

JESSE ASH: Raimundas, could you tell me about what we are looking at?

RAIMUNDAS MALAŠAUSKAS: Let me start with some prehistory, it might provide some clues. I was visiting a hologram museum at MIT in Boston, and they have an amazing collection of holograms from the 60s and 70s, including some really amazing holograms by Salvador Dali. He was technologically adventurous so he was one of the first to really jump into that technology. He did Alice Cooper in 3D.

JA: When was that?

RM: 1970s. I was interested in that hologram space, kind of an illusion of a 3D space. My initial curatorial idea was to see what it would be like to curate a group exhibition – to invite several artists to produce works that would only exist inside a hologram. So it's a bit similar to the *Hypnotic Show* – inviting people to come up with a work that can only be transmitted in a session of hypnosis. But there I felt that it would be almost like an illusion of a space with works by different artists. And so I asked artists for ideas, what they would like to do in a hologram. And actually it was quite difficult because people

responded in an abstract way but no one could come up with something concrete. I ended up with a big archive of meditations and thoughts about holograms. I'll read you a couple [prepares to read.] For example, Mariana Castillo Deball wrote:

“I think the idea of hologram is an ancient one, and it's most famous materialization is the one referred [to] as 3d photography. Even this attempt is a failed one, as in principle holography is about an impossible representation of time and space. I was reading yesterday about a conversation that Einstein and the Philosopher Henri Bergson had once, to discuss scientific time against philosophical time. The whole discussion evolved around a tenth of a second, which is the minimum reaction-perception time for human beings. For Einstein, philosophical time doesn't exist, and it is just a moment in between perception time and 'real' or scientific time. Bergson thought that it was important to defend philosophical time, as the scientific discourse specially after Einstein's theory of relativity seemed to replace philosophy. I think that this moment in between, this tenth of a second is the space of our holographic imagination, almost its limit.”

But then I was also thinking of smell as a composition of elements. One of the core operations in scent making is called a “recomposition.” It can be connected with a key objective of holograms – the reconstruction of an object through lens-less technologies. But let me read you a great passage from *Perfect Scent* by Chandler Burr, an American writer on scents:

“New York in an empire of scents, but they tend to materialise in entirely aleatory ways and at unexpected times. You turn a corner, you are enveloped out of nowhere in an olfactory hologram of warm steamed rice, or spectral sour milk, or acrid, cloying pot, or overheated cedar mulch (the hardware store on Tenth Avenue) with a sweaty genitals angle, or some greasy unidentifiable smell that leaps on you, mugs you, and vanishes inexplicably in the middle of the at Twenty Third Street and Seventh Avenue. That they are invisible makes them no less substantial. The way to experience New York’s smells is on your bike because then they come at you, sequentially and strong, the plasticky chemical scent of the excessive air conditioning in the office buildings (you enter scent, one, two, three seconds, you exit the other end), the smell of Gristede’s grocery vegetable aisle, the 1950s scents of the lobbies of the midcentury buildings as if from a time machine, the ripely fermented rotten garbage that fell off the truck, sweetly putrifying fruit rind from the Korean bodega (the peeled detritus of a hundred smoothies in \$ 4.95 increments of bananas, and strawberries and kiwi), but you cannot find them if you look for them. They find you.”

And so this is a passage about smell where he describes it as an olfactory hologram. You move in this olfactory hologram. The hologram made out of scents. So, in a way, I think what Burr is trying to say is that something that is invisible can still have a certain substance, a certain presence, and can actually find you, jump on you, rather than you finding it. So to me it was almost an introduction to thinking about what a hologram is.

JA: And also if you are on a bike and smell, you are very much in the middle of this sensory moment in relation to holograms – something like opening up a space and being inside of it.

RM: Yes, with holograms I also tried to introduce topological figures – figures that don’t abolish that division between inside and outside, that implicate a different logic of thinking where inside is often outside and somewhere else too. Like I said, my initial idea was to curate an exhibition inside a hologram, but the more I was thought about it, the more research I did, the more I realized that holograms actually defy this logic of inside and outside. It’s not about inside and outside anymore. A hologram is just a small part of everything that has all the elements of everything, and that’s where it gets tricky. That’s when the hologram in the 60s and 70s started to become a tool of a sort of metaphysical, transcendental, universalist, New Age thinking. Holograms become ways to explain how the universe is structured. Classical holograms of the 60s were done with a pulse laser technique. If you took one of those older ho-

lograms, let's say of a cat, and cut a little corner of the hologram you'd find that the fragment has all of the information that appears in the rest of the hologram. Even the fragment would have a cat in it, so the smallest particle has all the content of everything. The same applies, for example, to future, present, and the past – these domains are folded into each other.

JA: Could you say a little about that technique, because it seems really important in relation to the temporal value of this construction and the temporal nature of that performance, or that event, you were talking about? Jonas Žakaitis was saying that making a hologram is almost like making a film first, which of course is time based and we spend time with it. But we are also talking about the image being something which is an event or an exhibition – something that you would spend time in.

