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## FROM THE WORLD OF ART ARCHIVE



On the wall: Kasimir Malevich, *The Last Futurist Exhibition*, Belgrade, 1985–86, paintings, installation. On the table: Alenka Pirman, *Arcticae horulae*, 1991–98, dictionary, banners. Museum of Contemporary Art, photo by Jasna Jernejšek.

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# MESSAGES FROM/TO THE WORLD OF ART

**Saša Nabergoj and Dorothee Richter**

The cooperation between the World of Art programme (in frame of of the SCCA-Ljubljana, Center for Contemporary Art) from Ljubljana and the Postgraduate Programme in Curating , Zürich, has taken place on different levels from spring 2011 till summer 2012; it has involved intensive visits of students and lecturers in both cities as well as a shared project that was carried out at International Centre of Graphic Arts (MGLC) in Ljubljana ; this is being followed up by the present anthology of articles taken from the World of Art Archive archive of lectures and conversations from 1997 till today. Texts, conversations that we have compiled from an archive of school's diverse activities are bringing together a variety of curatorial approaches, reflections and questions dealing with the potential and impact of curatorial and critical practice in the shifting grounds of the world of art in the last 15 years. All of them were first published in the World of Art Anthologies – the selection of the following relevant texts was made by both programmes to outline an area of shared interests.

The World of Art was introduced as an educational programme in 1997. It grew out of the need for a theoretical and practical education in the field of contemporary visual art, which no university programme in Slovenia had hitherto offered. Formal education in the history of art had dealt neither with contemporary production nor with the art theory of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries; as a result of their lack of general knowledge and of techniques for decoding contemporary tendencies in art, young experts had mainly turned towards past periods. In the nineties, art production in Slovenia played an important part in cultural and social processes and was also integrated in the international scene, whereas the theoretical and curatorial techniques lagged behind. As a reaction to this situation, the World of Art programme organised a series of public lectures, which shed some light upon those artistic practices and art theories which are important in order to understand the contemporary arts. Moreover – a unique programme in this field – it offered a course which helped participants to gain the knowledge that is necessary in order to perform the work of a contemporary art curator. In recent years, World of Art has developed into a methodologically stronger and complex two-year school adapted to contemporary theoretical, curatorial, critical and artistic practices.

We have selected the following articles from the archive in order to emphasize the role of such programmes, in which the connection between art and politics, art and official policy, art and the public sphere are discussed. With this selection of texts and conversations we would like to offer an illustrative insight into the way the topics and themes relevant for curatorial practices have been tackled by the lecturers and to present some of the strategies and tactics, techniques and working methods which they use in curatorial, critical and artistic practices in order to introduce unique models of operation and constructive new approaches into the established and dominant system of contemporary art.

In the Balkan area, in the central and Eastern European countries, certain contradictions and problems are gradually more extreme than they are in Western European countries: as the financial crisis grows, there are huge cuts in the cultural budgets, the situation for all producers of culture is extremely precarious, and budgets which make regular work possible have been cancelled. Sometimes the arguments vary, but the message is the same: it is thought best to stop funding work that is based on a critical cultural attitude. On the other hand, anything that at least sounds as if it represents a nationalistic position or a simplistic view of artistic and thus also curatorial practice, is nonetheless financed by the governments. This means that some of the art and educational institutions are run like NGOs. This must necessarily be complemented by a special knowledge of funding practice on the international scale and by cooperation techniques all over Europe and elsewhere. In this quite complicated situation, in which it is occasionally advisable to rely upon private sponsoring rather than upon money from the state, new and old networks can work simultaneously, and new and old cultural elites exist side by side in the same country, although they have totally different agendas, values and aims. This being the situation, it is extremely important to be precise on the theoretical level. It matters enormously to at least understand in detail what one is doing and which choices one should make in view of their possible consequences. It is essential to gain knowledge about the tools one is going to use and their possibilities, and to clarify one's political and sociological situation before one proceeds to take cultural and, in particular, curatorial action. We are, therefore, very grateful to be able to republish here past articles which in their entirety will help to achieve a discriminating understanding of curating and its policies. For young curators and for lecturers it is extremely valuable to also have the possibility to visit a country and to be closely involved in cultural activities, for them to be able to see exhibitions and to delve into the cultural field, to speak with artists, other curators, writers and theoreticians, so that they can learn how action can be taken with little money, but with a lot of know-how; at the same time they should be aware of where a lot of money is being spent and for what it is used. We have also found out that there are many shared interests, if we can only start to understand the situation of our opposite partners.

**Exchange of Students and Lecturers from World of Art,  
Ljubljana and Postgraduate Programme in Curating, Zurich  
Part I – Ljubljana, March 14–16, 2012**



1 MSUM (Museum of Contemporary Art), Photo by Jasna Jernejšek.

2 Metelkova City, photo: SCCA Archive.

3 e-flux, video rental. MSUM (Museum of Contemporary Art) Photo by Jasna Jernejšek

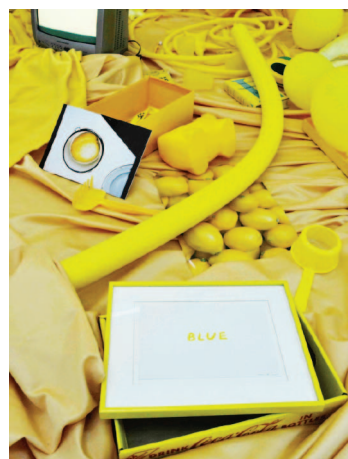
4 On the wall: Kasimir Malevich, *The Last Futurist Exhibition*, Belgrade, 1985–86, paintings, installation. On the table: Alenka Pirman, *Articae Horulae*, 1991–98, dictionary, banners. MSUM (Museum of Contemporary Art). Photo by Jasna Jernejšek

5 Marjetica Potrč, *Under a Common Roof*, 2005–08, wall painting, ink on paper. MSUM (Museum of Contemporary Art). Photo by Jasna Jernejšek.

6 Modern Gallery, exhibition of Metka Kraševc. Photo by Jasna Jernejšek.

7 Nedko Solakov, *Yellow*, 1997, spatial installation, detail. MSUM (Museum of Contemporary Art). Photo by Jasna Jernejšek.

8 Modern Gallery, permanent collection. Photo by Jasna Jernejšek.



# CURATOR IS THE ONE WHO GENERATES IDEAS IN COLLABORATION WITH ARTISTS

Saša Nabergoj: conversation with Clémentine Deliss



*I wanted to talk about the beginning. You did a PhD in social anthropology. Afterwards you began to work as a curator, and after doing some exhibitions you set up an independent organ Metronome, a place for curatorial research with artists and writers. Could you tell me more about what you brought from anthropology to curating in the field of visual art, and about the shift from the 'classical' format of the exhibition to the publication as a curatorial project?*

Well, I didn't begin studying anthropology; I studied art in 1977-80 in Vienna. And I already had a background in design work, because I did a lot of shoe design for my father who had a shop in London. So I was used to workshops. When I studied art in Vienna I realised that it required a lot of information and that I needed to find out more. I wanted to know about the underpinnings and the background of the works that artists were producing in the late 70s. So everything from late actionism, performance, experimental film and then through to conceptual work and early installation art. And all these led me to study social anthropology. I don't think I would have necessarily studied anthropology if it hadn't come from art practice and if there hadn't been the connections of conceptual artists to that discipline. Anthropology is similar to art history or other disciplines: it depends on the institute and who is teaching there. So I studied first in Vienna, which was very historical, then in London, where I finished my bachelor studies at The School of Oriental and African Studies and subsequently went on to do a PhD. Whereas the Austrian Institute began with 15th and 16th century anthropology and stopped at Durkheim, UK semantic anthropology went from Durkheim to post structuralism. I worked on an idea of interpretation, that which fuelled the desires of artists and fuelled the desires of anthropologists at a particular moment in time, the late 1920s in France. I discovered a maga-

zine called *Documents*, which was produced in 1929-30 and edited by Georges Bataille – in 1986 few people knew about it – and I realised it was a key between the two areas of art practice and ethnology.

After completing the PhD, I quickly left the whole world of anthropology and went back to art. I felt that social anthropology was interesting in terms of the analysis of text and the reflexivity and semantic developments around the discipline itself – it was very self-critical, interested in the problems of methodology – but there was very little relevant information or approaches to visual culture and to the material object. So I went back into art. At the time I believed that a curator was someone who sets in motion a series of ideas together with artists within an exhibition space. I wanted to set up complex, unresolved ideas with artists. And the show I did in Graz and Vienna called *Lotte or the Transformation of the Object* was exactly like that. So it was an important exhibition that allowed me to research ideas using an exhibition space together with artists.

I initiated *Metronome* in 1996 after having worked in television production and done a lot of travelling. I became increasingly interested in the way the discourse of art in Europe was unable to retain its original borders between western Europe and north America. And I got interested in the global question. It was at that point that I began to travel more to Africa and realised that if exhibitions had at one point been research spaces that in the early 1990s they weren't enabling that kind of experimental research to take place any more especially if I wanted to work with artists who came from contextual environments with different histories and different backgrounds. So I came back to the idea of the organ, the organ as a way of working with artists and writers that enabled me to short circuit some of the fears around contextual knowledge. I decided at that point that I could get artists professionally interested in other artists if I managed to bring together the blueprints or the earlier phases of knowledge production together rather than the final works.

*In a way, Metronome is a document of a specific period of working with specific artists and writers in a specific location. Would you agree that Metronome is a document of the development of your relationship with different artists, writers, and scientists? Why do you feel it is necessary to have a printed 'product'?*

I always hope that *Metronome* won't become a book again. The important thing about *Metronome* is that I can control it myself and that my only responsibility is towards the artists and writers I work with. No one tells me that I have to do *Metronome* in this way or that, or that I should include certain people, or that I should have an editorial board, or that I publish regularly, or that it should have the same format it had before.

So I am always looking for another medium, another channel, another vector or, if you like, another **transducer**, something that will articulate an area of production that's taking place, and make it interesting or provide an angle for somebody else from somewhere else to want to know more about it. And so it really can take on any shape. And what is interesting is that my moving around has been the key to the different productions. However, each production whether it takes place in Scandinavia or Dakar or Tokyo, as recently, is not about reflecting on these locations. It just so happens that when I go there something happens in the relationships that I set up or that people set up with me that makes me want to develop an idea in that specific location. And then obviously I go to print. But if I am in a location where I don't feel the necessity, as was recently the case in Melbourne, then I can't do it. So *Metronome* is a document of my relationships with artists, and yes, if you look at the list of artists, it's pretty extensive.

I think that what is fascinating about this kind of work is that as you go along, you realize the variable speeds of different information circuits. You could argue that since 1984 and the exhibition *Primitivism in 20th century Art* (MOMA) – and that's now 23 years ago – we have been confronted with locations and modes of art production that we had never had to deal with before. If in 1984 we saw the death of the overarching model of formalist affinities in primitivism, in 1989 we were faced with *Les Magiciens de la Terre* and yet another perspective on gathering artists from different cultures. Following *Les Magiciens de la Terre*, you had a period of maybe five or six years when curators in the States and in France in particular tried to animate new interest, but on the basis of very naïve understandings not only of the developments of art in Africa but equally of new art tendencies emerging in Europe and the USA. Then since 1995 I guess you have an increasing acceleration of information coming through, but equally of the younger generation. After 23 years there is now a powerful new set of artists and practitioners that deal with the relationships between contact and documentation in different parts of world. In this context, *Metronome* is sometimes closer to a collective art work with a very idiosyncratic research methodology, and less and less like a catalogue or accessible form documentation.

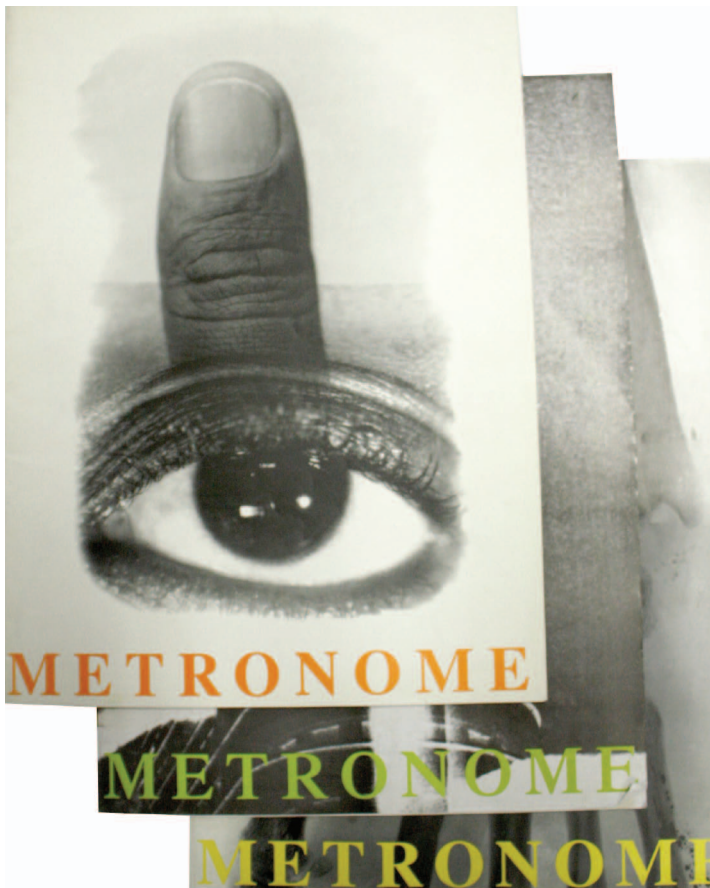


Photo: SCCA Archive

*You wrote in connection with Metronome about metalogue, about the relationship between the content of research and the structuring of it. Can you explain this a little?*

I had heard about Gregory Bateson before because he was married to the anthropologist Margaret Mead. Gregory Bateson is a curious maverick figure rather like a polymath. Bateson's idea of the metalogue is based on the value of recursiveness, of knowledge looping back onto itself and in so doing enhancing the subject.

I guess the most interesting editions of *Metronome* are the ones that can actually do that. And one of the most interesting things for me when I travel is to locate a local organ from whatever period in time that allows me to develop a format through which to introduce a new debate that is local to the place where I have arrived. For example the new issue of *Metronome*, which is being produced in Japan and is based around art and education, is not taking up at what I thought it would. My original interest was in Japanese propaganda magazines from the 1940s. One particular propaganda magazine was called *Front* and it was produced in 16 languages including Burmese, Tibetan, Chinese, German, English, and was nearly entirely visual. It was produced right after the bombing of Pearl Harbour in print runs of nearly 80,000 copies. *Front* was both formally and conceptually interesting as a magazine that went beyond language. Yet the actual model for the new *Metronome* is not going to be as nostalgic as that. It is going to be from 2004! It's a yellow book that is an artwork produced by the Japanese artist Masato Nakamura and it's called *Sleeping Beauty*. So with his permission I am basically producing a new version of his book. It will look the same as his book and that way will draw attention to what he has done and act as a metalogical translation of what we were doing in Tokyo in September through the *Metronome* think tank on art and education.

*I see a turn here towards a slightly different direction than the one from the beginning when the first three issues of Metronome adapted the format of the Senegalese tabloid press. The others, like for example number 10 (based on a zine from Oregon), adapt formats of publications as a kind of compliment or acknowledgement.*

The first three were test beds. With number 0, I had no idea how this would work. Through my work on the magazine *Documents* from the 1920s, I learnt to appreciate the division between text and image. So when I began *Metronome*, I didn't want any excessive graphics such as those we saw so much of in the 90s. At that time, there was no page that didn't have a bubble of an image, several different fonts, shades, and colours blending over

one another. I wanted to create a kind of polyvalent journal, so that you could look at it entirely through the visual half, get something out of it, and articulate ideas, just as you could also look independently at the written material which in the case of the first three editions (Dakar, London and Berlin) was always translated between two languages. I like the idea that as a reader you make a decision about which part you want to read and that you will float between the meanings that are conveyed by different languages.

*The Bastard*, number 7, is all about that. *The Bastard* has no images whatsoever, because it was about the voice, the use of a voice. What is interesting is that it contains more languages that I can speak and therefore wherever it goes the front door, so to speak, the entry into the book, changes position. So if you are in Senegal you will open it up and you will begin to read the Wolof text, and then you will find neighbours that you may be interested in, but if you are in Iceland, you will start with the Icelandic text, and in France you would probably begin with French text. It was a way of saying well, people assume they are reading the entirety of a book, because it is in English or in Slovene, or in German, but that's very rare in art that you read the whole book, or that you retain a memory of the whole book. You will only take a segment back with you.

*At the end of 90s you began to work and produce Metronome within the framework of art colleges. How did this environment change your practice? Even if you did maintain your independent position, did the shift affect the selection of people you worked with? Did you begin to work more with students?*

What you have to remember is that with the first four issues, produced before I began working in art academies, my approach was to combine artists as yet unknown with known artists. Which isn't something terribly new, but the idea was that reader would look at *Metronome* and would say ah, Paul Virilio, ah, there's Rebecca Horn, there's Slavoj Žižek, and then next to them would be somebody that they didn't know at all. This person would be probably important in the city or the country they were based in yet not connected to the same information circuit, and also some of them were simply still very young.

So I was already working with different generations of artists. When Kasper König asked me to work at the Städelschule as Guest Professor for the first time, I was offered luckily a very exceptional situation. I have never been asked to teach and I think that if I hadn't experienced this initial environment, where Kasper said, you are a guest professor, you do what you want with the students, make a film, make a book, I don't mind, I probably would never have held it out.

And at the same time, in 1999, they wanted me to do something in Vienna. And then in Edinburgh, and in Bordeaux. So I went to all of them and I said ok, I want to find out what the knowledge base is going to be in an art college. But I want to do it through the students. In 1998 crossover was the thing. So you could cross into any other discipline, any other culture, any other format and you could take what you wanted and create a new kind of relationship between art and fashion, art and design, art and architecture, art and theatre, you know, whatever. I wanted to tighten the screws on the loose attitude that students had towards referentiality.

So I said to students of the Stadelschule, I do not want to produce a catalogue of your works, as nobody is interested in young students' art works. But I want you to clear up your back store. I'd like to know what you read. I'd like to know what work you do outside of the art academy. I'd like to know if you have a guru, for you to invite them to be a part of *Metronome*. That's basically what happened in all those four locations. It happened within 6 months and I raised the money from all the colleges. It was very fast. But it was only because König and the other rectors in Vienna, Bordeaux and Edinburgh had given me that freedom of movement.

Afterward when I decided to work on the use of the voice, because I was dissatisfied with conferences in contemporary art and I had noticed that I have the ability to make myself understood in public. I wanted to understand what wasn't going right in the way people were speaking at conferences. And what happens when artists use the voice and through this, to quote Mladen Dolar when he says, 'the voice may well be the key to the presence of the present'. In another words how do we deal with presence through the use of the voice? But that was much more difficult. I have worked in art academies as a curator and publisher for many years now, but it's not always been easy.

*First you were producing Metronome, but then you became interested in a crisis situation that many art schools found themselves in at the beginning of the new century. They were rethinking their position, trying to figure out what do to next, what kind of structure they would need, and what kind of knowledge?*

I worked in art colleges because they gave me the freedom to do research and as a curator to find ways of producing work with people. Art colleges were going through this new shift and I became interested in that. Whereas museums were becoming more and more the same, with similar collections, and similar ways of working, art colleges were going through a transformation and were very diverse.

I felt happy in the art schools, certain art schools. Because it seemed to me that they had been the place that had originated my curiosity in research in the first place. I like the environment of the art school. I like the way people move in an arts school. I like the use of fashion and coding amongst students in an arts school. I like how they work in studios. I think I was particularly excited by the small German art college, like the Städelschule when it was being run by König because of its slightly loose way of working. It wasn't trying to be too trendy or too fashionable. An art school remains a place for me where very interesting conceptual work can be done, together with forms, and with interpersonal relationships. University has that rather problematic dimension, which is that offices are usually ugly, and academics however brilliant they are sometimes lack atmospheric or performative qualities. The university environment is a bit dry for me sometimes.

*You initiated a research project called Future Academy. You developed the idea through which you connected several art colleges throughout Europe. Could you tell a bit more on the history and structure of the Future Academy?*

Again it comes down to people. I was back in London and once again was offered this opportunity as a curator to work in an art school without doing formal teaching. One day, the out-going Head of Chelsea College of Art, Colin Cina said to me: 'We've just bought this big site on Millbank, next to Tate Britain. It's a former Royal Army Medical Army College. It won't be refurbished for at least two years, why don't you do something in it with postgraduate students. Whatever you want.'

And so that's what I did for a year. And it was the craziest environmental situation that I ever worked in. Because the site was huge and we had to have walkie talkies to find our way around it and there were unpleasant laboratories, soldiers had lived in there, medical doctors and students and it had a history of being a target of the IRA. There were mad rumours and stories about that. I put together a group of 9 post-graduate students who had just finished their studies and we met and worked there regularly for a year, inviting artists on tours through the site.

And we ended up doing a new issue of *Metronome*, number 8A and 8B. Afterwards I said to the Colin Cina why don't we do a conference about changes in art colleges? And that grew from being just an idea into something bigger. We thought, why don't we get some other institutions who are interested in this crisis to look at it together and that was how we managed to fund it, by pooling extra resources. It was clear that they couldn't give me a position. So Colin Cina used his power and his reputation to get Glasgow School of Art, Edinburgh College of Art and the London Institute (now University of the Arts) to find some extra money that would help me pay my rent, and keep me going to develop this idea. And we also went to the Arts Council, we went to the European Union, and we talked to people at very high level about this changing situation. We tried to encourage art colleges in Europe to come on board and become part of the research collective. But the art colleges in Europe wanted the investigation to focus only on changes in the Bologna agreement or things that would be of benefit to themselves, to an elite European art group. And it was at that point that I thought to myself that this has to be done in connection to the ex-colonies because we had exported art schools to India and to Africa and I wondered whether there was a concordance in the crisis of art schools in these continents too. I thought it would be more interesting to do it on a more global level. So that's how I spent one year working in Senegal and in India. And then after that the money ran out in London and Edinburgh luckily decided to keep me to do this. I have now worked for nearly three years with Edinburgh to develop the Future Academy.

