



Damir Stojnić, *Harmonia Sfera X, Y, Z (The Harmony of the Spheres X,Y,Z)*, Video Still, 2015

# Damir Stojnić

## *On the Ephemeral*

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### **Damir Stojnić: Navigating the Evanescent**

In *On the Ephemeral*, Croatian artist Damir Stojnić presents four video works. In each of these works, which consist of documented performative actions, the artist manipulates objects and materials, transforming them through ritualised action. In *Harmonija Sfera X, Y, Z (The Harmony of the Spheres X,Y,Z)* the artist cradles and rotates a globe of the earth as if it were a vinyl record. Using a knife as a stylus, the rotation produces a harsh, atonal scraping sound, scouring and erasing the recognisable map of the planet. This work is a response to the theory by Johannes Kepler<sup>i</sup> that every planet in our solar system produces sound. If harmony symbolically represents a sense of balance within the solar system, the noise produced by the earth during this performance disrupts this, reverberating as a disquieting cacophony. The act of marking and erasing to produce noise transforms any perceived idea of harmonious balance into a mechanised embodiment of pain and barely controlled tension.

Unmaking and removal characterises *Zlatna žila (Gold Vein)*, a performance produced in response to Croatia's switch from the national currency of the Kuna to the Euro in 2023. Here the artist pulls gold threads from both currencies, dismantling the perceived fixing of value between paper and precious metal, and foregrounding the real value of currency, which is abstract. The veins of gold are then glued to the veins on the artist's forearms with honey, the abstraction becoming embodied. The permeation and colonisation of the body and by extension, consciousness, by this abstract force conjures the power of ideology, and how it is either willingly or unwillingly internalised. The alchemical properties of honey and gold are linked to processes of transformation. Honey, collectively produced as a form of liquid gold nurtures and sustains the body, while the abstract, empty value of currency becomes another form of control. Through unmaking and reassembling its physical properties the artist challenges this form of control and attempts to reclaim autonomy.



Damir Stojnić, *Zlatna žila (Gold Vein)*, Video Still, 2023

The body in relation to base elements and alchemical transformation also features in *Kujem Uskrsnuće (Forging the Resurrection of the Dead)*. The artist lays on the ground and marks the outline of a coffin around his body using a sledgehammer. The imprint of the coffin is marked in stone and filled with organic material which he then sets on fire. As the fire burns down to embers, he destroys the shape of the coffin to create a constellation of burnt fragments which become indicative of a nebula or the vastness of a starry sky. Here death is positioned as a process of transformation, the shifting of one state of being to another. The form of the coffin, rather than embodying a sense of finality becomes a vehicle, a container of energy that connects the earth bound with the transcendental.



Damir Stojnić, *Kujem Uskrsnuće (Forging the Resurrection of the Dead)*, Video Still, 2015

*Herbarij (Herbarium)* further explores the question of phenomenology. Objects are rendered to scale, appearing as silhouettes or faint traces in a large, bound codex. Each drawing is revealed as the pages are turned slowly. The objects are utilitarian yet anonymous, their functionality haunted and mysterious. Liberated from the quotidian, they take the form of residual, ghostly imprints, void spaces that also function as portals. This removal and inscribing process questions how meaning is ascribed to objects and in turn, how it can be unfixed and transcended to ultimately become something that is inherently porous and fluid.

Through the alchemical processes of making and unmaking, Damir Stojnić surfaces and extracts new meaning. References to mining (veins of gold) and industrial processes (forging) foreground this process of physically extracting meaning. Objects and actions become vehicles for questioning the systems of order in which they assigned a role and functionality. Through performative actions our associations with the material substance of life that surrounds us is repositioned. Fixed meaning is cut loose and assumed knowledge or understanding recast in the light of the mysterious. In these works, our relationship with the material substance of the world and the meaning we make of it is questioned and re-presented as a process to be navigated.

*Conor McGrady*

**Damir Stojnić** was born 1972 in Rijeka, Croatia. He graduated in painting in 2000 from the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb. He has exhibited in over 100 exhibitions in Croatia and abroad (Athens, Cairo, Vienna, London, Milan, Prague...). Damir has received numerous recognitions and awards, the most important of which are: the Acquisition Prize of the

Museum of Modern and Contemporary art in Rijeka at the International Triennial of Original Drawing 2002, second prize at the 7th Triennial of Croatian Aquarelle-2005, special award by the City museum of Rovinj 2013 and the award for artistic contribution by the Foundation of the University of Rijeka 2024. Since 2015, he has been a member of the art collective Labin Art Express and has been running Gallery Lamparna in Labin. He was also the artistic director of Industrial Art Biennial organised by L.A.E. He works as a full professor in the Department of Painting at the Academy of Applied Arts in Rijeka.

**Conor McGrady** has exhibited internationally, with one-person exhibitions in New York, Chicago, Miami, Atlanta and Zagreb, Croatia. His first solo museum exhibition, *Entering the Control Zone*, took place at the Museum of Fine Art, Split, Croatia, 2021. Group exhibitions include the 2002 *Whitney Biennial in New York*, *The Jerusalem Show VII: Fractures (Qalandiya International Biennale)*, *Biennale of Contemporary Art, D-O Ark Underground, Sarajevo-Konjic*, Bosnia and Herzegovina. His writing has appeared in *Ruminations on Violence* (2007), *State in Time* (2012) and *The Design of Frontier Spaces* (2015). Dean of Academic Affairs at Burren College of Art, he lives and works in the Burren, Ireland.

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<sup>i</sup> Kelper, Johannes, *Harmonices mundi libri V (The Five Books of The Harmony of the World)*, Linz 1619



Damir Stojnić, *Herbarij (Herbarium)*, Video Still, 2015