RM: Maybe I'll read Pierre Huyghe. He wrote a really nice response to my request:

“I am not sure I understand the all mechanics. Well, this is not *cadavre exquis* of course, way too linear whatever the ingredients are: space, time or narratives. Still a situation is made out of circumstances different in nature. An exhibition free from time and space, something that has to do with envisioning a movement of mind, something that usually is expressed through a diagram or a graph. An exhibition that can only occur on the format that would be free from linearity, time and space as a dream or a thought can be. It's a coexistence of different actions that at dif-

ferent moments in their process have some interactions. A dumb example in the field we know: imagine seven artists installing things during a day for a group show that they are after. Their works are not yet done so they are building them within the place of the exhibition at the same time. We can imagine the confusion, the porosity of the accident that can happen. Some just go to eat, others get confused and starts working on other artist's work; it reminds me of a restaurant seen in *Playtime*. It has to be about editing as a film in what film can do with the space and time; montage parallel. It's still the film medium itself linear while the hologram can escape that. So it is editing without being linear. Time and space in this object are virtual. Still processes are display and movement is occurring. It is not an animated graph that shows a thought of mind on a flat screen, but an object that is an exhibition view from a different position of thought.”

I really like this description, particularly when Pierre says that a hologram is an exhibition view from a different position of thought. There is a big difference technologically between how the 60s' holograms were produced and how what you see here is produced. In the 60s the technique involved lasers. So let's say you had an object, a telephone in the 60s – there would be a laser beam projected at the telephone and then the laser beam would reflect and go back while another laser beam cut this reflected beam. At that cut there would have been this so-called interference pattern, the source of the reconstruction of an object without photography – a 3D reconstruction of

an object. And that's the 60s thing. This exhibition is very different. This is sort of updated version; it is a mix of 3D digital photography and a hologram patented by a company in Vilnius. So for the orthodox hologram maker of the 60s this is not exactly a hologram. Nevertheless, to me it was an interesting space to think with or to think along, or to think. And I've still been thinking. What happened in practical terms is that when no one was really quick to give me any concrete ideas about what should be happening in a hologram, except David Levine, who said maybe you should just put a finger like this in it [shows how to put a finger]. Or John Me-nick, who proposed to use duck decoys as models (then local Photoshop ducks also arrived from Fia Backström!). Because artists, you know, they don't like holograms. And then I thought – what if I became a hologram myself and recomposed all those threads of ideas that we were discussing with friends? I started to think more as a writer to create a character in a sense of what writers do in literature. You create a full character. And the creation of a full character is one of the terms of literature theory, especially realist literature. So, it's about fullness. It's about volume. It's about three-dimensionality of your social and psychological dealings. But maybe something important should be added: when I was in art school, I always had problems with making drawings and actually making volume in all these still-lives, in all those vases that they would put there. So suddenly I found how to take revenge. I created a full character using a technology of illusion. Now you know. [laughs]

JA: It's funny you refer to still-life. Because one of the things I am thinking about here is the event or the performance or the collaborative exchange, which is going on in the image. The viewers make that three-dimensionality by moving their own bodies around the image. So in a sense it's a museum, where all the things in there are still. They don't turn and face you; you're going around them. Don't forget the bicycle bag with a smell. This is the same thing.

RM: Precisely.

JA: I suppose that's again a still life in a three-dimensional image or form. I'm interested in the collaboration or the performance or the movement of the bodies and why the image is so still in relation to that and the viewer is active. So what I am saying, the subject matter is referring to some sort of collaboration or some sort of movement or exchange, social interference.

RM: You have to activate it. You create the time of the hologram.

JA: Still they are fixed. You are turning tables in a way.

RM: Exactly. These holograms change their appearance due to humidity and the temperature in a room.

JA: As does a viewer. So if you've got a particularly sweaty viewer...

RM: I'm sure it makes a difference. It looks totally different than how it was

in London. Anyways, in the first version I wanted to create a character. And I thought that a character should be someone who is neither a replica of an already existing person – let's say not a replica of you – nor some kind of a digital Second Life type of avatar. What could be this thing in between, this hologramatic character? So I thought about twins. What happened if I took a pair of twins, filmed them, and put them together in a sort of morphing exercise? Morphing is often used in holograms: one object morphs into another while you move along the image. So what happens with twins in this situation? Nothing special. When you see them you see one person, but this person is actually composed of two people. You see how the person changes strangely, how the expression changes, but you are aware that it remains the same person because they are twins. It's a basic trick, like an analogue trick – you get two twins that create this hologramatic character. In some way I was inspired by watching *The Social Network*, the film by David Fincher about Facebook. There are those two brothers – Ivy League graduates that try to sue Mark Zuckerberg for ripping of their idea. But in the film the two brothers are played by one actor. All the time they are sitting on the set together, having a conversation, arguing and so on. So it's the opposite of two people that become one character. The Olsen twins (Mary-Kate and Ashley) did that when they were kids. They were playing the same character in the kids' TV series, because according the U.S. law, kids cannot work more than a specific number of hours. But they did this analogue trick; they would

have sisters replace each other on the set and nobody would notice. So that was the creation of this character. And then I was still toying with the idea of making an exhibition-hologram or a hologram exhibition. And this is what it became. So in this one you see four actors. Oh let's see the twins [shows a hologram].