*You worked with professionals and students using the format of the think tank (in Dakar, Mumbai and Bangalore) and now something similar with Studiolab (Edinburgh). In all three places research was focused on three main subjects: epistemological, architectural and structural questions on the future of the art academy. Can you tell me more about the process?*



Each time it is a case of assessing the interest and motivation on the part of my potential colleagues or co-researchers wherever I am. I've worked like this with *Metronome* when I arrive in a new location. So with Future Academy, I go into an art school and sympathetic professors rustle together their students, and then I pitch the project to them and see their response. I did this in India, in Scotland and in Dakar, which was an incredible moment when I spoke to 150 Senegalese art students. I was the only white person there. And it was the most surreal situation. And I said to them ok guys, this is a situation, you are in an institution, there is a very fine line between the freedom you articulate and manipulate within this institution and the kind of freedom that you may want to set up for yourselves once you leave art college. So I am asking you to look at this institution as if it were nearly your professional context.

The key has been to think about this in terms of the future, rather than the present. This is crucial for Future Academy, because if there is a crisis in the art educational system then this crisis cannot be resolved directly by Future Academy. So we have created a scenario or conceit whereby we think 50 years ahead. And 50 years seems to be the right amount of time because my generation will be gone, but equally paradigmatically it refers to shifts in the 19th century, then later the Bauhaus and now a new kind of change in art and education. It also means that the students will be closer to seeing their ideas implemented than us. So Future Academy has been always student-led. But students have had to want to get involved. And so I pitch to them on three levels; who you want to work with, what is the map or cartography of your professional world, what is the way of working that you think is the best for the future, and what is the knowledge that you are already involved in producing? How do you integrate the jobs that you do outside of the college into your work as an artist? Many art students are involved in social work. So what do you do with this information, and what do you think about access to the art college? Even the word 'academy' can throw up incredible debates about exclusion, exclusivity, how one gets somebody who is not educated into the academy, and what to do about cultural diversity. And the presence of aesthetic practices, that are not recognized in the academy but are part of life and culture, even oral culture, all those sorts of things.

Another area that we worked on was architecture. We asked: do you need a building for a Future Academy? No, we don't need a building, most of them said. We need energy points and we need people and we need face-to-face meetings, but we do not need a building.

The structural issue is something that I haven't resolved yet except through my own activity, which is reflected in the way that I have produced *Metronome*. At the heart of Future Academy is something that I have always wanted, which is to set up a roaming faculty. Because I think it is the only way that you can get a deeper transfer of knowledge. I don't believe in one-week seminars, I don't believe in this kind of system. I think you have to bring people over for longer periods of time to work and engage with their own research in another context and with different people. And this will help the circulation of ideas. I tried to set up this roaming professorship through Future Academy but actually I ended up doing it myself informally. So I haven't quite managed to achieve that yet.

*The roaming professorship is connected to the question of knowledge transfer. What knowledge for which context? What art history? African? American? European? What knowledge is relevant for let's say the three locations that you worked with? What are the faculties of knowledge for the Future Academy?*

It's really about introducing and educating students to work with a rigorous understanding of methodology. Once that is done, you can bring in practically any material. These rigorous methodological procedures are related to their work, how they research as an artist not as an academic, and how they understand the ways and approaches of other artists' research.

It is difficult to make a big statement on whether you have to have the art history of former Yugoslavia to have a local relevance, because the local is now as they say trans-local. But there are subject matters, which I think would make a difference to an art academy and that people kind of take for granted. I think it would be good to have professional people to work with artists.

You have a faculty of knowledge and within this faculty you can have a lawyer, but not necessarily someone specialised just in copyright. A lawyer who learns with you, researches with you, maybe starts to work with you, and develops those areas of legal systems that need to be looked at so that artists have more autonomy. And it could be immigration, it could be identity, it could be security, it could be health, it could be a whole number of questions that artists can regard as an aesthetic project along with a lawyer who would look at these questions from a judicial point of view. I think it would be good to work

with an economist. And with an ecologist, a person who looks at the interrelationships of ideas and things, and of environments and conditions. These people could be quite stimulating in an art college context.

*So we are talking about the polymath team of the Future Academy, people who have different skills and knowledges, competences to work together. There is the question of when a polymath becomes a dilettante. Can you set up a structure to prevent this? Is it even important?*

I don't know. My team in Edinburgh has done a lot on the polymath. And I think it is interesting to think about the polymath because certain artists work that way. More and more people want to work together from different fields and have to deal with absences of knowledge from other fields. It can be frustrating to work in an interdisciplinary way if you are also dealing with these blind spots on an intercultural level and very big holes in information. So the dilettante is an inevitable outcome of this kind of pluridisciplinary context. And unfortunately I think that the fine art context breeds more dilettante interpretations than any other context. You know I wouldn't dream of presuming something about computer science, but computer scientists will make assumptions about art that is often frankly a sign of dilettantism.

*Let's go back to the structure of Future Academy, more precisely to the think tanks you set up, and Dakar for example. They also involved people that you worked with before, not only students, but also active professionals from very different fields.*

Well Dakar was the very first think tank for Future Academy and it was very special. I brought together intellectuals, artists, musicians, lawyers, information scientists, all people who in Dakar don't often meet and debate. It took place at the house of an architect. And there were a few arts students there too. But actually there were more people in their 30s and 40s or even older. So it really was a kind of top-level intelligentsia. And afterwards it became more student-led project. I went back to Dakar three months later and set up a cell of 20 people who came from a new media lab and from the national art college in Dakar. And that was very powerful. They were very good.

*Did they continue to work when you left? Or was it more a situation that you generated a kind of dynamics that eventually died out?*

It petered out in a formal sense. But you see, it doesn't really matter. The business of continuity is complex. One wants something to continue but one forgets that students pass through. Students aren't responsible for maintaining a project. They learn from it and then they move on to something else. It would be wrong for me to assume they have to keep it running. Because one of the key aspects to Future Academy has been to remind everybody all the time that we are not it, we are not the Future Academy. We are not an institution. So we are active in doing fieldwork and investigating ideas, bringing people together whilst all the time saying that this is in order to understand what the future may bring or be. But we are not the Future Academy. And that constant playing with blind spots or coming back to reality is really curious and bizarre. Sometimes you realize that you are doing it. You are the Future Academy. And other times you draw back and say no, no, this is a conditional exercise.

*You have a constant team, at least in Edinburgh. But in Dakar and India, you just got together a group for the one event at a time.*

No. In Dakar there was a cell, a group too. I had to find every way possible to keep it going and to be able to go back often enough. Then I went to India and started working there as well. In Bombay and in Bangalore. I never select students. They elect to be involved. In Edinburgh the same thing happened too following on from the African and Indian experiences. It was the cartography of Future Academy.

In Edinburgh we worked on the notion of a building. Because Edinburgh College of Art had just decided to buy a building and in India, the students had said, 'we don't want buildings!' So it made it really crucial to have a symposium to discuss what to do about buildings, to be with or without walls. To ask, why it is that governments support the construction of new art colleges? Most people don't know what a studio is anymore, and health and safety issues prevent people from socializing in a lot of art colleges, so the computer room becomes a social hub. All this is changing every minute. And so the team that I set up in Edinburgh again based on elective students from different departments, photography, television, and architecture investigated these questions. The final phase more recently has been in collaboration with the School of Informatics and the Department of Digital Design at the University of Edinburgh. First there were structural investigations, then there was the architectonic, and now we are looking at the question of the



Photo: SCCA Archive

knowledge base or the epistemological in collaboration with an area in the University of Edinburgh that is fundamentally interdisciplinary.

As the years go by with Future Academy the question of the elective voluntary group at a postgraduate level has become actually very subversive. Because you are able to do what you want, yet you are also confronted with a problem of motivation rooted in the lack of financial responsibility on the part of the students. They don't pay for your course so they don't have time!

*You said that you are not the one forming the Future Academy; you are just investigating possible ways. So what would the result of this investigation be for you? When do you think your investigation will have come to an end?*

Well, frankly I think Future Academy has run its course. I don't really want to continue next year. I have done it for five years and I have listened to a lot of different people and covered everything I wanted to cover with it. When I started Future Academy, the question of the transformation in the art college was being sensed but hadn't yet been developed by the people inside the art colleges such as you might find it has today. So 5 years on and art colleges have tightened their belts and worked on their future. Not everywhere. It is still a big question. One can do a lot more research on the global issue, on the question of the empire, globalisation and the arts school. But that's not really what interests me. I would like to put into practice some of the areas we uncovered or developed.

*And the academies? The ones that supported the project. How do they feel about it?*

They know that the results of Future Academy operate on many levels. Number one, indirectly, it provides a pretty tough education in the methodologies of art and research. They know I produce *Metronome* in the art world context, and they are more interested in that side of my work. And then you could argue in a way that it's their problem not mine.

If I do something that's heretical inside of the college you have to have good people to allow you to create this heresy. In certain art colleges it didn't work, because the people who were running the college didn't want another person coming in and messing around with a vision of a college that was constructed together with students. The heresy is too close to the bone. They don't like it. But if you are with people who know you can only do good, in irrigation, in developing laboratories within the college, think tanks within the political context that are useful, they will support you but they may not know how to exploit you. Because if they exploit you, they have to formalize your position. And that's actually what hasn't happened until now. So I want to do something out of Future Academy. I want to direct. I have learnt enough, I am experienced enough and now I want to direct something.

*Even if you don't have a plan for the Future Academy, you have certain sets of ideas that for example came in very handy for us when you formulated some of these into blocks of questions for the workshop. But there is also the influence you had on the students with whom you worked and the impact that remains when they leave art college. In a way it is about spreading around ideas of rethinking existing models or even methodologies and how*

to approach anything in art, not only the question of art education. So what are your plans for the future?

I want to do something with the results and experience of Future Academy, but I also need to find the place of production that suits my work at the moment. I would like to direct an institution. And I want to work in a different way than before, in a different area of production. I would be very interested in helping to set up new research station. When I was younger I was very nervous. I could never imagine that I would run a private gallery. I was always fascinated by how a person who runs a private gallery has the audacity and ability and courage to say, 'I will sell this artist', especially if it was an unknown artist. I am not saying I want to run a private gallery, but I think you see more in private galleries than in museums. You see new work. I am interested in new work and I am interested in an earlier phase of work, the work before it's completed, so I have to find a location where I can support the production of interesting dialogues with artists prior to the finished production of work. That's what I am mainly interested. In the early phase of development, not in finished results.

*For a forthcoming publication by BAK Utrecht, Concerning Knowledge Production, you write: 'For art institutions, the inclination towards theory and intellectual discourse need not be transformed in any extreme sense, for we should always support spaces that encourage reflection and discussion between people. Instead it may be helpful in these institutions to encourage a sharing of those scenarios and activities that tempt representations of that which is not yet known, and – as the metalogue – so neatly proposes, build new forms of knowledge production around them.' You were referring to the forms of knowledge production and content?*

Yes, because discussion in art practice is now part of a big machine, and more and more art galleries now set up seminars, discussions, workshops, think tanks and laboratories. There are so many now. What do we do about it? Is it a bad thing? And my answer is, no, it is not a bad thing. However if you do set up a discussion you can also think about the format and make it a bit more fragile. But to do that requires quite a lot of work. I have to say that if you invite people to a think tank, you can't just expect them to turn up and be ready to provide the kind of conceptual intimacy one needs for a real discussion to take place and to be open and fragile about ideas that they haven't been properly worked out. To be very very open, very very tentative about ideas that may be completely foolish is risky, yet vital. You can't do that unless you cultivate a kind of an invitation. The invitation becomes so important. If the discourse industry is something that we want to encourage, because it's good when people talk, one also has to encourage experimental way of doing it within the context of art venues, and allow people to work more with the poetics of theory, to work more with translation, with foreign languages, and to change registers more often. Just changing the way of listening to speaking as well. Those things are nearly the work of a hostess. You've got to be aware that a debate won't happen if you throw people in a room.

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# POLITICAL STRATEGIES AS ARTISTIC STRATEGIES: THE USE OF MULTIPLE NAMES

**Oliver Marchart**

The aim of this presentation is to reflect on the relation between artistic strategies and political strategies, their differences and similarities. During this task, I will focus on a single strategy, i.e. the strategy of multiple names. You might ask yourself what a multiple name is. To be honest, multiple names are quite common. A multiple name is a name, which can be used by anybody. Santa Claus, for instance, is a multiple name. Anybody who uses the name of Santa Claus, puts on a beard and wears red clothes becomes Santa Claus. In the art field this is a fairly common practice and Neoism is a movement, which is the most famous for extensive use of multiple names, in particular the name of Monty Cantsin, Karen Eliot and occasionally also Luther Blissett.

I decided to divide my presentation into two parts. In the first part I will offer you a short outline of the use of multiple names in Neoism. This will be the historical part representing the relatively short-lived 1980's art movement. In the second part I will be broadening the area of reflection by linking it to political practices where I will give some indications as to where the usage of multiple names occurs within the political field. Here, I will give you the example of the Angry Brigade, a terrorist group active in the late 60's and early 70's.

So, let's start with Neoism and its use of multiple names. First of all, what is Neoism? Neoism is a neo- or retro-avantgarde practice with various roots: its roots can be found in Pop culture, Punk and New Wave on one hand, and fine arts on the other. One of the definitions of Neoism (paradoxical like all definitions of Neoism) is that Neoism is a movement, which tries to simulate the impression of a movement called Neoism. Another definition of Neoism is that Neoism is a prefix (Neo-), and a suffix (-ism), with nothing to be found in between. The second definition gives you a hint of what Neoists generally tend to do, since their movement does not have any real content: through their practice they reflect the 'new' as such. In the autumn of '77, people who were later to become Neoists developed what they called an *Open Pop-Star* concept. They agreed that the name Monty Cantsin should be open for anybody who wants to use it. According to their theory, the advantage of using this name was that as soon as Monty Cantsin became famous anybody performing under this name will also be famous (if only anonymously). This is the PR-side of the medal. However, at the same time the star system would be opened and democratised. In fact, the name started spreading via the mail art network so that an increasing number of mail artists started using this name. However, soon the name became associated with a single individual, Istvan Kantor, an individual who was the most active in promoting this name. And it was him who defined Neoism (once more rather paradoxically) as a mass-movement of individuality. It is clear that this means that Neoism is a mass movement of multiple names, i.e. of 'post-singular individuals' (John Berndt). The idea of multiple names spread further, the next one being Karen Eliot, a name invented by Stewart Home as an opposition to Istvan Kantor. So what happened was that with this multiple names concept, the multiple – this kind of artwork so typical for the times of recession – was transferred through Neoism from the work onto the artist him/herself. It was not only the work, which was now relatively cheap to obtain, it was also easy to obtain your identity as an artist, therefore the artist became a sort of multiple. On a more theoretical level, these collective pseudonyms were of course directed against the Western philosophical ideas: ideas such as (in the words of Stewart Home) identity, individuality, value, and truth.

If we stop here for a moment, and take a look at the genealogy of the multiple proper names idea, we find that one of the very first pre-figurations of a multiple identity can be found within the Dada movement. In 1920, Raoul Hausmann announced that anybody who joins his Christus Gesellschaft and pays a fifty Mark membership fee would become Christ. The direct forerunner of the *Open Pop-Star* mail art concept was an idea brought forth by the mail artists Stefan Kukowski and Adam Czarnowski who, in 1975, 'discovered' that the name of the radio-station Oslo Kalundberg is actually an anagram of the name Klaos Oldenburg – as you see this does not entirely match the name of the famous Pop artist Claes Oldenburg but they decided to push this fact slightly aside. So, using the mail art network they asked all their friends to assume the name Klaos Oldenburg. If we return to Neoism, then it was Stewart Home (as I have already mentioned) who invented the rival name Karen Eliot. In a flyer from 1988 it was stated that Karen Eliot materialised from within the social forces in the summer of 1985: it tells you that if you become Karen Eliot, you

have neither a family, nor parents nor have you ever been born, and your personal history consists of all the actions of all the people that have used the name before. The name Karen Eliot can be strategically used for a series of actions, interventions, exhibitions, texts and so on. After the year 1988, Home tried to specify the Eliot-concept. By then he proclaimed that Eliot is less of an individual person who can be everybody (which is Michael Tolson's definition of a multiple name) and closer to a context which was created discursively by almost 300 people. And since Stewart Home was increasingly entering the art world and starting to organise exhibitions in galleries, the name was becoming an everyday occurrence within the art field and thus the name became what Home called a 'multiple signature'. Eventually, people in the art world – people Home did not know personally – took over the signature and in October 1996 the Liverpool Arts and Design Festival launched a Karen Eliot retrospective. The committee faked (although you cannot really speak of a 'fake' since there is no original) a Karen Eliot biography with photographs, home-movies and press articles. The funny thing is that, in order to create this persona of Karen Eliot, they actually stuck to the statistically defined average British artist, who is (according to a survey of the Arts Council) represented by a female, between 30 and 35 years of age and does not work with paintings or sculptures.

Today, one of the typical problems of the multiple names concept is that the multiple name in many cases stays in a way connected to the inventor or the main proprietors of that name. There might be many reasons for this, but one of the main reasons might be found in the fact that the inventors themselves are tempted not to cut all the links between themselves and their multiple name. During the first years in which the name Monty Cantsin emerged, the 'true' or 'real' name of the respective individual was placed in brackets behind the name of Monty Cantsin. What they announced was not Monty Cantsin but, for instance:

*Monty Cantsin (Istvan Kantor)*

It appears that one of the deeper problems here seems to be that no matter what strategies you choose in order to relate to the multiple name, one or several individuals will always occupy an empty tag through certain hegemonic manoeuvres, thus disabling you to 'keep it' completely 'free', as it were. Secondly, one of the reasons for the success of collective pseudonyms probably lies in the PR-potential of the anonymity concept. For many observers it is tempting to discover which individual 'really' stands behind a multiple name.

After this 'historical' part, let's turn to the political part. One of the political examples for the use of multiple names is the Angry Brigade, which was responsible for a series of bombings in the late 60's and early 70's. Their concept was basically a multiple name concept. In one of their manifestos (*Communiqué 6*), they state the following: 'These are the tactics of the revolutionary class movement. Where two or three revolutionaries use organised violence to attack the class system ...there is the Angry Brigade. Revolutionaries all over England are already using the name to publicise their attacks on the system.' And in *Communiqué 9* they proclaim: 'The AB is the man or woman sitting next to you. They have guns in their pockets and anger in their minds'. Basically what they are saying here is that the revolutionary class movement can be found wherever two or three people attack the class system – there is the Angry Brigade. So this is exactly the way in which the multiple name concept works. But it does not stop here. In a highly poetic *Communiqué* they say: 'Then we were scared... like any newly born baby opening our eyes to a gigantic blow – we got frightened... AND IT FLASHED: WE WERE INVINCIBLE... because we were everybody. THEY COULD NOT JAIL US FOR WE DID NOT EXIST. We started daring out into the open, talking to friends, to neighbours, to people in pubs, at football games... and we knew we were not alone...'. Again, you might notice that as soon as you proclaim that you are everybody you will eventually find out that you do not exist. The logic behind this is obvious: if everybody is the Angry Brigade than the Angry Brigade does not exist (as the Angry Brigade). At this point I would like to give you two further quotes in order for you to get an idea of what they were writing – it is really amazing. For instance they claim: 'The Brigade is hitting back. Now we are too many to know each other (...)' We are not in a position to say whether any one person is or isn't a member of the Brigade. All we say is: the Brigade is everywhere.' And they continued in such a manner until the movement was crushed. However, it was re-formed in 1983 and they started issuing communiqués and manifestos once more. Yet, by then, they did concede that it is impossible to 're-form' if you are not an avant-garde party, simply because everybody can be the Angry Brigade. So they claimed: 'It is not possible for the Angry Brigade to "re-form". It wasn't an organisation, nor was it a single grouping – but an expression of the anger and contempt many people up and down the country had for the State and its institutions. In this sense the Angry Brigade is with us all the time (the man or the woman sitting next to you?) – it neither appears or disappears (or re-forms) but is the natural manifestation of revolt when that revolt is directed against the heart of all that causes suffering: the State.'

What I would like to do now is to link this with a theoretical concept by proposing the idea that the multiple name in politics is very similar to what the political theorist Ernesto Laclau calls an empty signifier. The term empty signifier does have a very precise meaning. To put it in a nutshell: for Saussure, a sign consists of a signifier and the signified. The signifier is the material substance of the sign (the words I utter, for instance), while the signified is what we might understand by that in our 'mind'. The revolutionary innovation 100 years ago consisted of the insight that there is no necessary relation between the signified and the signifier, it is an arbitrary relation. But where does the meaning come from, how is the signifier connected to the signified, how does the process of signification work? Basically, the point is that the meaning emerges from the relation of differences between the signifiers. Relation of differences between signifiers means that a signifier can only assume or enter this process of meaning creation by entering a differential relation with other signifiers. (For instance, you only know what father means if you also know what mother, daughter, son and so on, means. Therefore, the meaning of father is not essentially or necessarily connected to the signifier but it emerges from a whole system of differential relations.) Laclau took up this concept by claiming that in politics you can have more or less empty signifiers. For instance, think of the notion of freedom. Many people can gather under the banner of freedom, but the point is that the higher number of demands are placed under that banner the less specific the content of freedom becomes. That is to say, the higher number of particular demands or meanings are gathered under one empty signifier the less specific the generated meaning is. For instance, if a union movement is fighting for higher wages, this is a particular demand. Yet, how can they foster their own position? They have to build a coalition with other movements, which are fighting for a different cause. In a situation where a relation between all these movements has to be established there has to be a common denominator between all these movements, and what happens is that the particular demand for higher wages, for instance, which in itself is nothing political, turns into a political notion as it is universalised. The result is that it is seen as having a wider impact not only for the union movement but for the entire society. So by erecting the antagonism between the enemy – for example the state which refuses to offer higher wages – and all other movements a universal element is introduced because the particular demand does not only signify 'higher wages', but also serves as a link between a number of groups, thereby assuming the role of an empty signifier like 'freedom' or 'attack against the state'. So, from the perspective of the coalition of demands or groups, the only thing that unites them is their opposition against the state. Therefore, what you have here is both, a universal element and a particular element.

#### *Universal (Particular)*

Basically the empty signifier is a signifier which has become so universal that anybody can use it in order to, let's say, fight against the state (or whoever the enemy is). But as soon as it is so universal, the particular content of your particular demands is lost. So there is a direct relation: the more universal it gets the less particular the specific meaning actually is.

