

"In the midst of the empty, endless hall of snow was a frozen lake broken on its surface into a thousand forms; each piece resembled another, from being in itself perfect as a work of art. In the centre of this lake sat the Snow Queen, when she was at home she called the lake the "Mirror of Reason", and said that it was the best, and indeed the only one in the world."

Next to the crystal surface of the Lake of Reason, in the largest hall of the icy palace sits a boy. With his frozen fingers, almost black with cold, he tries to place the sharp pieces of ice to form the word *eternity*. He sits at the feet of the icy white, beautiful and terrifying Snow Queen. The Queen's kiss has turned his heart into a lump of ice and he does not feel the cold any more. Even though love and warmth prevail in the end over the coldness of reason in this fairy tale by H.C. Andersen, the Ice Mistress and her country still tempt the reader's imagination. The young boy Kay's stay at the icy palace built of water crystals, at the edge of the Lake of Reason, next to Andersen's allusions to his erudite and heartless contemporaries, can also be read as a complete dedication to science and art which ought to provide him with eternity.

In his series of former works rendered both in textile and in other media, Silvio Vujičić was engaged with the subject of temporariness, transformation and the deterioration of material. While exploring the emergence and behaviour of salt crystals, Vujičić treats them as live organisms: he cultivates them, observes their growth, their interaction with other substances and the way they change in time. He grows colonies of salt crystals on simple iron grids – modules from which he builds objects/installations of different dimensions. If we reflect on the material he uses, salt and iron, it is primary, heavy and cold. The salt crystallizes and settles down on an oxidized, rusted iron surface. It is from this heavily corroded metal film plunged into a highly saturated salty solution that colonies of white, sparkling crystals will emerge. But the salt crystal will also draw the dirty rust into its ideal purity and smoothness of reflecting surfaces. This combination gives way to a destructive dynamic whose result is in constant change.

In an essay about the grid as an emblematic modernistic formal expression that, like no other, "sustained itself so relentlessly while at the same time being so impervious to change", Rosalind E. Krauss argues its modernity in several directions. Be it in the spatial or temporal sense, as a manifested concept of structuralism, as a form that has most successfully defended

its newly-won self-sufficiency of art and released it from any narrative threat... In symbolism the grid appears in the figuration of a window: its glass allows light to pass through, at the same time reflecting it. Perhaps this reflection is not far from the autistic reflection of the Lake of Reason. The window/mirror/grid freezes and locks the Being into the space of its reduplicated essence. And the fragmentation of the gaze through the window grid is also the medium of Mallarmé's crystallization of reality in art. In the unsolved discussion about the centrifugal and centripetal character of the grid, Vujičić's installation finds itself in the same schizophrenic position – its centripetal character is in the orientation of the closed ambience onto itself. But at that moment when emptiness awakens, the centrifugality is extended to at least the reflecting, crystal-covered grid. The quasi mathematical certainty falls apart in the instability of the reflection. The grid is the basic element of this work – mostly because it is built from a crystal grid. And the carrier, the medium, the metal grilled construction, in its neutral and clear form, displays the grown colonies of crystals. Closed and self-reflecting, like content with themselves connections and constructions, the installation reflects everything that comes closer to it and defends itself with a white reflection.

The installation placed in the space is only a temporary status of the work, or, more precisely, of the research. In the non-lab conditions of a studio, Vujičić cultivates the crystals guided by the almost alchemical principle that weakness “creates his strength, as the non-realisation of his goals shows the measure of his dream”. By directing the process that always slips away somewhat from him, he stops at the lure of the anomaly. And this anomaly, this deviation, is an integral part of this research processuality.

The sodium-chloride crystal chamber is wide enough to incite the illusion of space which is closed in itself, while at the same time sufficiently non-spacious to possess qualities of movement. The flamboyancy of the thick prismatic constructions and the fragmented gleam of the surfaces bring it closer to being an attractive object. The spaciousness that arises from the dimensions of the chamber and the voyeuristic gaze through the grid into – emptiness is obstructed by the closeness of the grilled structure. The chamber is thus, like a diminished and tangible image of the hall from Andersen's palace, left to its own satisfactory self-inspection and self-reflection. Only a small part of your figure can enter, and this only through the reflection. Joining the shattered anomalies and corroded structures.