JA: So it's a single figure, like a portrait. His face sort of comes out.

RM: Yeah, it is a portrait study.

JA: He looks quite unhappy. Looks sad. Why is he sad?

RM: I think that was just his mood. Something from the emotional world.

JA: And you were also talking about this one [showing the second hologram].

RM: I was thinking what progress would be made from two people making one character. I remembered a theatre play that I saw when I was a kid; it's a play by Peter Ustinov – an English playwright – called *Photo Finish*. In this play you have four actors playing the same character, sometimes all of them are on stage at the same time. One of the actors plays the character being 80 years old, second being 60, third being 40, and fourth being 20. So it's the same character having an exquisite inner monologue, with four people talking to each other. But you are supposed to see it as one person. It's almost like a speculative exercise of suspending your disbelief and seeing multiple things composing one thing and

yet remaining individual. So I was interested in that scene and I then I thought what would happen if I invited these actors now to become one character in this hologram? I found the same actors who played the character in the 80s, and now they are here in the hologram. You can see them. What happens when they meet now? I was doing a holo-shoot with them two months ago, and they've met themselves in the future. Because what they meet in this hologram is themselves, though much older than the one they were playing in the 80s. So I think it becomes interesting temporally. Then I asked an artist, Rosalind Nashashibi, to make a form for a mirror that I would hold in which you would see the camera that makes a hologram and the actors. She made a special shape that comes from a Paul Gauguin painting. Then I asked another artist, Gintaras Didžiapetris, to transform that form of mirror. He proposed a slight anamorphosis. I thought that what would happen in the hologram is that when you move, the shape of the mirror transforms; A becomes B. But actually shape B is on the left now, and shape A is on the right... and you see them both at the same time. So suddenly the whole logic of "before" and "after" got hologramised. There's no "before" and "after", they are at the same time. And so I'm holding those shapes, both of which are works by artists, and it's because of those shapes that you see what is happening. You see those actors become living sculptures.

JA: Can you see the camera in the mirrors?

RM: Yes. This is the camera. [shows]

JA: Ah, there's a tripod.

RM: Exactly. So there's this rail and the camera is moving kind of 180 degrees. It moves around you and films you. It's 6 or 7 seconds of video. Then it transforms into hologramatic intervals. I was talking with Elena Narbutaitė and she wanted to put a set of cookies into this exhibition. So from some angles one can see cookies. She was describing a Jay-Z song, where at the very end there's a little tune that shows up and disappears. But it was not there before in the whole song. So that was her logic. If you look through here you see a brief apparition of the cookie. That's by Elena Narbutaitė. And the background which you can hardly see is a poster of J Dilla – an L.A. hip hop master. I bought that poster for Gabriel Lester and sent it to Shanghai. J Dilla working in his studio. But the poster arrived totally damaged and it became 3D. So we took a picture and put it in the background. You don't see him, but he is there – somewhere in the space making the beats.

JA: So there's four works in the exhibition and Raimundas' work is not one of them? The hologram is not one of the works?

RM: It's attributed to me – the hologram – but I see it as a recomposition of several inputs of several actors... artists and actors included. What I wanted to do is to make a group exhibition that is indivisible. It's a group exhibition, but it's one thing. I was explaining it to Sofia Hernan-

dez and she said it's such a religious idea. This is where we get again to science and religion interference pattern in hologram. It's a multiple, a set of things, but it's indivisible. Working on these holograms became the inspiration to think about general optics as a possible subject. What I was trying to do in the beginning for you was follow some of the interests that came out of making the holograms. Voila.

JA: Is that it with holograms? Are there more possibilities for you?

RM: Good question. Maybe I still would like to make a small one, with a big exhibition in it.

JA: Just making it a little bit harder.

RM: Yes, to get more and more concentrated, to reduce the form, but really increase the condensation, the complexity. And perhaps to continue exploring those elements that Paul Perry wrote about:

“I am for a fatal holography. A holography which proposes the time of its subject apart from its subject's space. A determinist holography where each hologram encompasses the entire existence of the object, its alpha and omega. An oracular, prefiguring holography and an oblivious holography. Fatal holography is not a holography of time and willpower (where dinner comes before breakfast, old age before childhood, experience before innocence) but a holography where there is no cause for time and willpower.

I am thus for a holography of resignation. A holography where there is no space for hope and no time for faith. A holography where there is neither experiment, trial or test.”