So if you connect this to the question of multiple names you will see how close the latter logic comes to the logic of the empty signifier. Because what happens with multiple names is simply the following: You have a name – like the Angry Brigade – which is so universal ('we are everybody') that it has lost any specific meaning. The only meaning of the Angry Brigade is that they are fighting against the state and the class system. Therefore, the only thing, which links 'the man and woman next to you', is that both are fighting against the class system. Apart from that there is no meaning and it would be very hard to find any particular demands within the manifestos of the Angry Brigade. So, in my opinion, the discourse of the Angry Brigade is a great example for the empty signifier logic, which, in the end, is also the logic of multiple names within the field of politics. It is a great example because it pushes the logic to the extreme thereby demonstrating that a completely empty signifier can only exist phantasmatically (in the first part we claimed that the universal empty name always has to be incarnated by some particular individual) since what the discourse of the Angry Brigade actually proposes is the following logic: Angry Brigade (everybody). There is no space for a political or hegemonic move, as we have complete emptiness on both sides:

#### *Universal (Universal)*

Therefore we can claim that the Angry Brigade failed, not because it was violent, but because it became an entirely empty signifier and lost all meaning. It did not allow for the movement of politics, which is the movement between the universal and the particular. Instead, this link was established by the Angry Brigade in a merely imaginary fashion, not as a movement but as the identity of the universal with itself.

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# A CONVERSATION WITH MIHA ZADNIKAR

**Eda Čufer**

*Recently, there has been a lot of debate on the relevance of the term 'activism' connected with the arts. You are a declared cultural activist. What, in fact, is activism?*

In brief, this is the production of ideas away from one's own personal career, such pursuit of matters of broader social importance that due to their 'ideologic' orientation may be recognised in a political field devoid of parties, it nurtures mutual help without government, humanitarian or non-government institutions, and offers gratification by the mere investment without any material reciprocation. There are many problems with the understanding of 'cultural activism', as you call it; and they are increasing with the growth of internationalisms. Let's have a look at two examples. What I find problematic is the consumption of culture which has, due to its trendy and sensational orientation, started promoting so-called radical left-wing ideas and images as arbitrary places. Matters that should be as serious as your life, a long-term work process for improvement of life, are nowadays advertised in the same way as any other cosmetics. On the more everyday anecdotal (or better, tragicomic) level this is shown, for example, when you meet a girl in her late teens with a piercing and a tattoo and you naively consider her with that message automatically as a part of 'your' political option, 'your kind of person'. At first sight it is encouraging that the freedom concerning bodily expression has managed to spread outside of the identifiable political-social frontiers, but on the other hand, this is dangerous because it triggers misunderstandings instead of activations, and it also limits the 'collective self-realisation'. If we wish to avoid the national scheme, the religious dogmatism, the collective yuppie blinds, the global consumer society and similar traps the latter is, in my opinion, the only issue left that can structure a human-worthy identity. It is outright symptomatic (and indeed characteristic!) that sociology has also become trend oriented. The Ljubljana FDV (Faculty of Social Studies) likes to discuss 'youth subcultures', thus instrumentalising and limiting the population at the same time: Just as though subculture and its most frequent productive motor – activism – are something you get involved with for a limited time-span, and then you grow up, or what? The thesis about youth subcultures plays right into the hands of national (cultural, or, according to Gramsci without any adjective) politics, which takes great pleasure in dividing cultures in order to find it easier to suppress them. What is outright harmful for the growth of a wholesome personality is the automatism used by some theoreticians to connect 'youth subcultures' mostly to music. With this process, they are helping trend-distributive centres to the pedestal and are thus (not knowingly) indirectly helping to destroy the rare spaces where freedom of thought, the club culture is being bred. There is namely much more to this culture than 'music'. It's rather about sheer survival, if you wish. Here is the other example of what seems to prove a problem: 'cultural activism' tends to be rather passive and only pretends to be political. I know an infinite number of people world-wide (from my generation) who have closed themselves into a safe niche of cultural management and shrunk their political potential into a mode of stammering

companionship. They claim their heart to be on the right side and prove themselves exclusively through the aesthetic norm. Such a renegade activist will comment on the war against globalism in the terms of a performance, and will purify his/her own feebleness by including a politically-socially packed 'work of art' into his/her 'cultural programme'. This is actually worse than the opposition – people belonging to the international globalist scheme who pretend not to be a part of it. As far as 'culture' is concerned, they are actually interested only in one thing, definitely not cultural enough: to see the production potential of 'cultural activists' turned into market goods as soon as possible. If you make some enquiries about how much was stolen from the archives of the former Eastern bloc or how they treat artists there... We do not need to go far for evidence. This is why I would prefer not to speak about art and activism.

*You are into film and music, you teach at the university and spend a lot of time at Metelkova. In the context of cultural activism how are your actions related to your professional work? And what have you actually studied?*

I have studied ethnology and sociology of culture. At the faculty I was often guided by keen activist impulses. The reactions were varied, I believe some of them were premature showing off, but nonetheless I retained the passion for reading hardcore critical theories of societies, materialisms, even some of the outlines of a distant view of the academy. Each year, I enjoy giving a course in Sociology and anthropology of music.

Considering my activities – the work of an unemployed intellectual – I find it a rare enough, but all the more ingenious combination. I have eagerly remained in constant touch with my students for eleven years. I feel frustrated by the constant realisation that my views are generally more radical than those of the forthcoming generations. I work part-time at Slovenska kinoteka (Slovene Cinematheque), which is a great opportunity for me to observe the functioning of a government institution from close up. On the purely activist level I am interested in doing socially useful things with little money or none at all. Alongside my intense media work (radio, writing), these are my basic segments that form some kind of an activist circle where various issues merge in a productive way. Anyway, this is not really to the point. I hate the term 'professional work'. It reminds me of a personal excuse resorted to by the government or a medium when it is time to soften the political facts and arguments. These days it is more about sheer survival. The realisation that you have helped a young person to grasp something different than the cut-down and narrowed offer they have been bombarded with for the last ten years counts for a lot, whether this happens in class, at the club, on the radio or in the street. We have come this far, you see.



*I am interested in your relation towards some terms often used in your activist discourse. E.g. 'marginalism' or 'otherness'. Both terms can operate only in relation to something else and may be very adjustable within the context.*

There are many various moments and situations where these kinds of contexts can manifest themselves. However, I doubt the relevancy of the question as to what is expressed by naming them in one way or another. Besides these two terms there are others like 'civil society', 'alternative', even 'subculture' that do not seem so very problematic. What I find problematic is the fact that these terms are being used in a relative manner even by their own protagonists who are ignorant of the fact that they are thus losing their edge.

*What about 'independence'?*

In the field of culture, the definition of the 'independent' ones is very precise and depends on the system of financing and decision-making. It varies from one space to another. The dance and non-dance theatre artists from the 80's were culturally 'independent'. This is the basis for 'independent' culture, as a contrast to the 'alternative' which can never reach recognition on the part of media and institutions. There are exceptions like the Ana Monro theatre, but these only serve the politics to officially relieve themselves of their bad conscience regarding the alternative. In general, the following pattern is evident: After seven years of work, Teater Gromki can not get a review in the central daily newspaper Delo if it shouts blue murder, whereas Betontanc theatre group got it after their first high-school performance, because they were evidently 'independent', thus, from the government point of view non-problematic, harmless, remote and at the same time promoting anti-intellectual tendencies, which is always along the lines of the main printed media. Or, to put it otherwise: the 'independent' may be off or even off-off, but they can not afford to be underground – in their eyes this seems childish, passé, useless – in short, they are afraid of it. Only at this point can we ask ourselves as to who is really independent. The essential questions of (cultural) policy are simple – you must buy your independence or find somebody to pay it for you, while you can choose your own alternative. The alternative always manages to survive somehow, it does not need much. But things turn out to be problematic if we have a look at the funding of the so-called independent movements, when these people do not possess any premises or basic infrastructure. Like Nevenka Koprivšek, for example, who has had problems for years with the premises to organise her projects and the *Junge Hunde Festival*. I find her example much more symptomatic than the relation of the government and the municipal authorities towards the alternative culture or Metelkova. If the government and municipal structures are not able to recognise as their own even those structures that they urgently need for their promotion, the situation must truly be alarming.

*All the terms mentioned have their tradition from the 80's. However, the contexts have changed. How would you comment on the dialectics between the ideological and political through the change of context that we have experienced in the last 15, 20 years?*

Every public activity is political. Every public note, every concert, every act bears a political connotation, but not necessarily an ideological connotation. It is well known that an act is even more ideological when it explicitly wants to deal away with ideologies. As we say

in the language of art recognition, then the act is internally uncontrolled, linear, flat. I find it important for each artistic practice or cultural act to bear in itself the following open, but well-balanced structure: culture = art = politics = economy = aesthetics = ethics = law. Culture can achieve this high degree via an 'art form' either in an 'ideologic' or non-ideologic way. I am passionately in favour of recognisable 'ideologies', that is, in favour of a better world: This may be established through the radical left-wing discourse, it may possess a merely materialistic base, or again it may appear as some kind of a sketched revolt, as is the case with the new internationalist movements. Independently expressed 'ideological' segments may enrich a certain act, and in my opinion, the worst possible ideology is the one that regards ideologies as something obstructive, unsuitable. Such is the ideology of the modern time, i.e. globalism. In the presently narrowing gap between repression and ideology in this country one can clearly see that there is no more room for political activity outside the party system. I can sense this every day as an activist of the Urad za intervencije – UZI (Intervention Bureau). And when I hear an old ex-dissident reproaching UZI that it is in the service of 'forces of continuity' or something like that, I seriously ask myself what this kind of person had in mind during the times of his dissidence. What was he fighting against, and what was he fighting for? To me, such a person seems ideologically illiterate, ideologically disabled. Ideologies have not died out, not by far, there is just a growing number of poly-intellectual and even common discourses that ascribe them one-dimensional clichés.

*I find the civil society of the 80's a typical ideological project, which dispersed at the moment when it was*

*supposed to develop some political strategies and discourses in the 90's.*

If we raise the question of what the ideology of the civil society was used for and by whom, we find ourselves in an ideological loop: A group of regional politicians depicted their fight 'for' power (as we can see today from the Liberal Democratic party staff (LDS) as a fight 'against' something old, using the ideology of the Zveza socialistične mladine (Association of Socialist Youth) and relatively large amounts of material means. This fight against the old proved simultaneously as successful and useless, and the once proud spirit of the civil society directed against the rigid Zveza komunistov (Association of Communists) as well as against the rigid cultural associations dispersed into a series of ideologically unrecognisable civil societies. At the end of the 90's, any tenant's association is considered a civil society, and looking back, one suddenly realises that the whole machinery had been run by individuals outside of Socialist Youth structures. The latter belong to the rare non-converted-up-to-the-present-day society who sustained the punk, and, let's say, video movement. A great deal of Socialist Youth funds were spent on most of the 80's civil-society projects, and there is less than a dozen people now who were active in the 80's and could avoid the catch of substantial financing of official alternative projects. The 80's alternative has received much praise to the present day and there is no point in denying the historical affiliation with it; however, if we analyse the amount of funds received by its protagonists we can clearly see that only a few people had to fight hard to get their ideas realised. Everything was simply paid for; the essential struggles were being fought elsewhere, through the nazi-punk affair, Channel A affair, Radio Student, etc. Apart from these domains, there

was a kind of tolerated subsystem attempting self-justification through a logic of adhering to the official concepts. Looking back, it often seems it was a mutual, co-ordinated project. In spite of this, the fact is that there has been a good number of really amazing projects carried out in the 80's, a specific jargon has developed, urbanity was introduced and even some pieces of historical memory were retained (with a few people). Between the 80's and the 90's, a wide gap appeared, a loss, an amnesia, that makes us believe these days that history is beginning anew each day. Not only does one need to go explaining every basic thing all over again, the structure of the alternative also crushed – all of a sudden, the funds invested into the alternative were too abundant, and other investments not extensive enough. In spite of all, the 1988 Roška<sup>1</sup> event was the worst, most fatal blow – when many of us expected freedom, the nation happened.

*The case of Metelkova is a kind of metaphor and a measure for the success of the transition between the 80's and 90's. You have got a good overview of the developments ever since the 1993 squat. One could say that the issues concerning Metelkova are being resolved in very time-consuming, hermetic and puzzling ways. In a panel discussion organised by the participants of the World of Art course for curators in June 2001, Meta Hočevar, the dean of AGRFT (Academy for Theatre, Radio, Film and Television) stated that Metelkova is about 'much less than independent culture', while the moderator Bogdan Lešnik, Ph.D. paraphrased her claim with the words that Metelkova is about 'much more than independent culture'. Which of the two attitudes would you identify with?*

I would not like to be too personal. We are at war, Mrs. Hočevar is on the opposite side, and war calls for various tactics: painstaking negotiations, battles on different levels, and perhaps I should add a strategic expression in the Clausewitz manner: 'We do not need to spend artillery where thunder will do'. As far as identification goes: I am happy that among those who understand the whole situation at Metelkova (what has actually been done there, where are the mistakes, what is the especially attractive point about it) people are so wise, deliberate and brave as Bogdan Lešnik. I am dead serious about this.

*And what are, in your opinion, the key achievements of Metelkova in the period since the squat?*

In September, eight years will have passed since the occupation of the location or, in a manner I prefer – since the liberation of the space, and twelve years since the idea arose. I will not attempt to systematise the actual stages, because things were changing so rapidly, and because our effort not to be a part of the system (in addition to, say, a non-hierarchical principle) is one of our strategic priorities at this moment. The working and mental input of numerous people into Metelkova is truly impressive, and the psychological toll is considerable. This can never be repaid with money, there is no reward for these people. I know, and this is said without any irony or nostalgia, many heroes and heroines of socialist work in Metelkova. Anyone, who is aware of that, must know that we should not let go of Metelkova. This would be plain stupid. However, we are extremely occupied with defending it. It would be hard to present any actual plans – one reason being the conspiracy and the other lying in the fact that, following the recent serious threats of demolition, the city of Ljubljana failed to produce a single open card. We know they are confused and we also know that we have no reason to rest on our laurels, but if you are asking me to name the key achievements of

Metelkova, let me mention one of them. In my opinion, this is the key achievement. We have developed forms of coexistence and an internal organisation that can not be identified from 'the outside'. It does not take a part in the capitalistic logic, and yet it somehow functions on various levels, from operation to the security system. The path was paved with many obstacles, and there are still many gaps in the coordination, but we are on the right track to solving these problems: During the recent one-month active visit of the German-Swiss craft group Axt und Kelle, not a single problem emerged. There is not a single blow to the Slovenian mentality greater than being able to do things as a team, collectively. This is the reason they are going crazy outside the ghetto. Let me add another word on 'key achievements' on the club level. For the past 15 years, since my first visits to Dutch and German squats, I have been wondering why they have clung so tightly only onto punk, hardcore and, occasionally, street theatre? Lately, I have noticed that this was their demise. I am not saying that our position is perpetual and redeeming, but I sense a vision in it. I am pleased (now speaking on behalf of Gromka club), that we have joined ourselves in a battle against the monoculture. Mono-culture is equal to death. The club audience must be held, educated, surprised, taught, entertained, politicised, relaxed, etc., all at the same time and without straying away from the concept. The harder it is to identify the concept, the better it is. When a visitor asks me to turn up the music, I answer: 'Ask the young man reading a book in the corner. He is the measure of the moment.' The club is a sensitive point in all of its aspects – light, volume, service, programme and the rate of investment into the programme compared with the investment into equipment. The club is a form of live sociology and I should make my doctor's the-

<sup>1</sup>  
Roška – a local name for the former military barracks Marshal Tito on Roška street in Ljubljana. This is the location where mass activities took place in 1988 in support of the four arrested citizens and against the repressive behaviour of the Yugoslav People's Army on the territory of the Republic of Slovenia. What was at the time understood as an unified voice of civil society and hope for a better tomorrow, was narrowed to an explicitly nationalistic project only a few years later.

sis out of it someday. Furthermore, only working in a club such as this gives you the opportunity to realise the essence of, not just social, but sociologic thought. You might think the following criterion for success is ridiculous, but I think that it is important for the club that there is a balance between the number of men and women in the audience. As long as it stays this way, the club remains progressive and friendly. Furthermore, if a space that was not explicitly intended for such a purpose, becomes a meeting point for gays, lesbians, or the bisexual and transsexual population, I know that we are something normal, something mundane. But where do we go from here? I prefer to say that this is just the beginning... What seems as shining proof of coexistence of differences, only when they are recognised as such, can fall apart overnight. Fortunately, we do not have any illusions. And fortunately, we lived through the 80's, when anti-intellectualism was not as strong as it is now. Among our constant audience, there are many who are highly educated in the field of materialistic social theory, which gives us the possibility to make amendments as we go along.

*With the idea to build artistic academies within Metelkova, Meta Hočevar mentioned a vision of a common cultural centre with a permanent cultural program as one of the possibilities. In a way, this idea overlaps with the old vision of the so-called 'independent artists', to create their own cultural centre and no longer 'depend' on the kindness of the central public institutions, which have a lease on the entire infrastructure. In the area of programmes there are many different interests manifesting their own appetites for the potential infrastructures of Metelkova. Do you think that in the event of serious financial investments on behalf of the City the currently existing program structure will be able to endure the pressure of outside competition?*

Undoubtedly, and with a friendly, i.e. non-hostile production assistance this can be even more so. The reproaches from the city authority, claiming that the Metelkova location is too large for the current activities is partly due to ignorance, but even more so cynicism, if we take into account that the same city authority cut off all the financial aids to Metelkova. It must be added that within Metelkova a 'third class' came into existence, one which Mrs. Hočevar, due to her 'high-culture' vocation, is unable to notice, and which will soon be unnoticeable or ignored by the so-called independent artists.

*This class being?*

The low-budget, no-budget and volunteer productions, persisting with the methods of work that were never neither developed nor socially appraised within our environment. It is a position that will not consent to the idea that at the age of 25 you have to give up everything you are defined by and, paying the price, climb a class higher in order to survive at all. Certain production centres in the field of culture that have been developed within Metelkova absolutely avoid both options you have mentioned. If I limit myself to theatre, I can say that in Metelkova there are constantly projects that are completely unnoticed by either side, because they do not belong to any standard. They are mostly projects based on improvisation, experiment, pyrotechnics, ready made projects, etc. In our environment, these types of theatre are not included in the academic curriculum. What I find the most concerning is that the agreement between the city authority and the University uses Metelkova in order to manipulate with the student potential. The problems of space are used to sacrifice the student population, with the academic circles fighting

to expand their territory into the area already occupied by us. The situation is similar to those moments in revolutions and wars when, under the influence of the psychosis, children were put into the front lines in order to protect the adults and their interests. If it continues in this manner, it could lead to a real social drama. The plan's concept is not for the Metelkova Mesto Cultural Centre to develop with the existing standards and the young population that was raised here, but to demolish it and give it to the highest bidder, the latter at the moment being the University. The current activities in Metelkova would be offered a substitute location, which would result in the end of all activities. MA Roman Lavtar, representative of the town municipality of Ljubljana, explicitly stated that he wished to build a substitute, a Youth Cultural Centre, which would also be offered to the highest bidder. This Youth Cultural Centre means nothing but a further division of the cultural sphere into more segments. Suddenly, we have youth, alternative, sub-, student, independent, amateur, elderly, folklore, choral, etc., culture. The division of culture into various forms or even generation groups is one of the intentions of the state projects. On the other hand, one of the achievements of Metelkova is bridging the generation gap, we have managed to shake off the so-called ageism, i.e. segregation by age.

*I have a question related to ageism. Throughout the years, Metelkova has been trying to maintain itself as a specific entity, as a space of diversity, a space that enables different social and cultural initiatives. This project has evolved from the spirit of the 80's and thus has its generation representatives, such as Retina, Bratko Bibič, Marko Hren or, for that matter, you. On the other hand, nowadays, Metelkova has its regular users, who live and work there, who are active and have nothing*

*to do with the 80's. I am interested in the nature of the particular relationships between you, Hren, Bibič and the most active users.*

Concerning Bratko Bibič and myself, I must say that, among other things, we are also active users. In general, I am under the impression that the interpersonal relationships in Metelkova are becoming more transparent. To repeat this more explicitly, it is a fact that the vision for the future is not oriented on the generation models. To be more precise: In Gromka, we have a vision by which the representatives of the 'middle-aged generation' suddenly pass over the management to the younger ones. Since the opening meetings in 1993, I have personally supported the thesis that Metelkova should be a field we should prepare and later on let the others manage it. The introductory disputes with Marko Hren are directed to this question: Metelkova is not my personal project, it is not a part of my career – it is a place where I mainly co-operate, in contrast to Hren, if you will, who has Metelkova only in his head and is getting paid for that. If something happens in any other way than what he had planned, he is in a very bad mood. A paradox states that Hren is mostly absent and uninterested in the contents, but is basically more concerned with Metelkova than anyone working there put together. Such is the fate of false anarchists. One day you realise that they have activated themselves in a phantom-like manner, only with personal gain in mind. In this psychosocial context Bratko Bibič is of an entirely different kind, a valuable advisor, an excellent, completely realistic and down-to-earth theoretician of the urban life, space sociology, a witty interlocutor, someone one can really enjoy learning from. With all his critical effort, he proves that, despite neoliberalism and the infinite potential of the virtual culture, the virtual space itself is not sufficient as

a space for cultures. A need to fight for real, physical space will always exist. In essence the problem of Metelkova is a question of life – who has the space, who occupies it, who lives and works there.

*How do you comment the fact that the curator Aleksander Bassin chose Metelkova Mesto as the project he plans to present at the biennial in Sao Paolo in 2002?*

It is perfectly clear that for the last 10, 15 years activism, subcultures and underground movements have been a part of the trend in high art. Another part of the trend is to choose elite contexts and, within them, present hidden or forbidden parts of cities – street people, vermin, refuse and all other marginal communities. On the other hand, I am aware of the importance Bassin's decision has for Metelkova. We are in desperate need of surplus and approval. If we are getting constant confirmation from foreign guests, if we are present in the media abroad, giving interviews, then it is an even more beautiful thing when we get a positive voice from the home environment, from a man who is the director of a city institution, a hidden, so far unknown ally, who acts with the purpose of a more united and resonant presentation of Metelkova at an important artistic manifestation. Our goal, of course, is to present ourselves as more than just an artefact.

