

Ivor Lõõbas „Minu arvamus loeb” / „My Opinion Matters” (2020)

„Minu arvamus loeb” is intended to be a thought piece in public space. With an ambiguous statement on a trash can, its goal is to turn interaction with the installation into introspection and examination of various levels and forms of discardable opinions and freedom.

Living in these interesting and troubled times, time and again I find myself wondering if – in the grand scheme of things – my opinion amounts to anything. Not on a day-to-day basis, but in a more general way. Will it change anything if I vote differently? Am I buying something because I need it, want it, like it, or because I was subtly and strongly encouraged to? What freedom do I have in deciding on how I live my life and how much of it is treading paths of non-choices forced upon me by the society and the modern, digital, interconnected world? Am I being herded by the data analysis algorithms that reduce me to a cluster of anonymous, yet highly selective, and, in the end, identifiable data? Am I, in short, an automaton in the hands of the processes that be, or do I have a say in it? Does anyone really care about what I think or do?

Putting this message on a trash can with openings on both sides, with one side referring to agreement and the other to disagreement, turns the everyday mundane act of throwing something away into an involuntary interaction with the message that brings up questions of its own.

Am I (dis)agreeing with the message by being oblivious of it?

Am I (dis)agreeing with the message consciously?

Does it change the significance of my action if I tear off a piece of the poster and throw it away deliberately and symbolically instead of discarding actual trash?

What does it *mean* if I choose the yes or no side if it ends up in the same trash can anyway?

Maybe the trash can is divided into sections inside?

Is it about what *I* think?

Or is it about what others think of *what* I think?

Or is it about the *message*?

Is it about recycling and the environment?

Is it about politics?

Is it about advertising?

Is it about me throwing away my opinion?

What does it mean if I end up not using this trash can and choose another one instead?

Can I avoid it?

If I walk past the trash can, does it matter which side I pass?

What if I just walk *away* from it?

Moreover, is it a *question* or a *statement*?

Is it *me* or *the poster* that is asking the question?

Does it make me question what I think or does it reaffirm the opinion I formed a long time ago?

Who's trying to sell me something?

Did they pay for the advertising space on this trash can or was it taped over an existing one in a rebellious action?

What are they trying to say?

Why?

And does it matter anyway?

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By placing this message on the trash cans in the streets it has the potential to ask any, all or none of these questions. It creates a situation where a non-action is an action in itself. Simply being in the vicinity of the message already activates it. The act of avoiding the neighbourhood where the message appears still raises the question about a discarded opinion, be that of the person or the work itself. The message just *is*. Wishing does not make it not be.

It is also somewhat of a Schrödinger's cat. As an idea, this work possesses ambiguity that allows for different interpretations within the space of all possible meanings. Implementing it in a real-world environment will collapse the superposition of meanings into a concrete statement, depending on the implementation. The minute details of how it's taken to the streets are as much of a statement as if the trash can with the poster were just put into the gallery space. A specific implementation will always be less ambiguous and will only retain a subset of all possible interpretations of the idea itself.

Ultimately, this work is about freedom of choice and freedom in general. Are we free in our choices? Is the work free from its audience? Am I free from my work?