the Universe & The Pantheon, Day (Catalog page 31, metal/Pixel2).

In *Insight on Metal*, the image *Center of the Universe After the Arrival of Man* & *Heavenly Center Stone, Temple of Heaven, Beijing* (Catalog page 27 and back cover) was wonderfully printed by Pixel2 on a 33"-diameter piece of metal and mounted on a 4" high black wooden circular pedestal. This "photographic sculpture" sat in the middle of the floor at the Calumet (Escondido) gallery at the opening and closing of the show. As it was unwieldy to engage in the trans-Atlantic shipment of the piece or in its recreation in Belgrade, this image was simply printed on paper for the Magacin show. Pity.

Nevertheless, the meaning of the pair of before/after *Heavenly Center Stone* images (Catalog pages 26-27) was very well understood and received in Belgrade, as was the entire exhibition & by the public at the opening reception, and the TV and print media.

Personally, I was thrilled to find that concept-based art photography travels well. The abstract nature of the images (even when they dealt with horrific real-world locales in Manchuria, see pages 10 and 11 of the Catalog) and the conceptual & or philosophical and existential & inclinations of the photographer seemed, in Belgrade, to be as important to the viewing public as the stunning printing accomplishments of Pixel2 and MagnaChrome.