*Within the programs of Metelkova, you are mostly pre-occupied with the musical programmes. What type of music do you represent and where do you obtain your funds?*

We are very strongly resisting the proposal from the Ljubljana Municipality to fund, if at all, the entire programme of Metelkova as a package. If we agree to that, it will be even easier for someone to reject the program package. Besides, the programs are very different and individual. This year, when they rejected most of the programs, those involved in club Gromka in an instance decided to expand our activities despite the fact that we had no money at all. We have ideas for several on-going programs, but we are unable to develop them, due to the multitude of everyday club planning, which is very time consuming. The musical programs are composed in a way that does not demand much money. We are very active in the areas of club DJ culture, lounge and electronic music, freely improvised music, avant-garde jazz. In autumn, we plan to intensively expand the field of new music. We have permanent musical evenings led by the musical editors from Radio Student, but we are also very open to the production of progressive dance genres. In the 'sitting' concerts, named *Dephony*, our intent is 'to radicalise the heart and ear'. We are educating a few dozens of members of our constant audience as regards the deficit caused by notorious events moving (in spite of their initial pledge) along the path of populism. If we consider that we have our own kitchen and accommodation to offer, all we need for our musical programmes are the fees we need to pay the performers. If we concentrated more on the co-operation with organisations such as the British Council and the Goethe Institute, we would be able to cover most of our travel expenses. Our activities in the field of improvised music, which is our speciality, have already brought results – in the well knit European net the word is spreading of how well received the musicians were during their visits, which means that they are willing to come here to play for a percentage of the entrance fees or for a very small fee. This exceptional compliment is proof of two things: The serious (meaning seriously working) musicians have a taste for homely environments, for environments with a grateful and critical audience, which offers an additional inspiration – a factor very important in im-

provised music, since these are the environments they originated from. On the other hand, this proves that entire Europe is more or less in a crisis and that people want to return to their origins, to their do-it-yourself practices. This is another way, in which I am convinced that Metelkova is on the right, brave track and that it represents an indispensable cultural form.

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# WHAT COMES AFTER THE SHOW? ON POST-REPRESENTATIONAL CURATING<sup>1</sup>

Nora Sternfeld and Luisa Ziaja



Claudia Hummel and Annette Krauss, *Testing Carnevale*, documentation of an action in the framework of the project *Sehen am Rande des Zufalls* (*Seeing on the brink of chance*), Kassel, 2007. Photography: *Sehen am Rande des Zufalls*.

<sup>1</sup> Currently we work together with the curator Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez and the political theorist Oliver Marchart on processes and strategies in art and politics after representation under the title *What comes after the Show?*. The lecture at SCCA-Ljubljana marked a starting point for our engagement with this topic.

Let us start with an example: In 1968 Graciela Carnevale locked the audience of her opening inside a storefront gallery and left. Her exhibition created a situation that forced spectators to act: After an hour of growing tension a passer-by smashed a glass window allowing people to escape. Carnevale's performance triggered the very act of leaving the gallery, of escaping from the institution. In 2007 a photograph and accompanying text of Carnevale's 'confinement' action were presented at *Documenta 12* in Kassel. There it also served as a reference for the art education project *Seeing on the brink of chance* by Claudia Hummel and Annette Krauss: An action entitled *Testing Carnevale*. What happened between these two moments? And what could that mean for contemporary curating and educating?

Both the critique of representation and the critique of the institution were essential parts of the avant-garde in the course of the 20th Century. These approaches were marked by the dilemma between refusing the institution, or subverting it, and being appropriated by it. This impossibility of escaping institutional logics became a 'leitmotif' of institutional critique that was accompanied by a **reflexive turn** in exhibition theory. After putting all conditions of exhibiting and representing as well as associated types of the institutional logic into question in recent years an advanced segment of the field of art and exhibitions has increasingly been raising the question of curatorial agency. Presuming that there is no external standpoint for criticism, the question 'What is to be done?' is being asked and undergoes a variety of deconstructive turns.

2  
Lucy Lippard,  
*Six Years. The Dematerialization  
of the Art Object  
from 1966 to  
1972*, Berkeley/  
Los Angeles 1973.

One of these turns is the transition from curating to the curatorial: Beatrice von Bismarck understands the curatorial as a cultural practice that goes well beyond the mere organizing of exhibitions and specifically has 'its own procedure for generating, mediating for, and reflecting on experience and knowledge'. Thus the curatorial leaves the logic of representation: exhibitions are no longer sites for setting up valuable objects and representing objective values but rather spaces for curatorial action in which unusual encounters and discourses become possible, in which the unplannable seems more important than, say, precise hanging plans. Emphasizing the referential and relational dimensions of presenting art transforms exhibitions into spaces where things are 'taking place' rather than 'being shown'.

In this text we would like to examine the current situation and generate a catalogue of post-representative possibilities for curatorial work. We will start by retracing the history of struggles with representation in artistic and curatorial work since the 1960s. In a second part, we will relate these strategies to specific logics of the museum with the aim of establishing new forms of agency.

### **I The crisis of representation**

The understanding of art as a representational practice has been contested on many levels and with various approaches since the early 20th Century, however with their heavy criticism of the Greenbergian modernist discourse and its advocacy of painting and sculpture the 1960s marked a paradigm shift in both artistic and subsequently curatorial production. The traditional notion of artistic activity has been expanded into a diversity of forms ever since, comprising among others text, sound, video, installation, happening, environment, performance, encounter. In order to characterize and understand this crisis of representation we will focus on three aspects: the status of the art object, the relation to the viewer, and the relation to the institution.

#### **Dematerialization – The status of the art object**

Rather than displaying finished artworks understood as entities, the exhibition space replaced (re-)presentation by experience – an experience that was not built on artefacts but on ideas and concepts in order to escape the increasingly commodified representational mode of exhibiting. Harald Szeemann's seminal 1969 exhibition *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form. works – concepts – processes – situations – information* at Kunsthalle Basel is considered to be the first major survey of conceptual art in Europe. It gathered a generation of North American and European artists, who worked process-oriented, with new strategies of installation, environment and happening and, as Szeemann put it, 'the artists took over the institution' that turned from a representational space to a space of ongoing production. While some artists intervened into the physical conditions of the exhibition others transcended and dematerialized it altogether by taking it out of the given framework: Richard Long for example went on a three-day hike in the Swiss mountains. Lucy Lippard's annotated chronology *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1972*<sup>2</sup>, first published in 1973, bears witness of the variety of artistic strategies that questioned, inverted, expanded or rejected all possible material, social and political parameters of art, its production, presentation and reception.

Drawing from these critical approaches the very act of exhibition making was increasingly appropriated as (collaborative) artistic practice opposing the authoritarian figure of the curator established by Harald Szeemann with the aim to address often marginalized socio-political topics. The artist collective Group Material defined the display of art as political event and developed a working method that critically juxtaposed art, information, and cultural objects in a democratic process. Referring to feminist writer Bell Hooks, Group Material employed a policy of inclusion in order not to mirror oppressive structures and conceptualized their exhibitions and projects as forums, which leads us to the second aforementioned aspect: the radically altered relation to the viewer.

#### **Involvement – The relation to the viewer**

In contrast to the modernist contemplative mode of reception the viewer is not only directly addressed and challenged to react but in a much earlier state of a project in-

vited to become an intrinsic, defining part of it. This radical turn from instruction to participation characterizes a new notion of the viewer that Suzana Milevska termed a 'paradigm shift from objects to subjects'<sup>3</sup>. For their multipart project *Democracy* conceived for the Dia Art Foundation in New York in 1988, Group Material organized a social platform preceding and accompanying collaboratively produced exhibitions in the form of roundtable discussions and town meetings to 'undo the notion of expertise, to replace the singularity of the proscenium with the multiplicity of the audience'<sup>4</sup>. In the same series Martha Rosler realized *If You Lived Here...: The City in Art, Theory, and Social Activism*, a discursive, site-specific research and exhibition project in 1989, dealing with the pressing topic of homelessness in New York City. Rosler opened up the institution for a six-month process involving a wide range of actors with various backgrounds thus transforming the art space into a social space. *If You Lived Here...* is considered as a groundbreaking point of reference for collective and participatory work in the art and exhibition context. Different from many later approaches that French author and curator Nicolas Bourriaud called *Relational Aesthetics*<sup>5</sup> and that have been criticized for their undifferentiated and sometimes depoliticizing notion of relations, Rosler's collaborative project provoked situations that also put its own framework and context to test. It didn't shy away from formulating an inherent critique of the Dia as hosting institution that had triggered gentrification processes in the area. Accordingly the relation to the institution is the third aspect to shed light on here.

### **Critique – The relation to the institution**

The first generation of Institutional Critique intervened into the specific protocols of production, presentation and reception of visual art in the late 1960s and 70s – employing methods of historical research, investigation and context analysis and thus, time and again, imagining a possible outside of the institution. Since the 1990s, however, critical approaches are much more aware of their own involvement and complicity in the social, economic and political structures of the field of art. This second generation of institutional critique pointed its examinations at the increasing relevance and impact of private corporations in a highly differentiated institutional landscape. Taking into account that the art historical canonization of institutional critique contradicts its initial intentions, recent approaches try to actualize institutional critique as an analytical tool, as a method of self-reflection and as instituting practice that aims at social change.

### **II Post-representational curating**

After this brief historical overview we now propose the 'post-representational' as a concept of intervention into classical curatorial tasks. This implies a revision of the role of history and research, of organizing, creating a public and education. This will be done from three agency-oriented perspectives: Performing the Archive, Curating as Organizing and Turning to the Educational, which together open up a yet unfinished catalogue of criteria for post-representative curating.

#### **Performing the archive**

New Museology has conceptualized the museum as a space of violence, economy, discipline, and police, among others. And artistic practices of Institutional Critique as well as scientific studies have analyzed the specific logics of collecting. Let us have a look at the history of the museum and of its depot as an archive<sup>6</sup> and see how a critical, performative approach could be developed: The archive and its methodology, function and ideological underpinnings have been scrutinized in recent years from different perspectives and by a range of disciplines involved in museums and exhibitions. It has become a contested space where the notion of history, historicization, canonization, legitimized actors and objects as well as possible counter-histories are disputed and negotiated. Thus artists, activists and curators have not only challenged the concept of the archive but have actively employed its methods in a performative way in order to establish practices of counter-historicization. Against this background we firstly think curating as actualizing: as a way to relate to history from a strictly contemporary perspective. One early example for practices of counter-historicization is the information service by Ute Meta Bauer, Tine Geissler und Sandra Hastenteufel at *Documenta 9* in 1994 that used archival methods to reclaim feminist histories in the exhibition context. Here, the archive is understood as a discourse that intervenes in the hegemonic canon of knowledge. Often these practices are based on collaborative research and knowledge exchange, which leads us to a second condition of post-representative curating: an understanding of curating as enabling processes of collaborative knowledge production with an unexpected outcome.

#### **Curating as organizing**

A post-representational approach understands curating as a way of being active. In *Outside in the Teaching Machine*<sup>7</sup> the postcolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak reads Foucault with Derrida and makes us understand that 'savoir/pouvoir' – the two French words for knowledge and power – are not only powerful nouns, but also verbs. 'Savoir' means knowing and 'pouvoir' being able to. Like in 'savoir vivre', Spivak connects the two verbs, and

3  
Suzana Milevska,  
'Participatory  
Art. A Paradigm  
Shift from Objects  
to Subjects',  
*Springerin*, No.  
2/2006.

4  
Doug Ashford,  
'Group Material:  
Abstraction as  
the Onset of the  
Real', *trans-  
versal*, 09/2010,  
[http://eicpc.  
net/transversal/  
0910/ashford/en](http://eicpc.net/transversal/0910/ashford/en)  
(03/30/2012).

5  
Nicolas  
Bourriaud,  
*Relational Aes-  
thetics*,  
Dijon, 2002.

6  
We owe these  
thoughts to our  
colleague Martina  
Griesser-Sterm-  
scheg and her  
historical and  
theoretical work  
on the museum  
depot.

it is exactly in this sense that she re-reads Foucault's 'savoir-pouvoir' as 'being able to do something'. While in reflexive museology the 'exhibitionary complex' has been theorized along the lines of power and knowledge, we suggest with Spivak to think exhibitions as spaces of agency with curators who are able to do and to change something.

Moreover, following James Clifford and Mary Louise Pratt, exhibitions can be understood as shared social spaces where different agents come together and act. This concept of the contact zone is based on contingency and processuality: It is a space of negotiation in which the meaning of words and things is not fixed but always open to discussion. Representation is replaced by process: Rather than dealing with objective values and valuable objects curating entails agency, unexpected encounters, and discursive examinations. However, in collaborative discussions asymmetric relations between participants have to be taken into account. Thus, as Clifford points out, the aim should not a 'give-and-take that could lead to a final meeting of minds, a coming together that would erase the discrepancies, the ongoing power imbalances of contact relations.'<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, post-representational curating creates spaces for negotiation, openly addressing contradictions within seemingly symmetrical relations. This also may involve conflict as Clifford speaks of the contact zone as a conflict zone. And Oliver Marchart, who understands curating as the organic intellectual task of organizing, defines the curatorial function as 'the organization of conflict' taking into account that antagonism cannot be organized.<sup>9</sup> Hence the curatorial function consists in taking a position that transcends the mere logic of the institution. Both references show that critical curating as agency does not only become processual but is potentially conflictual.

### Turning to the Educational

In the inaugural issue of *e-flux* journal, Irit Rogoff, under the title 'Turning'<sup>10</sup>, calls attention to the recent 'educational turn in curating', thereby naming important shifts in the understanding of both practices: Curating no longer means the mere mounting of exhibitions; education no longer means the transmission of existing values. Thus we are dealing with a turn in two arenas, the curatorial and the educational. Rogoff does not simply connect the two, curating and educating – which would be a rather traditional enterprise, as the modern museum since the French Revolution conceived itself as an educational institution. Traditionally, in addition to collecting, preserving, and researching, the tasks of representing and mediating were understood precisely as the educational tasks of the museum. Moreover, the educational aspect of the museum – we owe these ideas to the reflexive turn of the New Museology – has first and foremost been a technique of power, aimed at absorbing and internalizing bourgeois values. But Rogoff's point is a different one: In the 'educational turn' education is not about handing down existing national and bourgeois values, as Tony Bennett would have it, nor about the reproduction of legitimized knowledge, but about exploring possibilities of an alternative and emancipatory production of knowledge that resists, supplements, thwarts, undercuts, or challenges powerful canons.

### III Questions

We would like to conclude this rough sketch of approaches to post-representational curating with several questions that in our view could take it a step further: **Who is acting?** – One characteristic of the post-representational is the redistribution of agency. Referring to Gabriele Brandstetter's post-dramatic thoughts on the 'grey zones' of the participation of the viewer<sup>11</sup> post-representational curating would imply the organization of such grey zones that make action possible – where something can happen. But who is acting? Actions could be triggered by objects and artworks in interplay with a variety of different agents such as activists, artists, theorists and curators. **What is the time of the curatorial?** – If we think the post-representational as processualization time plays an important role. The classical curatorial discourse is about creating space – but how can we think curating as a creation of critical time? **Where do we want to go by overcoming representation?** – Processualization and transformation of institutions appear to be progressive strategies. But the fact that process and transformation are essential governmental techniques of neoliberal capitalism has to be taken into account as well. Therefore a critical post-representational practice of curating should be defined as a practice that challenges what can be seen, said, and done by taking a position of solidarity with what is outside of the institution, with actual social debates, fights and movements.

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# THE INTERVIEW AS A TOOL

Eda Cufar

## Introduction

Different communities shape their individual and collective identities by using and conventionalising certain forms and principles of communication. A talk, hearing, personal confession, religious confession and interview are different forms of spontaneous or institutionalised communication between an individual and a community, between the private and public spheres. They are mechanisms through which the personal, the intimate (the thought, the experienced, the inner, the potential, the unconscious) is made conscious, rationalised and externalised when articulated in words, statements and signs, becoming the essence and property of the whole community, its collective identity, its public sphere.

With the transformation of social regimes after 1989, East European societies fundamentally changed their habits of communication. Contrary to totalitarian societies recognisable by their powerful ideological and repressive apparatuses, which control or censor individual, critical and spontaneous forms of statement, democratic societies go as far as to idolise all forms of public, spontaneous and critical statements. In the contemporary communication environment of liberal capitalism, interviews, round tables, public discussions, investigations posing questions to those directly involved and the like are canonical forms of communication through which social life as a whole emerges and is regulated. However, we place more trust in a word that comes straight from the heart, which spontaneously emerges before us, than carefully considered, authoritative or authoritarian words in environments governed by the values of liberal capitalism.

By learning and assuming the model of liberal democratic capitalism in the process of so-called transition, East European societies have also taken over a new norm of communication and socialisation. From hiding and suppressing one's personal opinion, individuals are invited to join a society of constant conversation based on ritualised dialogue and idolised extremes, individuality and the bold expression of personal opinion.

Like any institutional form of socialisation, idolised communication and conversation is to some extent ambivalent. The positive and negative effects of the new formula for socialisation work simultaneously. It depends on what stance we take in the existing social current, and on what form of awareness we develop: do we exercise our critical awareness, or are we satisfied by being consumers of institutional ranges of identities? The question is whether we believe every seemingly spontaneous statement, or what kind of critical distance we are able to maintain in relation to surrounding discourses, a distance which we need to set over and over again, as critical awareness needs to be constantly practiced. Its dynamics depend on what criteria and tools we use to fight for our own utterance position in a given social context: are we passive, or do we creatively participate in co-opting our own intervention into the public sphere?



Photo: SCCA Archive

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**What is an interview?**

The interview is one of the prevailing tools of communication in contemporary Western capitalist culture. 'Inter-view', a compound that originated in English, has become a staple in the international dictionary, as it has been appropriated by most languages. The concept of an 'interview' – which emerged with the development of the press and communication technologies (audio and audio-visual footage, radio, television) – first described a genre used in journalism. Dictionaries state that within the scope of this practice, the interview was mostly used for 'researching contemporaneity' or 'current issues'. Posing questions to individuals regarding a current issue established an overview and view of contemporaneity. Most dictionaries still define the interview as a journalistic form in which 'a public person responds to a reporter's questions'. More comprehensive dictionaries also include other definitions and uses of the word. In addition to the definition of the interview as a journalistic form, the *Dictionary of Slovene (SSKJ)* defines the interview as 1. 'a talk intended for the public in which a person answers prepared questions', while also offering another definition whereby an interview can be used in other ways, such as in science, statistics, and criminology for collecting data, in which the interview is an element of scientific methodology ('collecting information via oral questions and answers'). 'Interview' is also the term used to describe the process in which an employer recruits a potential employee and conducts an interview to assess not only whether the person has the necessary professional capacity, but if they are suitable candidates as persons.

Therefore, an interview is primarily concerned with collecting and exchanging information, statements, opinions – an 'authentic' testimony which the interviewer provokes with questions. An oral testimony is preferred, which is to be only subsequently, and if necessary, recorded and disseminated in written form (if it is not already originally recorded in increasingly prevalent audio-visual formats). The immediacy of oral testimony is intended to ensure qualities of authenticity and subjectivity, the basic qualities of an interview.

**Interview as 'dispositif'**

When discussing the practical use of an interview, it needs to be defined what sort of interview is being referred to (journalism, science, research, etc.) or where the interview is to be used (published in a newspaper, aired on the radio, used for company PR, a political party or for an art project).

A more thorough exploration of the question of the origin, nature and function of the interview reveals that it is – on its own – a neutral means, medium or tool with which something can be developed, or some effects can be achieved. Only by using the interview in a given social context, can the (formal and ethical) significance of its effects be assessed.

The interview, which emerged and has been developing along with media technologies and information systems, is performative in its essence. By researching and reporting on contemporaneity and current affairs, it creates a notion about, and establishes authoritative criteria of, contemporaneity.

However, the modern form of the interview, which is based on journalistic practices, is only a sub-genre of a more general and fundamental practice, which is based on a more fundamental condition identifying the human community as

a community of communicating creatures who exchange information, opinions, etc. The interview is part of the 'dispositif' of communication. Foucault's use of the term 'dispositif' assigns to the term the qualities of a complex tool. 'Dispositif' is a mechanism, a device. Just as the car (a means or tool of transportation) belongs to the 'dispositif' of movement, the interview belongs to the 'dispositif' of communication. It is in human nature to communicate, which led to the development of language and other complex systems defining the concept and forms of cultures and civilisations. Complex systems and forms of 'knowledge and power' (Foucault) developed via the invention of tools for the most efficient exploitation, use and functionality of these predispositions: we can talk, communicate, move, and so on. Foucault argues that the 'function' (how and for what something is used) is the basis of the 'dispositifs of power', while defining the 'statement' as the basis for the formation of 'discourses'. Conversation, interview, its various functions and characteristic of provoking the other speaker to make statements by posing questions, is at the crossroads of very complex flows of 'knowledge and power'.

The interview is potentially a very powerful and even dangerous weapon which can be used for creative, repressive or emancipatory purposes: as a tool for the subordination or emancipation of an individual in the context of a community. The functionalisation and instrumentalisation of conversation is typical of the most authoritative and controversial forms of controlling the relationship between the private and public, the personal and collective in human history. Conversation is a primary form pre-existing various functionalised and specialised forms. The modern – journalistic – implementation described by the term 'interview' is only one of the many instrumentalisations of conversation.

Conversation is also a tool used in the Catholic confessional: it is a medium in psychoanalytic practice, and a method of police or political interrogation. In all these examples, conversation is from the outset a neutral, primary form which can be used to provide a constructive and creative boost to the movement between the part and the whole, the individual and the general, the intimate and the public, individual consciousness and the collective norm; or conversation can be abused as a tool for the violent subjugation of the individual to collective norms and consensus.

