

**Vito Trbuljak**  
**Free Coin**

The exhibition *Free Coin* is divided into two parts - one installation and two projections, created in 2022 - each offering visitors a unique perspective and sensory experience in its own way. Within the installation, carefully arranged are digital prints of circular shapes, precisely crafted with a diameter of 30 mm. These prints are housed in capsules resembling those used to hold numismatic valuable and rare coin specimens.

The presentation of the work does not imitate the usual templates, conventions, or strategies of spatial organization commonly found in stores. Instead, the presentations are closer to thoughtfully designed marketing pop-ups. The circular digital prints feature abstract representations derived from real products typically seen on store shelves, adorned with brightly coloured designer labels and food packaging. These colourful product images have been downloaded from the internet and then, with the help of computer program effects, transformed into visual symbols in the form of spirals. The spiral symbolizes progress, but it is also a tool used in hypnosis. The product images are distorted into colourful spirals that are completely unrecognizable compared to their original source.

The exhibition author suggests that each visitor is free to take one of the spirals they like. The capsules also contain a part of the economic exchange offered in this exhibition, as each one contains a circular print and an unseen coin that can be heard rattling inside. Some capsules contain a coin worth 10 or 20 cents, while others have an even more modest content - a one-cent coin. By placing these capsules on the gallery floor in close proximity to the wall, the artist mimics the "strategic" display of goods in a supermarket. However, by degrading the position of the installation on the floor, he also somewhat devalues the offered product.

As prompted by the artist, visitors are invited to take a capsule with a spiral and a coin for themselves, momentarily freeing themselves from the usual daily exchange of money for goods. After that, the artist places a red sticker on the wall above the emptied spot where the capsule used to be, similar to the ones usually placed next to purchased artworks at exhibitions, indicating strong interest from the audience. In this exhibition, the red sticker signifies that the visitor not only took the artist's work but also received it for free. Moreover, they also received money, while simultaneously giving the gallery wall or the exhibition itself a new appearance. By taking such action, visitors could potentially find themselves in an even more advantageous position in the future, assuming they preserve the plastic box with the print and the coin. One day, these may increase in value beyond their current

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nominal value. Perhaps the artist's digital drawing will become significantly more valuable, or maybe the coin, once taken out of circulation, will gain numismatic value much greater than its current worth. Or maybe neither will happen.

The installation occupies the first room of the gallery, inviting visitors to explore the "charms" of commerce and human interaction. Moving into the middle section of the gallery reveals a monitor displaying the first video, showing the transformations of various items into spiral vortices. In the adjacent, dimly lit room, visitors are introduced to the second video projected onto the wall, bringing the animated spiral vortices to life. These works encourage visitors to get lost in the exploration of the swirling nature of consumer culture, engaging in the boundless fusion of the "art" of items and the art of movement, while simultaneously questioning the functioning of the gallery system.

By combining these two videos and incorporating the installation and the participatory involvement of the audience, the exhibition explores the symbiosis of commerce and art, emphasizing cyclical patterns and infinite vortices that shape our world driven by consumer desires.

At the same time, the goal of the exhibition is to evoke the memory of artists past and present who utilized similar expressive means. For example, there are Boris Demur's spirals, a form he saw in all aspects of life and nature, and Dubravka Rakoci's enormous circles, which she constantly repeats, always in new colours and twists. Finally, Marcel Duchamp and his *Rotorelief* (1935) and *Anémic Cinéma* (1926) should be particularly emphasized as early predecessors of what will be seen in James Whitney's film *Lapis* (1966). In *Lapis*, a hallucinatory animated mandala accompanied by the sound of an Indian sitar speaks best to the spirit of the time in which the film was created, the era of flower children and the oneiric, relaxed hippie movement. This film was likely among the first attempts to use a computer for its production, and computers were rarely accessible to artists at the time. However, today, the computer is an indispensable element in the entire process of this work.

V.T.

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