The operating principles of this sensitive transition point, which is a reference for measuring the ethics and politics of the use of the interview (conversation) can be demonstrated more specifically with a concrete example. If we want to help someone (e.g. a doctor helping a patient, a priest helping a religious person), we must first discover what is bothering them, how they feel their body, and how they experience the world. A patient and a worshipper must first verbalise their condition, communicate it to the person that they are communicating with, from whom they expect help. By making it public, the inner condition is materialised, becomes visible and real. Only in this form can it be subject to exterior intervention or used for a common good. The same rule applies in the opposite direction. If we want to abuse someone, prevent his activity and the like, we must first know how the individual thinks and experiences the world, what the person is planning, and by what beliefs he is driven. We have to prepare the person to tell his thoughts and convictions, to confess that they really exist. In this confession – the articulation of potential that belongs to an individual's thoughts, feelings and sensations, dreams and

wishes – lies a surplus value, an invaluable fuel for the moral drive of human communities, for their potential for revitalisation, or their self-destruction.

### **Inter/View and the ideologies of modernity**

The twentieth century, the century of modernity, was marked by a radical shift in paradigm, when religious and idealistic social management models which had long been dominant, with surplus moral value, were replaced by materialistic, scientific, secular models.

Two of the most prominent prophets of modernity, Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud, applied the scientific method to the mind and society and subjected them to scientific analysis. Former transcendental concepts, such as the soul, eternity, etc. were replaced by immanent concepts like psyche-subjectivity, nature, society, history. Former ethical models, which emerged in connection to the concepts of good and evil, sin and absolution, were replaced by new ethical models emphasising the rational analyses which fashion and socialise us as human beings. By understanding the principles of how nature and society work and by analysing the mechanisms of the human mind, modern individuals and communities were supposed to have fought their way to full emancipation and the perfection of various forms of individuality and sociality.

By analysing various attempts at the social implementation of twentieth century utopias, we realised that conversation, asking questions, the interview, had been instrumentalised and institutionalised in both dominant alternative attempts as the principal tool shaping and streamlining ideological discourses of modernity. Does not a comparison between the image of Freud's couch, where a patient relaxes while the analyst tries to draw from the patient's unconscious mind content and forms to cure and liberate them, and the image of political interrogations by secret police – the KGB, Securitate or Udba in Yugoslavia – who with use of torture and abuse tried to make their victims confess that their dreams and convictions were false, provide a very clear and revealing allegory of the different paths taken by the West (democratic capitalism) and East (communism) in the period of modernity?

The various ideological discourses of modernity in the Cold War were based on differing relationships of the dominant social groups to the issue of the significance and application of an individual's potential, and the significance and value of their thoughts, beliefs, wishes and ambitions. The general attitude to these core human values legitimised different forms of the use of communication tools and determined how freedom of speech and the press, and artistic and scientific liberties were addressed in a society.

### **The interview, conceptual and post-conceptual practices**

It is typical that artistic practices creatively appropriate and modify current issues, discourses and tools of power. Therefore, it is to be expected that the interview has been in continual use in the visual arts for the last forty years.

Andy Warhol is considered one of the pioneers of the contemporary use of the interview in the visual arts. The magazine *inter/View*, which he established with his collaborators at *The Factory* in 1969, was published monthly, created out of the interest in the immediate recording and historicising of fashion and the emerging 'society of the spectacle'. Warhol was obsessed with recording events

on audio and video tape. He conducted the interviews himself, thereby establishing a new model that rejected the stereotype of the traditional report that had been established by dominant journalistic practice. Warhol's interviews were based on the idea of a conversation between equals in a relaxed atmosphere, accompanied by food and drink, but still intended for magnetic tape.

The change in perception of norms and habits of communication recorded by Western artistic practices from the period of the Cold War – including pop art, minimalism, conceptualism, land art, body art, arte povera, and Fluxus – was already appearing in Western academic circles in the nineteen-eighties as epic, as it introduced into art and art history a completely new law, which the traditional history of art, its methods and theories cannot manage. New academic disciplines emerged, developing new scientific methods of examining artistic and cultural phenomena (visual anthropology, visual culture), while artists also increasingly took over theoretical articulation and interpretation, with interviews and conversations becoming an efficient tool for recording the primary artistic discourses which emerged directly from creative practices.

In artistic practices which developed their primary theories (about the dematerialisation of the object, the significance of ideas and concepts in art, the relationship between linguistic and visual signs, and the open structure of artworks that favours process above the end results of artistic creation), the conversation/interview assumed the function of a tool capable of recording the direct, spontaneous cognitive process of artists, their creative subjectivity.

In the environment of conceptual art, the interview was not only used as a tool for obtaining information, but as a medium for materialising the temporality of the stream of thought, as a medium for objectifying creative subjectivity.

Michael Diers<sup>1</sup> argues that Saul Ostrow and Betsy Sussler, the editors of *BOMB magazine*, which was known for interviews with artists, greatly valued the format of the interview, not only because it enabled artists to express their opinion publicly, to reflect critically on their work and reception, but because they saw in the interview format an opportunity for the cognitive process to be revealed in a raw, unrefined form which stands on its own. While questions can be drafted in advance and an art work can be analysed by different means, what happens in a conversation is spontaneous and performative, and cannot be comprehensively recorded and preserved. The questions are based on answers; ideas float and consider the atmosphere of the event. While it seems that we can follow a conversational thread as a kind of curve or line, the transcript of a conversation always includes a rhythm, a subtext, and an inner logic which remains implicit. The interview has become another method of documenting prevailing processual and performative artistic practices. A similar stance on the use of the interview was taken Gwen Allen<sup>2</sup> in her analysis of the work of *Avalanche magazine*, which featured a presentation of all the heroes of the North American and Western European proto-concep-

1  
Michael Diers,  
"Infinite Conversation or the Interview as an Art Form", in: Hans Ulrich Obrist,  
*Interviews, Volume 1*, Charta, 2003.

tualist art scene between 1970 and 1976 (Joseph Beuys, Vito Acconci, Robert Smithson, Lawrence Wiener, Yvonne Rainer and many others).

The editorial policy of Willoughby Sharp and Liza Bear was to support the direct artistic voice. Instead of following established practice, like the majority of arts magazines which published opinion pieces by critics and art historians, *Avalanche* presented documentation about current artistic processes and interviews with artists. The covers of individual issues included monochrome portraits of the artists, while intensive dialogues with artists and a presentation of their creative methods and processes filled the pages inside. The editorial strategy, which sought to increase the individuality of the artist vis-à-vis the increasingly dominant and depersonalised art system, saw *Avalanche* mimic the current strategies of the dominant cultures that nurtured the cult of the star. While the interviews and portraits borrowed the main features of popular magazines such as *Playboy*, *Rolling Stone* or *Interview*, their content promoted a quality of glamour which was completely opposite. The ruffled, unshaven and defiant faces of then unknown artists and the planned informality of interviews expressed the spirit of the vital alternative cultural policy of the 1970s in the USA. Allen maintains that it functioned as a gallery without walls, which represented art that sought to avoid architectural and institutional confines.

Sharp and Bear were sensitive to changes in the perceptual norms and communication habits of the emerging post-industrial society, which was marked by the unstoppable expansion of commercial culture and the culture industries. According to the editors, for American artists at the turn of the 1960s, being present in the media was no longer a matter of choice; it was a necessity. Therefore, they conceived a medium which aimed to support the direct voices of artists by means of the culture industries.

The views of the editors matched the concepts, critical analyses and theories developed by the artists who collaborated with them. The creative dialogue between Sharp and Robert Smithson led to the choice of a geological metaphor for the name of the magazine (*Avalanche*) and the understanding of the magazine's social function through Smithson's concept of 'non-sites' such as galleries, media, museums and collections, where an artist was to present only the documentation of their remote and hard to access (land art) work. In his interview with Sharp<sup>3</sup>, Smithson defines non-sites as the central focal points in contemporary society, while the site operated more from the fringes. 'One might even say', says Smithson, 'that the place has absconded or been lost'. In a sense, the 'non-site' is the centre of the system, while the 'site' constitutes its fringe.

Therefore, *Avalanche* was a project that established a generation of artists with a careful media strategy which rushed like an avalanche from the fringes to the centre. In six years, *Avalanche* published sixty-one interviews and conversations with artists now viewed as paradigmatic (Andre, Dibbests, Smithson, Oppenheim, Nauman, Weiner, Matta-Clark, Glass, Kounellis, Rainer, General idea, Acconci, Ruscha, Burden, Buren, Monk and others) which were conducted by the editors themselves. Like Warhol, Sharp and Bear insisted that the interviewer and interviewee share a similar artistic sensitivity. Gwen Allen argues that this approach resulted in interviews which are extremely idiosyncratic, and convincingly transfer the emotional details and informal qualities of inter-subject exchanges to paper. They succeeded in capturing the rhythms and cadences

	2		3
Gwen Allen, "In on the Ground Floor: Avalanche and the Soho Art Scene 1970-1976", Artforum, November 2005.		"Discussion with Heizer, Oppenheim, Smithson", <i>Avalanche</i> , 1970.	
			4
		Dan Graham, <i>Works 1965-2000</i> , Richter Verlag, Dusseldorf, 2001. Thierry de Duve, <i>Dan Graham and the Critique of Artistic Autonomy</i> , Richter Verlag, Dusseldorf, 2001.	

of natural speech, complete with pauses, silences, absurdities and linguistic automatisms. The interviewer and interviewee are simply thinking aloud, interrupting each other's sentences, completing each other's thoughts. Like Warhol's interviews, *Avalanche*'s conversations took place after a meal, sometimes in the afternoon, or long into the night, accompanied by coffee, cigarettes, joints and alcohol.

The paradox of Warhol's project and similar ones – which gave the interview a new meaning in the context of the more recent history of art – is that they were conceived in order to empower the artists, to place in the lime-light a way of life and thinking typical of social fringes, within the scope of an effort to trans-substantiate site into non-site, but were forced to shape their image and format with precise means, like popular and commercial culture, which were flooded by the cult of the star in this period.

Analysts of proto-conceptual artistic practices agree that interviews operate in a kind of 'active split'. Regardless of the utopia that their work seeks to contribute to the de-alienation and emancipation built by artist on the basis of reading contemporary radical theories (Marcuse, Adorno, Horkheimer, Gestalt psychology, Lacan etc.), these practices – consciously or as a side-effect – sensitively recorded the structural rules of the flourishing of the administrative/bureaucratic culture, the culture of archiving and a media culture in post-industrial society. In his analysis of the work of Dan Graham, *Performer/Audience Sequence* and *Present Continuous Past(s)*, Thierry de Duve<sup>4</sup> argues that Graham, despite seeking to be critical of society, with some projects created an efficient impersonal allegory of a society without transcendence and finiteness, a society of the continuous mediatisation of society, caught in the endless openness of its homeostatic machinery. According to de Duve, already the next generation, the generation of the 1980s, read the Frankfurt philosophers and conceptual art in a particular non-utopian fashion, or even cynically, via the punk slogan 'No Future', via strategies of appropriation, quotation and copying, which commented on the laws of the fetishisation of art objects and the mechanisms of media constructs of historical subjectivity.

### Interview and performativity

In the 1990s, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, with the expansion of globalisation and new information technologies, the world was caught in the stranglehold of a new paradigmatic shift, which, according to experts, is characterised by a decline in representational culture and the advancement of the performative. In the deluge of the new, which promptly becomes outdated, it seems that the world can be understood and be active in it only through continuous communication, conversation, exchange of opinion, of constantly being plugged into an inter-subjective network. Reflection and activity have become simultaneous processes, caught in the endless circle of a single, homeostatic loop. Critical provisions of the *non-site*, which subverts the site (Smithson), or the allegory of constructing historical subjectivity in media culture, where a place or event recorded by the media becomes old every eight seconds, until it is completely pushed out of the visual field (Graham, *Present Continuous Past(s)*) in one minute, the logic of copying and quoting, expanded in the 1990s in the everyday living environment, where, according to new-era analysts, the simulacrum is becoming more real than its model or completely indistinguishable.

The overflow of rapid interviews, debates and chats which have flooded the Internet have also promoted a radical critical analysis of the interview as a tool of media manipulation. Artists quickly became accustomed to the power ascribed to their direct statement in the context of the art system, which finally appropriated the star cult in the 1980s. They began adapting their statements to the effect that they had in the media. The 1970s had already seen the emergence of doubts with regard to the reliability of interviews with artists, as it is in the nature of artists, according to Lawrence Alloway, to try to deceive or manipulate critics to the benefit of the artists' personal mythologies. Direct contact with an artist enables a critic or historian to obtain precise information which could not have been acquired from other sources, while the critic may be manipulated. The increasing use of interviews as a method of uncritical lauding of the artist's ego prompted the Russian curator and critic Olia Lialina to reject the interview entirely, because she believes that, since Warhol, minimalists and conceptualists, it has produced stars instead of ideas.

Despite well-founded criticism, the conversation and interview proved to be efficient tools even in the 1990s, where, in accordance with their paradoxical, dual nature, they concurrently established, commented on and reflected the particularly performative nature of the new era.

In the 1990s, together with the *Irwin* artists collective, I was able to test the efficiency of conversations and interviews as tools in a series of projects (*NSK Moscow Embassy*, *Interpol*, *Transnacionala*), which sought to reflect and record mental, emotional and social processes since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the direct exchange of general value systems typical of social transition. In view of the objective, the direct recording of conversation proved to be an efficient tool for preserving inter-subjective processes, where our subjectivities in real time performatively bade farewell to the content, experience, and value parameters of real-socialism and adapted to the imperative and rituals of the new social reality of liberal capitalism. Invisible inter-subjective psychological processes, which were at the forefront of the mentioned projects, were also complementary to more visible economic and social processes, which were clearly recorded in urban structures, among others. During the operation of the *NSK Embassy* in Moscow, Russia was being penetrated

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The concept of  
'endless conversation' was taken by  
Obrist from the  
title of a book by  
Maurice Blanchot  
published in 1969,  
while the concept of  
the 'art history of  
the presence' was  
borrowed from histo-  
rian Timothy Garton  
Ash, who used the  
term to refer to  
political changes in  
Eastern Europe  
which he recorded  
promptly, as he  
was convinced that  
the changes were  
happening so quickly  
that history might  
miss the essential  
details if he  
did not record them.

6  
Hans Ulrich Obrist,  
*Interviews*,  
Volume 1, Charta,  
Milan, 2003,  
p. 317.

by the Western market, which translated in urban spaces into a palimpsest language of two economies. A large department store near Lenin Prospect 12, where the *NSK Embassy* operated, was leased unit by unit to sellers of Western merchandise, while the remainder continued to be used to sell mostly cheaper Russian products. The streets were also a rich symbolic mixture of old and new facades. The moment in the future – which now lies in the past – when the old world disappeared behind the new facades was easy to predict.

Within the scope of the global art system, a new meaning and role was achieved by the curator Hans Ulrich Obrist through a series of extensive and influential interviews with artists and scientists.

For Obrist, the interview was a tool of 'endless conversation', which also recorded the direct 'art history of the presence'<sup>5</sup>. According to Michael Diers, Obrist's interviews are encyclopaedic – archives and collections of thoughts of some kind, the views and opinions of creative individuals. Contrary to the demand for the complete, contemplative atmosphere of Warhol's or *Avalanche's* interviews, Obrist's interviews took place in any possible and impossible situations – on planes, in taxis, in lifts, over the telephone, by fax or e-mail. Generally, the interviews were not pre-planned, but usually side products of other events (exhibitions, symposia, conferences). The main thread of Obrist's extensive interview project, which imbues it with an authorial coherence, is his indestructible passion for conversation, which motivates him to discuss complex abstract issues with his interviewees regardless of the obstacles imposed by the context.

As established in one of Obrist's interviews with the artist Douglas Gordon<sup>6</sup>, the differences between the present and past generations of artists are not defined so much by an increased flow of image and information, but by simultaneity and the dispersal of activities and impulses which constantly interrupt the direct contemplative or communication flow. Just as historical memory is paradoxically weaker in a world which extensively records and archives every minute activity, direct complete inter-subjective communication is driven from the world of extensive communication realised through conversation or interview. From the moment that Gordon and Obrist entered the flat where they were to conduct an interview in real time, this current, says Gordon, was bound up with countless parallel processes – from telephones ringing, to street noise, to jumping between topics, and urgent little activities. According to Gordon neither the contemplative Broodthaers

nor someone like Duchamp could live in the way which all of us living and working in the current times do, where we, exposed to continuous sensations of multiple currents, lose the quality characteristic of full and focused cognitive and communication processes.

7  
Hans Ulrich Obrist,  
*Interviews*,  
Volume 1, Charta,  
Milan, 2003, p. 244.

#### **Conclusion – Interview as a tool of conceptualisation**

Within the scope of the workshop we narrowed the field of the interview to the field of contemporary art. We tried to think about the interview as a tool of conceptualisation (creative contemplation, preparation, creative processes) used by different practices connected to the field of contemporary art. The interview (which can be recorded on audio or video tape) can be used in the research (creative) stage of an independent art project, exhibition, dissertation, review or other similar activity.

Regardless of the awareness of the paradoxical and ambivalent nature of the interview, which should encourage us to use it with caution, its inexhaustible source of vitality is the fact that the interview is so well suited for researching and discovering the unknown – its tendency to encourage saying out loud what had previously been unsaid. According to Hans-Georg Gadamer<sup>7</sup> the oral and immediate quality of conversation is what gives the interview its vitality and controversy, as oral articulation successfully brings together and mixes rational and emotional elements of utterance. The interview becomes a true creative adventure in the moments when the interviewer manages to encourage or provoke the interviewee to utter content which is not repeated based on previously articulated models but expresses immediate rational and emotional currents, which surprise and inspire both the person uttering them and the one asking questions, connecting them in a shared communicative adventure. Despite seeking to constantly explain them, the human psyche, our cognitive and emotional processes remain mysterious and unpredictable. They include a goldmine of potential, half-conscious or unconscious content that exists in potential form and which will not be expressed unless provoked. The interviewer is the person managing this sensitive tool aimed to challenge. The path to exciting and passionate conversation is reached via exciting and passionate questions.

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# VOICE(S) OF ONE'S OWN: WRITING A CATALOGUE TEXT AS A SPECIFIC GENRE OF INTERDISCIPLINARY AND PERFORMATIVE WRITING

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*The catalogue entry is an introductory text that belongs to a specific writing genre: it is a piece of interdisciplinary and performative writing that is determined by its relation with art. It is often called a **preface** but it is actually the main text in publications related to art projects and exhibitions. Each exhibition, artist's career, and a single work of art all have a certain form/format and a background concept that needs to be presented and clarified within the catalogue essay so its function inevitably derives and is closely related to the exhibition and exhibited works. 'In fact, a good entry should help the reader to see the work more clearly, more fully.'*<sup>1</sup>

Besides the formal descriptive and explanatory aims, however, there are other requirements that a comprehensive catalogue preface needs to fulfil. All required components make the structure of this genre more complex than the structure of any other genre of writing being comprised of many different reality registers. The text that follows does not offer a recipe for writing a successful catalogue text but will reflect on the usual expectations that professionals and audience have from a catalogue entry. For the same reason it will attempt on tackling some of the major issues that accompany the fulfilment of these expectations and the sources of the problems that writers encounter in the process of writing.

On the one hand, many relevant data need to be presented clearly and comprehensively throughout the text that often requires an extensive research to collect, select and analyse all necessary information that is available. Research about art and artists goes under similar scrutiny as any other research and is even a more painful process particularly because private artistic archives are often scattered and fragmented. On the other hand, the catalogue text is a **text** after all: it needs to have its own structure and it needs to stand on its own because it is published as a publication that circulates not solely adjacent to the exhibition but also independently. Each writer, therefore, has to find his/her own voice through the process of writing, as with any other text. It should make this text stand out of many texts written about the same exhibition or artist's work and to function together with its subject. The text, therefore, has to simultaneously retain its relation with the exhibition and with its past or future audience.

## **The inefficiency of language**

A lot has been said about the inefficiency of language to express reality. The inadequacy and incommensurability of our language for representing reality become even more evident when reality to be reflected by a text is an art work or exhibition. This intricacy is a result of mainly two complex phenomena:

- There is little to be said about art works with writing just about them because it is impossible to retrieve the creative process.<sup>2</sup>
- There is a lack of equivalence between image and referent so purely linguistic understanding is inadequate to art objects.<sup>3</sup>

For Baxandall the verbal pointing phrases such as 'there is a flow of movement from the left towards the center' even though a more complex than the usual descriptive words are far from being sufficient for reconstructing the creative process that precedes the completion of an art work.<sup>4</sup> The problems with writing about art occur instantaneously because the words about images and objects are predestined and overburdened by descriptiveness, linearity and tautology.<sup>5</sup> The narrative expression largely differs from the visual one. To put it simply, words do not belong to the same order of reality as the images and objects, even though they are closely related in our consciousness: 'THE WORDS

1

Sylvan Barnet,  
A Short Guide to  
Writing about Art,  
8th ed., Pearson/  
Longman, New York,  
2005, p. 138.

2

Richard Wollheim,  
'Correspondence,  
projective properties,  
and expression in arts', *The  
Language of Art  
History* (eds. Salim  
Kemal and Ivan Gaskell),  
Cambridge University Press,  
Cambridge, 1991,  
pp. 51-65.

3

Richard Wollheim,  
*Art and its Objects*,  
2nd ed.,  
Cambridge University Press,  
Cambridge, 1980.

4

Michael Baxandall,  
'The language of art  
criticism', *The  
Language of Art History*  
(eds. Salim  
Kemal and Ivan Gaskell),  
Cambridge University Press,  
Cambridge, 1991,  
p. 67.

5

*Ibid.*, 71-72.

resist me the way objects resist. They had to be observed, encircled, I would pretend to move away and then suddenly come back...<sup>6</sup>

6  
Jean-Paul Sartre,  
The Words: *The  
Autobiography of  
Jean-Paul Sartre*,  
Vintage: 1st  
edition, Vintage  
Books Ed, Random  
House Inc., New  
York, 1981, p. 44.

### **I. Interdisciplinarity**

Even though each epoch has its own requirements of approach and preferred rules, the catalogue entry has always been far from pure description or neutral attempt of retrieving the artistic concepts and expressions. Interweaving of different theoretical methods, literature and certain creative writing methods are means that can help the writer in finding the appropriate writing approach and vocabulary for each exhibition and catalogue text.

I want to argue that the catalogue text is a unique interdisciplinary genre that is neither mere a theoretical text, nor just another literature genre. Therefore even though it is open to experiments and variability there are certain specific rules of this genre and only by following of these rules it can justify its existence. The interdisciplinarity of the genre allows to the writer to put together different sources that may originate from disciplines that do not belong to art history but may shed more light to the specific language of each artist in the era when art is evidently influenced by social and natural sciences, literature, political, economical and other issues besides the visual representation.

Writing of the catalogue text happens through an entanglement of at least three radically different aspects:

**a) Close formal analysis: an extrapolation of the form, subject and concept that is necessary introduction for the audience that usually reads the catalogue after visiting or instead of seeing the show.**

Writing a formal analysis is not about a simple description even though it is based on observation. To precisely indicate how different forms are put together to convey not obvious meaning is one of the most important task of the detailed formal analysis. The extent and the importance of the close formal analysis' role differs from period to period but nevertheless this part of the catalogue essay is an inevitable tool for articulating the need for use of different elements and artistic media and for thoroughly presenting and understanding the chosen art project.

The relevance of formal analysis has been significantly contested by the contemporary critics of modernism and modern art only because if this is the only analysis offered by the catalogue text, it isolates the work of art from its own context. By so doing it shreds all other possible meanings that a work gains when look at its own context.

**b) Research: collecting and analysing of factual information about more general context of the exhibition.**

To embark on the research for writing a catalogue is a process that differs from exhibition to exhibition. It can be based on one of several studio visits and informal conversations with the artist or it can mean years spent in local archives. It can even include travelling abroad and researching international state or private archives, depending on the concept and genre of exhibition (individual project, group exhibition, period overview or retrospective).

Collecting and analyzing of the background information about the work's origin, artist's career, social or political analysis of the era or adequate theory, or any other contextual issues relevantly related to the exhibition requires consulting of many various sources: hence, the writing inevitably becomes interdisciplinary and can largely exceed the art history methodology.

**c) A personal quest for one's own voice: searching for a specific methodology and vocabulary of writing that is recognisable for the writer/curator).**

Besides the general requirements of formal and content analysis each text brings forward the subjective voice of its writer. Regardless to objectivity as one of the most important requirement of a catalogue essay, the personal, subjective approach towards a work of art or an art phenomenon is always welcome as long as it does not overlooks or is in a direct collision with the main aims of the artist.

In continuation of this text I will focus on various modes of speech and on the problems that writers encounter in finding a way to express their own opinions in a personally developed writing models and to build up their text either on stating facts and offering descriptions or on writing as a performative process.



## II. Performativity

### a) material and demonstrative mode of speech

Philosophers have never agreed on a single definition of nature of the link between the language and the reality: whether the words have meanings and stand for something other than themselves or they are completely independent and conceptually formative. According to Richard Wollheim's interpretation and application of Rudolf Carnap's distinction between two different modes of speech, for any writing about art it is important to take account of the distinction between:

- the material mode of speech that states how certain things are and
- the demonstrative or formal mode of speech that states how certain things are described in different contexts.<sup>7</sup>

If we use the example that was pointed by Wollheim for the material mode 'Bavarian landscape is happy' the example for the demonstrative speech would be 'The predicate "happy" is applied to describe a landscape.'<sup>8</sup> For Wollheim such formal mode of speech is used to draw the link, to stress the correspondence between the words and objects.

### b) Three different kinds of indirectness:

#### non-descriptive figurative mode of characterisation of works of art

Language has different models for circumventing direct descriptive speech. Figurative means differ and relate to either the optical phenomena they try to describe, the way of their production or their reception. For example, while the comparisons by metaphoric description such as 'rhythmic', 'forest of verticals' remains in the realm of visual field, the causal characterisation of works of art in terms of agent or action that would have produced the work: 'cautiously', 'sensitive', 'tentative', 'elaborated' enters the realm of projection of a certain presumable production process. The third way of indirect speech focuses on the effect: it is a characterisation of works of art with words that describe the action that they have on the viewer such as 'imposing', 'unexpected', 'surprising', 'striking', 'disturbing.'<sup>9</sup> Such distinction between the second and third indirect speech according to Wollheim derives from two different psychological theories about expression. The first theory is based on the assumption that art expresses certain psychological condition of the artist that causes the artist to make the work at first place. The second theory is the one that is based on the assumption that a work of art expresses a certain psychological condition 'just in case it is that psychological condition which perception of the work causes in the mind of spectator.'<sup>10</sup>

Not only are the correlations between words, objects and acts essential for establishing of our relation with art but they are also important for better understanding of the human conception, representation and changing of world.

### c) performative mode

Contrary to *constative statements* that consist of *material* and *demonstrative statements* and both describe some state of affairs or state certain facts that they must *do* truly or falsely, or to *figurative speech* that indirectly describes art works, *performatives* do not 'describe', 'report' or constate anything. They are neither true nor false. The uttering/writing of the performative sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action.

The assumptions of *performative writing* come close to the basic principles of *radical constructivism* of Ernst von Glasersfeld's about constructing the object of observation throughout that very process. Von Glasersfeld refers to his ideas as 'postepistemological' because his radical constructivism posits a different relationship between knowledge and the external world than does traditional epistemology:<sup>11</sup>

1. Knowledge is not passively received either through the senses or by way of communication, but it is actively built up by the cognising subject.
2. The function of cognition is adaptive and serves the subject's organisation of the experiential world, not the discovery of an objective ontological reality.<sup>12</sup>

The process of writing, though, can not be neutrally isolated from the art object and our knowledge about the external art world shapes it, constructs it, while we write about it.

However, to put it in J. L. Austin's words, the various roles may weaken each other's 'illocutionary force' of the performative speech that does the *action*.

7  
Wollheim 1991,  
p. 51.

8  
Wollheim 1991,  
p. 52.

9  
Baxandall, p. 69.

10  
Wollheim 1991,  
p. 64.

11  
Ernst von Glasersfeld, "Questions and answers about radical constructivism", *The practice of constructivism in science-education* (ed. K. Tobin), NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Hillsdale, 1993, p. 24.

12  
Ernst von Glasersfeld, "The reluctance to change a way of thinking", *The Irish Journal of Psychology*, 9(1), 1988, p. 83.

According to Austin 'illocutionary force' rests in the 'performance of an act in saying something as opposed to performance of an act of saying something', such as in the acts of 'orders'.<sup>13</sup> When the performative acts are put in a sequence, if the next performative speech contradicts the previous one for Austin it would be a clear case of contaminating the necessary conditions that having been fulfilled in the first case, cannot be successfully fulfilled and repeated in the next contradictory case.

In order to have a 'happy performative act' several conditions always need to be fulfilled. To use one of Austin's examples of a performative speech act, the utterance of 'I do' or 'Yes' – uttered during wedding ceremonies: if one of the wedding partners utters the same sentence in another ceremony with another partner (without getting a divorce in the meantime) it would be a clear case of bigamy and thus the performative cannot be treated as 'happy'. Only in the case of the unquestioned power of the sovereign whose body and actions are outside the law the 'performative act' will always be 'happy'.

In fact, it is important to acknowledge the fact that these different registers can often be confused and may easily contradict to each other, so one might easily confuse successful and failed performative speech acts.<sup>14</sup> In his article 'Signature Event Context' Jacques Derrida questions the first two lectures of J. L. Austin's book *How to Do Things with Words*, and also opposes to John Searle's uncritical acceptance of Austin's theory, by contesting the possibility for clearly distinguishing of *speech acts* from *constative* statements.

According to Jacques Derrida's interpretation of speech act theory, the opposition 'success/failure' made by Austin in the context of performative sentences is 'insufficient or derivative'.<sup>15</sup> Austin posits context as the most important factor in the success of the performative speech act because the utterance of a certain phrase or sentence can be 'happy', or can actually do things only if the required juridical, teleological or cultural conditions are met during the performative speech act. However, because of the problem with citationality and the impossibility of listing all possible contexts and criteria for Derrida there can be 'no pure performative'.<sup>16</sup> He ultimately argues that Austin was aware that his distinction between constative and performative speech was 'hopeless from the start'.<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps it is not that clear how this debate relates to the issue of writing a catalogue entry? I argue that illocutionary force of the catalogue text has never been contested. Needless to say, the illocutionary force of the text ultimately results from the established institutions of a catalogue and its writer. Such institutional frame legitimizes the validity of the statements of the catalogue entry that is nothing but a pure construction of correspondence between certain words and the art works. The performativity and the 'illocutionary force' of the catalogue essay may be questioned because there can be a clash of several art institutions that are involved in the execution of an exhibition: the institution of the artist or group of artists, the institutions of a museum, gallery, cultural centre, the management, or even the founders or state cultural policy.

Moreover, in the context of contesting catalogue texts one should be aware that once proclaimed classifications and metaphors used about certain artists and exhibitions enter international circulations and by a way of repetition become the speech acts inevitably linked to certain art works. Consequently their performative force is harder to be questioned and disputed after they have been legitimised by art history. The distinction between *constative* and *performative* speech becomes blurred in time and the responsibility of the writer for this loss within this distinction is less visible.

#### **Instead of conclusion: voices of their own**

The abundance of already existing traditional exhibition models (individual, monographic, retrospective, thematic, historicised, or biennial/international exhibitions), as well as the recently developed un-orthodox exhibition models or projects (interactive/relational, on-line, collaborative, participatory, researched or archive-based project, etc.) require re-thinking of the genre of catalogue entry. The analogy between art and language favoured by Wollheim may not be sufficient today when art languages started intertwining among each other and with outer world. Therefore the language we use to write about art should change.

Some of the main questions of this text remain open:

- *how far should one go in adapting and changing the writing methods, forms, vocabulary etc., when writing different texts and*
- *how this affects the voice of one's own.*

13  
J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, druga izdaja (eds. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa), MA: Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1975, p. 100.

14  
Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass, Prentice Hall, London, 1982, 309-330.

15  
Derrida, *Margins*, p. 324.

16  
Derrida, *Margins*, p. 325.

17  
Derrida, *Margins*, p. 325.

It sounds as an inevitable paradox to attempt on preservation of one's own voice at the same time when trying to modify and accommodate all new challenges in conceptualising writing forms. It is difficult to imagine that a writer would succeed in applying always different, self-transforming writing style, and simultaneously insisting on having a recognisable 'voice'. In order to enable the writer to answer to the challenges of rapid art transformation the **voice of one's own** needs to become the voice of multiple potentialities of what art is and can be, and thus what can be a writing about it.

Finally, I want to suggest that texts written **about** art may need to be replaced by writing that develops together **with** their subject in many different ways and directions. To conclude, the voice of one's own today needs to be plural, to become by a way of multiplication **voices of one's own**.

Would this mean a loss of any potentiality for a kind of authentic and subjective **colour** of the voice?

As for the questions of authenticity and authorship, they have already been fundamentally contested both by poststructuralists and by radical constructivist and postepistemological theory. Therefore a closer relation between the writer's voice and the art it voices out is required. Subjectivity is not endangered, though, as long as the **multitude** of voices is linked to the multifaceted art phenomena today. It is always already based on the assumption of subjectivity that at the same time **constructs the text**, and **is constructed through the performative process of writing**.

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# THE POSSIBILITY FORUM – INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE AND MODEST PROPOSALS

Charles Esche



Superflex, Free Sol Lewitt (2010). Danish collective who 'freed' Sol Lewitt's work by reproducing it and giving it away to visitors of the museum. Courtesy Peter Cox.

If we want to talk about global capitalism and art at all, we need to be precise. It is necessary to distinguish variations and aporia in global capitalism, just as we have to distinguish different levels within the capitalist system in general. Without such distinctions, even the suggestion of using art to probe its internal working becomes overwhelming. However, once we see that not all capitalism is global nor is it always the version we have presented to us as the current salvation of poor and rich states alike, we can start to find gaps and exceptions that permit other forms to emerge.

Defenders of global capitalism would claim that the 'creative destruction' inherent in the economic model is necessary for the material benefits it will eventually deliver. Thus, everything in the global version of capitalism that might seem negative or anti-emancipatory – from the slaughter in Bhopal to the deceit of Enron – is simply a necessary if unfortunate bump on the no alternative one-way street of growth. It is this appearance of inevitability that is so disabling to cultural critique, presenting the current version of capitalism as more akin to a force of nature than as a product of particular social and individual choices, or as a moment of human history amongst so many others. The powerless and sense of inertia this produces extends to current political parties with their competitive battles reduced largely to their relative economic managerial competence. In the field of visual art, it also seemed that much of the nineties was spent trying to make the system work for the individual artist rather than questioning the system itself.

Now I sense, with unashamed optimism, that this situation is changing. Small-scale, local engaged, independent initiatives and artists projects that have been happening since the mid-1990s have sought ways to question current conditions not through critique and metaphor but through tangible 'play' with the mechanisms of capitalist production and social exchange. In this short text it is difficult to name more than a few, but let me at least state examples as various as Dan Peterman's building in Chicago; Rick Lowe's Project Row Houses; Oda Projesi in Istanbul; Superflex and their local network of web TV Superchannels; Aleksander Battista Ilic and Ivana Keser's Community Art in Zagreb. All these projects are seen to propose real changes in social and economic relations, not in the theatrical

spirit of 'relational aesthetics' but in locally differentiated environments with individual protagonists.

As a result, art itself becomes a questioning, open, permissive and imaginative space for social and economic experimentation. Of course, the artists, the public institutions and the self-made artists spaces that produce and promote this work are all necessarily located within the economic hegemony of capitalism. They are always already compromised but that compromised position is precisely their advantage. The projects can act as 'engaged autonomous' elements within capitalism, totally inside the system and yet, through their association with the tolerated cultural enclosure called 'art', able to act according to different rules. After all, to many 'hard headed' entrepreneurs, art projects are meant to lose money, to be profligate or to behave without economic rationality. Through these projects and through changes to institutional ambition, art can therefore be enabled to discuss the gaps between real existing global capitalism and desires for things other than consumption. Tests and experiments within the field of capitalist exchange can be fenced off from its more rapacious financial demands and such projects can become, in Superflex's terms, tools for other ways of thinking and relating to each other. This position of 'a foot in both camps' is probably only possible now, in a situation of totalising end-of-history capitalism, when there is no outside and no absolute autonomy from economic conditions. I intend these terms 'modest proposal' and 'engaged autonomy' also to be antidotes to the utopian tendency of art. Utopias are dangerous in many ways, not only if they are made real but even their proposal seems too often to lead to a kind of lazy disinvestments in the existing situation. For a utopian, hope is always elsewhere and much can therefore be excused in the present. The modesty of the proposal as well as saves it from too grandiose a claim either of universality of large-scale application. Art as a 'modest proposal' remains on the scale of the individual or small group both in terms of production and presentation. Possibility is made manifest and these modest proposals for collective action suggest ways to be different than we currently are. At least that, as I said, is the optimistic picture that I would like to see.

The term possibility seems a vital one to use in relation to such thoughts. As a director of an art institution, it is the concept (and the challenge) of creating possibility for the artist, for the audience and perhaps also for the city and citizens where we are based that drives my ideas. Possibility is, in these terms, simply a condition of thinking differently or imagining things otherwise than they are. Within the totalising structure of global capitalism, such thinking, as well as project making, has to be done from within the existing structures, there being no outside from which to gain an overview. We have to use the material, the tools and the language at hand in ways that are both meaningful and resistant to instant comprehension. Therefore creating possibility is not a fixed point of view but a slippery and changeable condition made of spatial, temporal and relational elements. In other words, for possibility to emerge there needs to be a site, a moment and a group of people – material that is obligingly in the hands of public art institutions as much as any other gathering place.

I'd like to suggest that the that the space for the generation of such possibility is now more than ever in the hands of cultural institutions. The vacuum created by the increasing inflexibility or marginalisation familiar sites for such rethinking such as politics, religion or even the nation-state itself, leave the field open. To suggest that visual culture might be the site is, I know, faintly ridiculous. Yet the field of the visual does seem to have achieved an permissiveness to discourse, media, collective and individual activities greater than any other artistic genre and certainly greater than academic disciplines. Let us imagine (and therefore partly create) that the space for synthesis is visual art and its institutions as oases of generalism in a world of increasing separation and specialism. Even if this situation may be temporary and might simply be a way in which capitalism can fix its internal contradictions, it is not a reason to refuse to make use of it for investigative ends. The question then is how far can the field of art be a test site for economic and social alternatives? How far can we press the protective shield that has accrued around art in free market capitalism? Can we sneak possibility in through the back door if, like Ernst Bloch says: 'There is a very clear interest that has prevented the world from being changed into the possible.'

The creation of possibility has also little in the way of precedents in the current climate. There are no obvious formulas to follow, although the frequent talk these days of laboratories and factories gives us the beginnings of certain kinds of models from science and industry. I am however, rather uncertain about these terms as they seem to exclude a position for a visiting public – both labs and factories being by definition private productive sites. To use the institution at its best, we need to balance the need for private experimentation with public discussion, especially as the forums for a generalised intervention are becoming less and less in the face of privatisation of space. Art and its institutions need to move in an opposite direction if they are to play an effective social



Superflex, Free Sol Lewitt (2010). Danish collective who 'freed' Sol Lewitts work by reproducing it and giving it away to visitors of the museum. Courtesy Peter Cox.

role. So, I prefer then (at least provisionally) the centre of possibility or the possibility forum as a term for this institutional proposal.

In order to find some co-ordinates with which to figure how to determine the activities within such a site, we need to think in terms of shifting vectors of possibility around these spatial, temporary and relational (or where, why and for whom?) co-ordinates. As a start, I always return to an old quotation by Vito Acconci that I have used on many previous occasions. Asked by Artforum in January 1980 to describe the developments of the coming decade he talked specifically about the art gallery: 'A gallery could (then) be thought of as a meeting place, a place where a community could be called to order, called to a particular purpose.'

This statement reveals tellingly that the 'community' is created in the 'gallery' rather than the gallery addressing existing fixed groups. Here, the art institution becomes the reason for community and describes the process of its coming-into-being as the responsibility of the gallery itself. What topics will be on the table when the call 'to order' is issued? What 'particular purpose' would bring people together? Its authoritarian ring is also mildly revolutionary, without the delivery of a concrete manifesto.

In opposition to such a statement, Derrida has recently been working on the concepts behind friendship and hospitality in relation to Klossowski's earlier ideas. In his conversational book *Of Hospitality* he says simply of the subject itself: 'Let us say Yes to who or what turns up, before any determination, before any anticipation, before any identification, whether or not it has to do with a foreigner, an immigrant, an invited guest or an unexpected visitor; whether or not the new arrival is the citizen of another country, a human, animal or divine creature, a living or dead thing, male or female.'

Such radical openness to the other challenges the role of gatekeeper and judge so much part of art institutional practice. What would it be to be a 'hospitable institution' or to have 'curators of hospitality' in the museum? It would certainly mean more than a good café. It may mean handing over decision making, simply allowing the use of the space for 'who or what turns up' It could even be liberating of the uptight notion of art world success – the institution judged on its attitude rather than its products.

If these quotes become the poles between which an institutional programme might circulate, it would mean that activities would be judged according to their effectiveness on the visiting public, either those that turn up or those that are specifically invited. It would mean that the internationalisation of art would have to take account of its meaning and relation to given local situations. Most importantly, it would mean inviting artists to work with that situation, with the institution having sufficient contacts and roots with the communities that made up the public to be able to create the meeting points and the much higher levels of commitment that would be demanded.

Before I seem to be proposing a new state of affairs, let me say that much of what I say 'would' happen, is already happening and is integrated into the thinking of artists and their particular practice. Its challenge is much more towards institutions themselves to adjust to the new demands of the artists, or to provide the means to realise ambitions that can sometimes remain only rhetorical.

In conclusion, and to try to give some more concrete idea of the institutional and exhibition structures that might stem from these terms, I like to mention briefly two recent projects with which I have been involved. The Gwangju Biennale that recently closed in southern Korea was intended to offer a different take on the large-scale festival model. The curators Song Wang Kyung, Hou Hanru and myself chose to create a core to the exhibition by inviting 26 independent artists groups and 'alternative' spaces from Europe and Asia. We handed over the traditional curatorial function to these groups, simply asking them to provide us with architectural drawings of their own or an ideal space that we would build cheaply in the enormous biennale hall. The result was a series of structures rubbing side by side that created a kind of Babylonian cityscape in which different registers of voice, esthetic, content and method complemented or irritated each other. The chaos that attended the opening was in some ways illustrative of these differences as Istanbul artists led in groups of Korean schoolchildren or Singaporean curators worked with local seamstresses. The opportunity this biennale provided was also to create a new series of meetings between these groups I organised an extraordinary eight day workshop in the weeks before the opening in which eight of the groups sat down with their Korean colleagues to discuss their widely different experiences and understanding of art within a local context. A publication about this workshop will follow shortly, but I believe in these days we came as close as possible to Acconci's vision of calling a (global) community to order. The heat of the discussions about the effects of globalisation on different Asian and European communities provided some means to imagine what a different kind of cultural globa-



Kurimanzutto, Mexico City catalogue copying

lism might mean. In the disputes between Malaysian, Korean, Polish and Danish world views grew the beginnings of mutual respect that might also make the yes saying demanded by Derrida that much easier. To take it forward, we are now seeking to hold a second workshop in Yogyakarta in summer 2003, where the Indonesian group Cemeti Art Foundation will be the hosts.

The second project is the exhibition and related events organised by Superflex at Rooseum, Malmö in summer 2002. In choosing to make an exhibition of their projects, we had to decide how to visualise what are essentially a series of socially located tools for thinking and producing. The exhibition itself can testify to our success or failure but the most valuable part of the project was the way it emphasised Superflex's use of the field of art as a 'tool' to unpick situations outside. The 'tool' as a product of an 'engaged autonomy' that functions both as a real action and a metaphor becomes as applicable to the institution itself as to the individual products or artworks within which it is shown. By choosing to work intensively with Superflex, not only as visiting artists but also as discursive partners in the development of Rooseum, we are able to think beyond the time frame of the exhibition project and towards this whole question of the institution in parallel with a group of artists probing similar questions from a different perspective. Superflex therefore in some way inform everything that happens in Rooseum, as we try to constantly reimagine the institution not as a vessel to be filled but a tool to be used and made use of by our visiting publics.

What all this might have to do with a benign global capitalism is hopefully that by creating the conditions of possibility at moments and with certain people in the institution, we also permit the kind of imaginative response to the monolith of the free market that provides ways of thinking it otherwise. Groups such as Superflex and many in Gwangju are in some ways perfect paradigms of contemporary capitalism. Pragmatic, flexible, fluid and resourceful, they fit the profile of good entrepreneurs. Indeed, that is their point. By repurposing the tools of capitalism, we might find the lacunae, gaps and inconsistencies; the desires that cannot now speak their name, on which other collective ambitions may be built.

Charles Esche, 'The Possibility Forum - Institutional Change and Modest Proposals', *Strategies of Presentation 2&3, World of Art Anthology* (ed. Barbara Borčić, Saša Nabergoj), Ljubljana, 2004, pp. 35-37.



# THROUGH ART TOWARDS NEW DEFEATS: THE AUSTRIAN CASE

**Boris Buden**

This text deals with the relation between politics and art in an actual historic situation – in the political tension that has been present during the last two years in Austria. We are immediately faced by the question: Did anything unique and drastic happen in the relation between politics and art in Austria during this period? Anything that would demand our total attention? The answer is simple: No! Nothing new happened between politics and art in these Austrian conditions. Nothing revolutionary. Everything remained within the frames of the already known. The artistic intervention did not change the political events in any way, nor did politics – nor in an aggressive attack on art nor in a necessary self-defence from it – in any important way influence the art production or radically interfere with the lives and work of Austrian artists. Thus, this does not solve the problem, but at the end it is not the answer that is important. Important is the question, our conviction that art plays an undoubtedly important role in the political and historic events and that every time something important happens in politics it is not only legitimate but also heuristically important to ask ourselves: And what did art have to do with this?

At this we react with the logic that continues to operate in opposition to the facts. For example, let's take our traditional media. In them the section 'culture and art' is still strictly separated from the sections intended for politics or economy. In this view the traditional media (printed or electronic) still keep to the classic – let's say Webber's – concept of modernity, in which culture and art form an autonomous or semi-autonomous social sphere, separated from the sphere of the practical mind or the spheres of religion or politics. In this view the post-modern brings forth a radical change: the borders between the aforementioned autonomous spheres of society are disappearing ever faster in a way that leads to expansion. Frederic Jameson talks about an explosion of culture into all other spheres of social life. In a certain way everything from economy, politics, religion to anything else is becoming culture.

This weakens the foundations, even though it does not completely destroy the old idea according to which artistic or cultural production is a sort of specialised activity and as such belongs amongst the higher forms of social reproduction. Of course, this deals with the tradition of classical, bourgeois high culture. The old division onto high and the so-called mass culture is also slowly disappearing. Thus the tension between the normative superiority of the high culture, which is supposed to be the guardian of humanistic heritage and the defender from the 'barbarism' of the true reality is on the decrease. The demand for the autonomy of culture and art is losing its social and critical force as well as its progressive meaning. Not only this, it can also change into the motto of the opposite, today we could even say the right wing popular mobilisation. In February 2001 the neo-nazis marched through Hamburg. In their hands they were carrying

banners, which read 'Right wing rock for all' and 'Right wing radical music for all and everywhere'. With this the right wing radicals rebelled against the official ban of racist and neo-nazi concerts across the German countryside with an assault on the urban cultural scene. All of this was performed under the slogan of 'artistic freedom'.

When they stopped functioning as an autonomous sphere, culture and art did not lose their social character. On the contrary. Their power of influencing society increased dramatically. At least on the left wing political scene, upon which the issue of cultural hegemony became the decisive issue of social dominance or resistance to this dominance. The battle in culture (Kulturkampf) became a recognisable form of the left wing political engagement. Today the radical social change on the left end of the political spectrum can be understood as a change of the hegemonic – i.e. in the broadest possible meaning cultural – structure of society. This is therefore, in the most general sense, the historic cultural context in which the aforementioned Austrian case took place. The case on the basis of which we will discuss the current relation between art and politics.

But first I would like to say a few words on what took place (politically) in Austria. We are talking about the time following the Austrian parliamentary elections in the beginning of October 1999, or since February 2000, when the new Austrian government led by Chancellor Helmut Schüssel took over. To round up the story as fast as possible, this government fell last autumn, the result of which were the new elections and at the moment of writing this it is still not certain in what sort of a coalition the new Austrian government will be sworn in. What has thus happened in the Austrian politics two years ago? What alarmed the Austrian as well as the broader, European and global public? Under the leadership of the right wing populist leader Jörg Haider the Liberal Party (FPÖ) received 27% of the votes (with which it also overtook ÖVP, the party of nationalists, the representative of the so-called bourgeois-conservative block by a few hundred votes). With this FPÖ became the second largest political force in Austria and soon entered the new coalition government of Chancellor Schüssel.

Why did this (as we have already mentioned) shock not only the Austrian, but also the broader, global public? Because with today's idea of liberal democracy we quietly understand some sort of a central option of government, a government of a balanced majority of citizens, which still has its moderate left and right, conservative wing, but these two are more or less merely two nuances of the same. These two wings or nuances are constantly changing their positions in power. However, while performing this nothing really changes and they do not question the basic issues of democracy, the world of civil normality or stability. It is of key importance for the preservation of this democratic concept that it permanently excludes or better stated marginalises the so-called radical left and right

wing options, which are pushed to the boarder of the political sphere and in the majority of cases excluded from parliamentary policy. In the event that they are present, they have a minor influence on the major decisions and the formation of the official policy.

This is what brought the shock on. The power was taken over by the radical right wing, a party that was until then a mainly marginalised political force in the civil democratic normality. Of course this was Heider's party, which formed its political programme on racist slogans, aimed predominantly at foreigners as well as the spread of the EU towards the East. This is a party, which is in the sense of political tradition (even though more implicitly, with single meaning and obvious allusions, as well as explicitly) represented the so-called *deutchnationale* (German national) forces that have political and ideological roots in German nazism. Thus, it is an explosive mixture of contemporary cultural racism (hate of foreigners), nazi-fascist nostalgia and neo-liberal deregulation. In the centre of Heider's populist propaganda is the so-called small person, the social resentment of whom is the main source of the mobilisation energy of the liberals. In the centre of democratic Europe such a party thus became a key factor in the parliamentary life of an EU member state. It became the representative of almost one third of the population within this country.

The reaction of Europe was also radical as regards its democratic conditions: Austria was hit by EU sanctions.

On the domestic, Austrian political scene the new parliamentary opposition did not have sufficient strength to organise a rebellion against the new government. The socialists were overcome by the feeling of defeat or brake up, while the greens did not present a decisive political force. The reaction of the so-called left democratic public was much stronger, for it felt deserted and without any political representative. This public took upon itself almost all protest activities or as it was said and still is said in Austria *Wiederstand*, i.e. not only the resistance against the inaugurated black-blue government of Chancellor Schüssel, but also against the entire political condition, which lead to such an occurrence. In this political context an open mobilisation of the cultural and artistic scene took place. Mass protests were organised – the largest was the mass protest on *Heldeplatz* in February 2000, at which over 200.000 people participated. They also organised *Donnerstagedemonstration* – Thursday demonstrations, which took place in Vienna every Thursday until the government fell last autumn. Apart from this they also organised a series of interventions on the cultural and public scene, which were inspired or performed by artists or people, who are active on the artistic scene: curators, critics, intellectuals, etc. This was also a generation protest – predominantly it was carried out by the young, many of them too young to officially vote.

The carriers of the resistance defined themselves, their role and the social basis of the protest as the civil society. This was performed through the slogan *The rebellion of the civil society* (*Aufstand der Zivilgesellschaft*). To this extent they have foreseen the artistic intervention into politics as a kind of political mobilisation of the civil society. At the same time the idea of civil society was also the social and political framework for the intervention carried out by artists. The protest – as much as it was reflected – did not focus on the current situation, Heider, nor the desire for power shown by Schüssel's nationalists. Instead it focused on the structural problems of the existing democracy.

Predominantly their democracy was distancing itself from the political structures, party bureaucracies, from the masses and the interests of the citizens. Most people had a feeling that they no longer have any influence on the political decisions. For a long time the de-politicisation of the masses paralysed all attempts for changes and at the end it endangered democracy itself. In this sense we can describe one of the main goals of the artist's interventions into the political and social reality as re-politicisation, as a seemingly ideologically neutral awakening of the interest for politics – of course – within the frame of a civil society. Their goal was not the establishment of new political parties or revolutionary action, but the reanimation of the existing democracy. The main goal of the intervention was to offer democracy a new life. The majority part of the cultural/artistic actions and initiatives was in the function of this re-politicisation of the civil society. The other important theme of the resistance is racism or the current policy towards migrants and foreign workers. In this battle the Austrian cultural artistic scene joined the general trend of re-politicisation, which was started in the German speaking area art in the 1990's. The reaction of artists towards the increase of racism within society was marked by artistic and political engagement also in Austria.

In the beginning of the 1990's the so-called *Wohlfahrtsausschüsse* (social councils, committees) were organised in Hamburg, Köln, Frankfurt and Munich. Within these committees links were created between musicians, artists and writers on one hand and classical autonomous anti-fascist and university activist left wing groups on the other. The common goal was the resistance against neo-nationalism and racism that flourished in Germany following the fall of the Berlin Wall, i.e. after the reunification of Germany. This joint anti-fascist initiative of artists and activists also had a long-term goal, which was to cross the boarder, which has until then divided the numerous formations of left wing groups, i.e. the boarder between culture and politics. This resulted in the co-operation between the works of the so-called political left wing and the works of the pop or cultural left wing. In the years that followed one could witness a general crossover of critical authors in the fields of music, politics, art and theory. As stated by Holger Kube Ventura (*Politische Kunstbegriffe*, Selene, Vienna, 2002) this crossover could also be understood as a type of a new left wing movement. Initiatives like this were the formation ground for newspapers like *Texste zur Kunst*, *Die Beute*, *Springer* as well as a few years of *Spex*, projects such as for instance the Köln *Friesenwall*, the Zurich *Shedhalle*, the Viennese *Depot*, *Kunstlerhaus Stuttgart* or the Munich *Kunstverein* as well as the events and meetings like for instance *Rahmenprogram*, the Köln *Unfair 1992*, Munich *Sommerakademie 94*, Lünenberg *Service-Projekt*, Köln *Messe2ok 1995*, Berlin *Minus-Messe96* or the *Hybrid-Workspace* within the frame of *Documenta 10*.

In his analysis Kube Ventura defined three types of this new politicised art: the first is information art (*Informationskunst*, a term coined by Jochen Becker). This consists of projects that contextualise and thus reveal official discourses trying to establish some sort of a counter-public (*Gegenöffentlichkeit*). At this, this is not so much of a protest, which would point towards the poor state of the society and blame those who are responsible for this state, but more a critical analysis of the state or processing it in illustrations, multimedia displays, photographs, videos, interviews, etc.

The second type of politicisation is represented by intervention art (Interventionkunst). By this we have in mind projects that are targeted towards limited period tasks or even unlimited structural changes outside of art institutions. Such initiatives reach from Clegg's and Guttman's 'Open library' (Offener Bibliothek) to the spectacular projects by the action theatre of Christoph Schlingensiefel and numerous very concrete social interventions of the Viennese WochenKlausur. The third in the row is the Hamburg civil initiative 'Park Fiction'. With the help of artists and lobbying the responsible for culture they succeeded in preventing any construction on the plot in St. Paul, while at the same time also forcing the local government not only to approve of a new park on that location but also of including the surrounding inhabitants to participate in the planning. Kube Ventura summarised the common point of all of these projects: In this process of re-politicisation an artistic workshop is not seen as a closed fortress, which has to be conquered or even boycotted, but as a workshop full of working possibilities. Artistic or exhibition spaces are used in the sense of information, intervention or impulse potentials from three reasons: to allegorically articulate the political position, reach the circles outside the artistic ones and to come across production means. At all this the aesthetic criteria is of course in second plan.

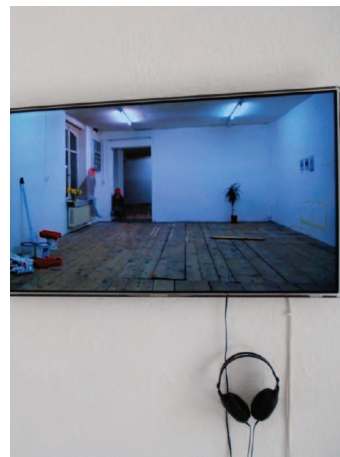
To the best extent this diagnose of re-politicised art can be used also for the Austrian case. For example, let's take the resistance against racism, which is a typical theme of the Austrian intervention artists and political activists. At this we should keep in mind that it was the very same racism or to be more exact its political mobilisation that brought Heider his political success. On the basis of the anti-racist initiative Gettoattack, which co-operated at the mobilisation of the civil society against the so-called black and blue government (in Austria black is the colour of the nationalists and blue is the colour of Heider's liberals) a new initiative arose in spring 2001 (prior to the municipal elections in Vienna). This initiative was the so-called Wiener Wahlpartie (a word game with the word partie, which suggests a political party, but in the Viennese slang it actually means a small group: The small Viennese election group). What was it all about? In Vienna there are about 200.000 inhabitants who can not participate in the elections because they are foreigners. The Wiener Wahlpartie initiative pointed to this fact and opened the problem of politicisation of migrants and the restrictions of this politicisation. The form chosen by the initiative was public imitation – and at the same time ridicule – of the election meetings in the streets and squares of Vienna, i.e. a sort of parody of the election campaign. In the conceptual sense its main purpose was to show the contradiction, which is hidden in the core of the democratic concept based on the sovereignty of the national state – the contradiction that a part of the society is excluded from the public life. However, this democratic initiative does by no means wish to enlarge this contradiction, which could lead to new social conflicts. On the contrary, the protagonists of this initiative optimistically explain their action as one of the moments of the democracy revitalisation. Their logic works in the following way: by appearing in the visual field the foreigners step out of political darkness and expand the political visual field, i.e. they open a new political horizon. Their incapability to establish a political party is substituted by the simulation of a party or the party struggle, agitation, election campaign, etc. This play with the form of a political party does not fit merely the contents or the situation, but also reveals what every political party is, i.e. a political

party without the party apparatus is nothing but a form of action. Thus foreigners, or the activist initiative, which politically represents them, not only equal citizens from some country, but also politically contribute to the depth and revitalisation of the existing democracy. This is performed without any conflicts, without undermining one of the basic concepts of this democracy, the concept of the national state.

Thus also the aforementioned contradiction of the realistically existing democracy – the contradiction the main symptom of which is the incapability of foreigners to co-operate in the political life of a nation – disappears from the field of sight. In fact the play with the form of a political party hides its forced character. Foreigners can only play that they are establishing a political party, in reality they can not do this. This game is an expression of the realistic incapability. Even more: those who can not co-operate in the political party life of the state in which they live in, who are realistically excluded from it are thus defined as politically more authentic than the citizens of this state and their political parties. If we ideologically had to take over the range of all these cultural and artistic initiatives in the political life of Austria, then we would have to say that this is mainly a concept of the so-called left wing patriotism. In the end the intervention of culture and art into politics had one single goal – to dominate in a national state. And it did not realise this political goal. Its realistic influence upon the political reality in Austria remains insignificant.

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**Exchange of Students and Lecturers from World of Art,  
Ljubljana and Postgraduate Programme in Curating, Zurich  
Part II – Zurich, April 18–21, 2012**



In the Relax studio, 18.04.2012  
At Hauser & Wirth, 18.04.2012  
At Haus Konstruktiv, 18.04.2012  
In BINZ39, 21.04.2012  
Photos by Jasna Jernejšek

# IN BETWEEN: INDEPENDENCE AND THE LURES OF INSTITUTIONALISATION

WHW

As an independent curators' collective WHW acts within the sliding area negotiated between different models of non-formal institutions. It is a creative group, an organisational team and an 'institutionalised friendship'. It is based on activism and it includes different partners and initiatives in its activities. Our actions are based on a synergy that appropriates and redefines the various representation models and systems in which they coexist. In order to explain our present situation, best described as a transitional state, between an independent position and institutionalisation, it is necessary to describe some circumstances under which WHW started to work as well as the dynamics of the cultural scene.

The independent cultural scene has been identified with alternative culture already for decades. In regard to cultural production, the term 'alternative' is usually linked to notions such as non-art, anti-art, avant-garde, neo-avant-garde, contra-culture, i.e. to what is different in form and content, progressive, radical, gets out of the mainstream and opposes the establishment (the traditional high culture that is generally bourgeois). But in today's circumstances of culturalising everything, in a situation when every 'avant-garde' or 'subversive' act is immediately absorbed as a fashion, exclusively cultural and temporary alternative, there is no alternative culture. Alternative culture existed only when there were alternative ideas on social order, ideas of alternative politics. To put it bluntly, alternative culture is to be articulated only alongside politics that articulate an alternative to the existing capitalism. Following the heroic period of alternative cultural movements in ex-Yugoslavia during the 1970's and 80's, contemporary visual culture become significantly active once again in the late 90's. Already on the visual art scene itself there is a generally evident reaffirmation of local conceptual practice, which is connected to the simultaneous breakthrough that this particular practice achieved on the international scene during the late nineties. Generally speaking, the contemporary art scene became active within the civil scene, capitalising on the knowledge and especially on the know-how developed during this period within a very dynamic and independent civil scene. Contemporary art is gradually positioning itself as an attractive media material and a vital space for the articulation of social frustrations and antagonisms, as well as a fertile ground for social experiments. In the current situation the cultural and artistic production can still be an alternative, not by virtue of its new, different, unusual forms or ways of expression, but exclusively in a political sense.

Obviously, our interventions in the cultural scene, although based on such belief, have no illusions about its potentials to totally articulate the political alternatives. Instead, they aim to introduce the themes we consider socially relevant (and are continuously ignored by the mainstream cultural production, academia and national intelligentsia) into the public discourse. In the present moment of time it seems as if culture is the only field that contains a political struggle. All WHW projects are based on the belief that contemporary art is capable of

articulating, mediating and introducing social themes to the wider public. A realm of visual arts is conceived as a catalyst to the relevant issues and social antagonisms that can offer new models of collectivity, exchange and active participation of the audience. In these terms, WHW does not act as an isolated phenomenon on the local scene, but rather as an active part of the recent local independent cultural initiatives (Multi-media Institute mi2, Attack, Močvara, Art Workshop Lazareti, Urban Festival, Center for Drama Arts, Platforma 9.81, etc.). Since the very beginning of WHW activities, collaboration, collectivity and establishing links with different subjects was an important work model as well as a conscious strategy of working in the public sphere that became increasingly elaborate and took over a form of long-term synergies. These various models of collaboration evolved into the most important aspect of the WHW work, as well as into an important strategy of presenting specific topics and an effort of developing parallel cultural policies.

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As a curators' collective WHW started to collaborate for the exhibition *What, How & for Whom, on the occasion of 152nd anniversary of Communist Manifesto* in 1999. This was the time when the Croatian version of the democratic 'revolution' had been finalised with the triumph of capital and the rediscovery of the market economy as a tool of resource distribution. What, how and for whom, are the three basic questions of every economic organisation – which are operative in almost all segments of life. What – represents the problem how

many of the possible goods and services will be produced with limited resources and social input, how – represents the choice of certain technology according to which each good, chosen by answering the question what, will be produced, and the question – for whom concerns the distribution of goods amongst the society members. These questions presented an issue in the planning, concept and realisation of *What, How & for Whom, on the occasion of 152nd anniversary of Communist Manifesto* exhibition, and generally they also mark all future WHW projects and activities. The impetus for our first project was the fact that Arkzin republished Marx's Communist Manifesto with an introduction by Slavoj Žižek. The book was published on its 150th anniversary, which went by almost unnoticed thus we wanted to see how the art scene could respond to this challenge. The need to question our 'communist' past was a result of the dominant cultural politics in Croatia in the 90's, in which insufficient intellectual contextualisation disabled any serious reflection of both, the immediate communist past as well as the present 'transitional' moment. We were interested in discovering what the Manifesto as a political concept, a philosophical text, a cultural fact and a synecdoche of a social system might represent today. We also wished to discover what issues does it open following the breakdown of true Communist enterprises. Our findings were that the economic analysis and descriptions of capital in operation are currently at their most relevant. The exhibition did not aspire to shape an image on the subject of communism as an ideology, political regime or utopian endeavour.

Facing the recent production of artists who emerged on the Croatian art scene in the late 80's (a period of rapid deterioration of the socialist regime) with artists who have been forming the strong current of socially engaged art since the late 60's – the exhibition stressed continuity rather than breaks. On the other hand, the exhibition established an international context for local art production, which was lacking significantly during the last decade. The Manifesto was not the subject of the exhibition, but a strong trigger to develop an international context for local art production and revitalise the visual art scene by producing new works by Croatian artists. It also served as a trigger to initiate a public debate on the issues of recent history. The exhibition was first shown in Zagreb in June 2000 in the Home of Croatian Association of Artists, then in Vienna in 2001 in the Kunsthalle Exnergasse and we are hoping to show a modified version in Amsterdam in 2005.

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*Broadcasting project, dedicated to Nikola Tesla* aimed to continue the discussion started by the What, How and For Whom exhibition on arts and economy, i.e. it tried to explore the issues of economical/political interests that prevent full realisation of the democratic potentials of new technologies. It was organised in co-operation with Arkzin publishing house, Multimedia Institute mi2 and the Technical Museum in Zagreb.

In the *Broadcasting Project*, the questions what, how and for whom related to media: what is distributed by the media, how is it done in regard to the technological conditions, tactics and strategies, and for whom, – who is the public of the mass media models of communication and what are the alternatives. In general, communication and mediation were questioned as a project background. On the practical level the presentation of the project in the mass media and public space was carefully planned in advance, in order not only to increase the audience, but to make it react more actively. By presenting art projects in electronic broadcasting media, as well as works that question the conditions of communication in general, the *Broadcasting Project* functioned as a field of social experiments trying to offer a platform for a new definition of the public, social and political role of the media. It was conceived as a long-term series of cultural events that question the social and artistic implications of broadcast media from different perspectives. In the following months the project had been developed in collaboration with the Technical Museum, the Third program of Croatian National Radio and Radio Student as an international contemporary exhibition and series of radio broadcasts and interventions. In the same period, in collaboration with the cultural magazine *Zarez*, two supplements dedicated to the *Broadcasting Project* presented project contributors and in a certain way 'documented' the project development. The project was dedicated to Nikola Tesla (1856–1943), a Serb from Croatia who died as an American citizen, an eccentric, charismatic personality who invented over 800 patents and laid the theoretical ground for the development of radio, radar, satellites, electronic microscope, microwave, fluorescent bulb, etc. Once more, our intention was not to create a closed 'illustrative' exhibition or to focus exclusively on the biographical references of this charismatic legend. Instead, we wanted to open space for interaction and exchange of information, and at the same time encourage artists to utilise in-situ installations and projects with space-visual-audio elements exploring the experience of body movement and physical action in technologically redefined conditions of post-information time. *The Broadcasting*

*Project* was aimed at negotiating the intersection between the realm of broadcast as a medium that disseminates via telecommunications, and the metaphorical surpluses spreading from visions of universal energy transmission, left over when the broadcast is translated into Croatian.

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During the past several years the position of WHW gradually changed and evolved. Until summer 2003 WHW operated without a permanent exhibition space, however since then it has been running the program of Gallery Nova (in collaboration with the publishing house AGM).

The Nova Gallery is a non-profit city owned gallery in the centre of Zagreb and we try to structure its program using the WHW project strategies, conceiving it as a platform for discussing relevant social issues through art, theory and media, as well as a model of collaboration and exchange of knowledge between cultural organisations from different backgrounds. In the mid 1970's the Gallery Nova was one of the most active spots of the Zagreb visual arts scene. It was open towards radical, avant-garde, unconventional and often marginalised art practices that were characteristic of the young generation of artists, whose protagonists still have an important influence on the development of the new Croatian art scene. WHW refers to precisely this period in the Gallery Nova history, and the new program concept brings a wide array of new activities into the customary exhibition and gallery practice.

Alongside producing and presenting contemporary visual arts, the gallery also focuses on establishing links between the visual culture and other forms of cultural production with the civil, activist, and NGO scene. Besides exhibitions, the program is characterised by a series of events that are designed to turn the gallery

into a vivid cultural centre, and includes concerts, performances, film screenings, lectures and public discussions. It tries to fill in the gaps in the local cultural scene acting at the intersection of popular, high and alternative culture in differentiated models that enable the investigation of representational strategies, exhibiting forms and actions within a public space. The Gallery Nova is a vivid and active space that predominantly targets young audiences, using its non-hierarchical structure and organisational flexibility towards fostering different innovative cultural collaboration practices, promoting contemporary media and a socially conscious and educationally involved cultural production. Besides the international exhibition program, an important aspect of our work is the continuous collaboration with the youngest generation of Croatian artists, which WHW initiated with the *START* exhibition (City Art Gallery Ljubljana 2002; Karas Gallery, Zagreb 2003). The artist belonging to the youngest generation still work without a sufficient institutional framework, with a strong tendency of polarisation between the 'capital' and the 'provinces,' mostly very traditional educational models, non/existence of any regulated art market, lack of professional publications, critical acclaim, systems of support and financing. In this respect, a significant part of the Gallery Nova program is a series of *START* solo exhibitions, the goal of which is to establish professional standards of work for young artists and at the same time, through a series of accompanying events, establish a platform for a critical evaluation of their work. The program is establishing collaboration with the young generation of curators and is also trying to stress the continuity of artistic endeavours and social themes opened in the 70's, thus continuing the traditions of local conceptual and socially conscious art practices. In the end, the question is

if one can radically change the basic conditions of seeing/appreciating artwork, examine the political potential of the art and its ability not only to identify new and sensitive themes in a wider social context, but also to offer new modalities of resistance and collectivism. In this respect, the Gallery Nova is perceived as a public urban space of social visibility, intensive circulation, space for showing things, passing through, spending time, interacting, exposing conflicts, etc.

One of our recent exhibitions was *Side-Effects* which was exhibited in the Salon of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade. This exhibition presented works by EGOBOO. bits, Felix Gmelin, Igor Grubić, Sharon Hayes, Vlatka Horvat, Kristian Kožul, Andreja Kulunčić, Aydan Murtezaoglu, Serkan Ozkaya, Kirsten Pieroth, Bulent Sangar, Marko Tadić, and VERSION. *Side-Effects* took place within the context of *In the Cities of the Balkans*, which is the 2nd part of the *Balkans Trilogy*. This project was initiated by the Kassel Kunsthalle Fridericianum. *Side-Effects* is a good and illustrative example of the indirect links that WHW creates amongst various projects that take place outside and inside the gallery. The exhibition presented works that deal with a broad spectrum of issues that can be read in various contexts. However, at the same time, all of them dealt with certain unavoidable conflicts within the 'transition' towards liberal capitalism, the side effects of which are class divisions, an increase in unemployment and crime, cultural and spiritual impoverishment, lack of imagination, solidarity, safety, indifference, and lethargy. *Side-Effects* offers a conceptual frame, a certain standpoint from which the presented works can be understood against a background of lost illusions within the solutions offered by the 'normalisation' process and its idea of a gradual approach towards the imagined ideal of liberal democracy and a free market, while at the same leaving an open dialogue between the artistic and curatorial position.

In a certain non-committed way, the exhibition is the third in a series of recent exhibitions prepared by the WHW curators' collective. It is not the same exhibition in three versions, but rather a process in which the same traumatic core is questioned in different ways. This series of exhibitions might be seen as a kind of dialectical triad in which the thesis is represented by the exhibition *Looking Awry* (apexart, New York, 2003), which includes works by Igor Grubić, Aydan Murtezaoglu, Adrian Paci and Maja Bajević. Starting from Žižek's interpretation of a Shakespeare's quote from Richard III, the exhibition is based on the impossibility of grasping the truth through a direct gaze. In this sense Marx's demand to 'look at the world with sober eyes' demands exactly that 'awry' look, which might also be understood as a look from the social margins. The exhibition *Repetition: Pride and Prejudice* (Gallery Nova, Zagreb, 2003/2004) presenting works by Sharon Hayes, Pierre Huyghe, Sanja Iveković, Aydan Murtezaoglu, Anri Sala and Andreas Siekmann, functioned as an antithesis: we cannot reach directly for the truth and that is why we keep repeating the traumatic event. That repetition is not a consequence of some 'objective necessity' independent of our desires, but it functions as a political option, as a payment of a symbolic debt, a gesture of repeated inclusion and symbolic appropriation. 'Pride and prejudice' in the title are not separate themes, a positive and negative feature, but they point towards their inter-relatedness – and just like pride emerges solely from the perspective of a certain prejudice, prejudice is a product of the gaze of arrogant pride. If

we wish to spare ourselves the painful way around false recognition, we will miss the entire truth. In this dialectical triad *Side-Effects* is a kind of a synthesis, a negation of a negation.

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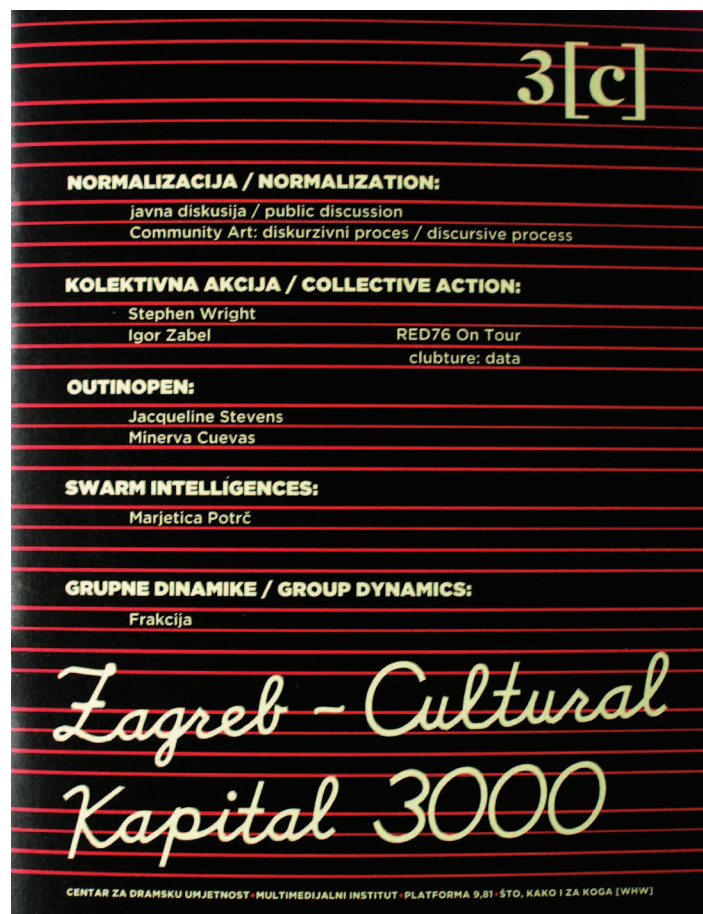
Currently, the most ambitious long-term project in which WHW is involved is the Zagreb Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000. This is a collaborative platform initiated by four independent cultural organisations in Croatia – Centre for Drama Art (performing arts), Multimedia Institute mi2 (new media), Platforma 9,81 (architecture and media) and What, How and for Whom (visual culture). Throughout a three-year period (2004–2006) the project will develop a manifold of collaborative practices within the local and international cultural scene and thus draw attention to the inadequacy of the dominant cultural models to meet the challenges in a changed cultural action setting. This new setting comes as a consequence of the acceleration of globalised communication exchanges, transversality of capital and the attendant ubiquity of economic globalisation. Contrary to these dynamic processes the cultural field remains largely limited within the confines of the representative cultural models, its inefficient institutional framework, without sufficient dynamic collaboration strategies and almost without any (and increasingly smaller) social relevance. As its goal CK3000 has set to react (in the local context of cultural production) to this (primarily European) situation by offering to the broader local and international cultural public an action model which will (on the level of methodology as well as on the level of issues) deal with the dynamics of transforming the cultural field, which are significantly marked by the ambiguity of the notion of capital (as in cultural capital city, socio-cultural

capital and economic capital). The initial strategic partners of the Cultural Kapital 3000 are Project Relations from Berlin (a project initiated by the German Federal Cultural Foundation with an agenda to promote cultural collaboration in Eastern Europe) and Erste Bank from Vienna which supports the creation of various cultural platforms in Central European countries in which it does business. By choosing contemporary agendas, such as the relation between public and private, status of public spaces, capital in the physical space, intellectual property and digital technologies, copyright and alternative licensing systems, hybrid information in physical space, artist groups and collective labour, collective intelligence, labour management and immaterial labour, the Cultural Kapital 3000 project will form a complementary and coherent set of cultural issues which are of great social relevance and thus promote the importance of cultural action as a significant element in the development of the public and social capital in a neo-liberal transitional context. Cultural Kapital 3000 will promote practices and actors articulating cultural actions in terms of a social agency and a social agency in terms of a critical culture. Over the next two years, Cultural Kapital 3000 will produce a number of local and international interdisciplinary collaborations, which will present and engage new group dynamics, new collective strategies and new forms of labour within the cultural production. These collaborations will counteract and hybridise the control of productivity through intellectual property, advocate the protection of the public domain in face of privatisation, produce policy proposals for strengthening and developing an independent cultural sector and secure its presence in the cultural capital. It will create collaborations while investigating and inducing its conditions of possibility,

because cultural capital no longer means infrastructures, but rather collaborations, for collaboration is its infrastructure.

\*Editor's note: Following the primary informal group of authors the WHW collective (What, How and for Whom) registered itself as a non-profit, non-government organisation for visual art in 2002. The organisation is lead by Ana Dević, Nataša Ilić, Sabina Sabolović (curators), Ivet Curlin (cultural management) and Dejan Kršić (theorist and graphic designer).

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Zagreb Cultural Capital 3000, cover of a publication,  
Design by Dejan Krsic, 2004

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1 Pierre Huyghe: *The Third Memory; Repetition, Pride & Prejudice*, Gallery Nova, 2003/2004

2 *Repetition, Pride & Prejudice*, exhibition publication, design by: Dejan Kršić

3 Sanja Iveković: *Secondhand Utopia Shop; Repetition, Pride & Prejudice*, Gallery Nova, 2003/2004

4 *Side-effects*, Gallery Nova, 2004

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# THE MERITS OF INCOMPETENCE

**Charles Harrison**

A current discussion about art tends to be inflected by the idea of the global, by the idea of the post-modern, and by various forms of connection between the two. There is a widespread tendency to conceive the global as modern, progressive and dynamic. The global is thus given a positive cultural value coinciding with the value it is given in the expansionist rhetoric of multinational companies. Where the global is associated with the post-modern, the implication is that global culture is more modern than modernism itself. On the face of it, it might seem somewhat contradictory to reject the values of modernism in favour of the new. So what is it that we are supposed to have finished with? What do we now understand by modernism?

In general, modernism stands for a certain relationship between socio-economic reality and cultural forms; a relationship in which the tendencies of the latter are supposed to maintain some critical autonomy with respect to the former. The pessimistic view of modernism, as articulated for instance by the American sociologist Daniel Bell, is that modernism encourages divergence, dissent and non-conformism, and that it is productive of conflict. As the French students boasted in 1968, 'Nous sommes tous undésirables'. The model students of the post-modern age, however, are supposed to respect the differences of others as much as they assert their own. 'We are all citizens of the world', is their cry.

There have been two principal concepts of modernism in art. The first form of modernism stands for belief in the autonomy of art and in the aesthetic as an absolute value, distinct from the social. The English writer Clive Bell was representative of early modernist theorists. He believed that all works of art were united by their 'significant form' and by their ability to arouse emotion in the spectator. From this perspective, the differences attributable to different conditions of production seemed of less importance than the aesthetic properties that works of art have in common. As to artists, Bell believed that there was no point in trying to conceive them as social beings, for they were 'the salt of the earth'. Between the wars abstract art was conceived within the modernist tradition as a form of ideal planning from above: an utopian model for a better world. However, after 1939 it ceased to be possible to associate the ideal with any form of social order. In the second – American – phase of abstract art, the work of art was conceived rather as the model for an ideal personal relationship; a kind of all-absorbing equivalent for other people.

However there is a price to be paid for keeping the rest of the world at bay. As thus conceived, the work of art required increasingly specialised conditions of display and encounter if its integrity was to be preserved. By the 1960s it seemed that there was a tendency for modernist art to impose a kind of disregard for the social order. It had become specialised, professional and competent – at least as represented in the discourse which accompanied it. The Conceptual Art movement may be seen as a reaction against this tendency and this discourse. It was aggressively unprofessional, irresponsible and incompetent. It said, 'We don't know what is aesthetic', and 'There are no universal values'. In the most radical elements of the movement, the competencies of painting and sculpture were

deliberately abandoned or frustrated, and the practice of art was recast as a task of learning, discussing and writing – a project to re-view modernism from outside its own framework of ideas and beliefs. The history of modern art itself was recast in the process. This led to a second, revisionist, form of modernism.

In this second form, modernism stands for the critical and oppositional tendency in modern culture, and for the constant revision of concepts of the aesthetic. The origins of modernism as thus conceived lie in an avant-garde break with the values of bourgeois art and culture, initiated in the mid-nineteenth century. The art in question aspires to reflect those truths which normal bourgeois consciousness seeks to conceal from itself. Its tactic is to render its non self-critical spectators incompetent – though at the risk of being condemned as incompetent itself. Thus Cézanne was dismissed as an incompetent in the 1880s. Now, however, we see his art as the very standard of modernist competence, and the work of his Salon detractors as morally incompetent – lacking in taste. Cézanne's inability to paint like the Salon painters – whatever its causes – appears as a virtue. A conservative sophistication is shown up by the critical 'innocence' of the 'primitive'.

During the twentieth century the association of modernism with the critique of sophistication meant that modernist styles were increasingly distinguished from naturalist and realist modes of picturing. In the post-war period critical modernism stood apparently opposed to a doctrinaire realism. In fact the contrast was misleading. On the one hand the title of 'realist' was applied with increasing inappropriateness to merely conservative forms of figuration. On the other the critical power of modernist art was diminished to the extent that it became established as a culture in its own right. This circumstance of misleading contrast was ironically represented in *Art & Language's Portraits of V.I. Lenin in the Style of Jackson Pollock of 1980*.

One sign of the supposedly post-modern is the executive reconciliation of modernism and realism, west and east; the idea of a global culture again. In the work of Feng Mengbo (as shown at Documenta X in 1997), clips of Chinese Socialist Realist film are incorporated into high-tech videos displaying typically modernist formal devices. In the post-modern world, the global technology of electronic communication reigns supreme. The video screen brings 'original art' direct into (almost) every home. The late-'60s photos of political violence on the streets now look curiously old-fashioned, local and 'modern'. We say 'there was a little local difficulty'. Harmony is global. Yet beneath the streets, or above them, there are still those who keep watch for signs of trouble, on screens where there is no art to be seen. And trouble is made by incompetents.

In fact, if art is global, it is not by virtue of its engagement with the technology of the day, or even with the 'issues' of the day, but because it touches what touches us all and defines us as human. From the noisy world of *Documenta X* – the first truly 'global' Documenta – two images stick in the mind. The first is from Gerhard Richter's *Atlas*: the image of a candle, its flame blowing in the wind – the simplest of images for the fragility of life, yet still somehow affecting in the hands of an artist

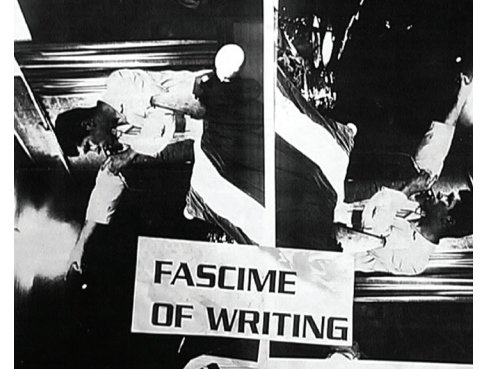
confident of his means. The second is a painting showing the open spread of a printed book, from Art & Language's installation *Sighs Trapped by Liars* – an image which reanimates the centuries-old dialectic between looking and reading, pictures and words. These images are made of everyday materials, yet as images they are given the power to touch us as though for the first time. They bespeak that form of resolution without which art cannot persist: trust in the potential of a medium.

Art must embody some form of resistance to the dominant regimes of the culture – some form of incompetence. It cannot be good unless it does. This is a basic tenet of modernism. Does it follow that it is an outdated notion? Does it no longer hold true in the post-modern world? Or is the idea of the post-modern, like the idea of the global, no more than a return to the earlier, discredited version of modernism, in which all differences were overcome in the eyes of the global aesthete-cum-consumer?

First published: Charles Harrison, 'The Merits of Incompetence', *Geopolitics and Art, The World of Art Anthology* (ed. Saša Glavan (Nabergoj)), Ljubljana, 1999, pp.10-11.

# A CONVERSATION WITH MIKE HENTZ

Eda Čufer



Mike Hentz, Stills from video lecture *Translation*, Škuc Gallery, 2001.

*Your work is a complex system and it is hard to introduce it in a few words. I suggest that we start with a concrete project. For instance, what are we dealing with at the Stone project, which is a sort of work in progress and has been going on from the beginning of the 1980's onwards?*

The Stone project is all about transporting a large, five and a half tonnes heavy stone on top of a lorry. We traveled through various countries and cultures and we have been to countries like Iran, India, Italy and so on. We work in a group called Minus Delta t, which always consists of a group of between three to five people.

*How did you manage to cross all of these country borders with such a large stone?*

Each border was a performance in its own right. Sometimes it took us a few days to arrange for them to let us through.

*Where did you get this stone?*

We excavated it in Western England for we wanted it to have a symbolic meaning. If we excavated the stone in Italy, it would be connected to the Roman culture. Our stone has a sort of connection to the Celtic culture, which was the oldest in Europe. At the same time the stone presents unworked material, a free space, which can accept various meaning projections and various symbolisations. For instance, the Catholics project the concept of 'peace' into it. However, in Pakistan the situation is different and there are also other projections and symbolisations. That is what we were interested in. The stone was consecrated by the Pope of the Roman-Catholic church himself.

*How did you manage to reach the Pope?*

That was very difficult. We had to visit the Jesuits, have dinner with nuns, and in the end we were helped by a Polish journalist, who was connected to the inner circle of the Vatican. In Iran we wanted to meet Homeini. We were accompanied by the revolutionary guards for three weeks and we attended numerous meetings, but in the end we failed.

*In India you left the stone in the Ganges river.*

Yes, for a few years, then we took it out of the river and continued our journey with it.

*And where is the stone now?*

In New Delhi. We wanted to take it to China, but this was not possible at the time. However, I think we will manage to do this in the next two or three years.

*Your projects differ to a great extent. On one side you operate on a very individual basis or within the frame of proliferated groups, and on the other hand you dedicate a lot of your time to projects dealing with organisational models and the logistics of networks upon which the cultural models of the new media are based. How do you perceive projects such as Van Gogh TV, Piazza Virtuale and others?*

I am interested in processes through which ideas and concepts become real and cease to remain merely on a symbolic level. In order for things to become real you need a certain will, discipline and organisational effort to carry them out. On this level we can truly distinguish between individual or group projects and networks. The individual is the first unit. To be an individual means to know oneself and one's media and for many artists this is where it ends. They sign their works and that is it. The next level is the group which shares similar beliefs and taste. This is a sort of a narcissistic community, which provides a very important experience for the development of language. The third level are networks, which operate within the field of the 'other' and their metaphor is a man that meets a woman or vice versa. The 'other' and not the 'same' is the condition for the establishment of the network and a similar rule holds true also on a commercial level. Closed groups can not remain. They have to confront the 'other' i.e. the networks and these networks are based on the tradition of translating contents from one context to another. For me all of these levels are of the same value. It is my belief that an individual work of art is of no more importance than a group work of art or operation within the networks. There are more and more people who believe that individual artistic creation is anachronistic, but these are mainly people who operate within networks, because they do not have their own ideas and therefore they despise individual artists that have original ideas. For me all three levels are necessary. From here on we can develop new definitions and distinctions.

*What sort of distinctions, for example?*

I distinct between three different levels, which I have named 'school of observation', 'school of thought' and 'school of life'. The 'school of observation' is (on the level of visual art) connected with the technique. If I want to draw your portrait I have to learn how to translate your image into a drawing or painting which will reflect you, in which people will recognise you. If you want to reflect the society you must be precise in the translations of your observations into words or images. That is a thing of technique, craftsmanship. The 'school of thought' deals with the symbolic level. That is, when you, for instance choose various elements for an installation, put them together and see the symbolic context of things. A context which does not exist in reality, but only on the thought level. Modernism as well as post-modernism very clearly belong to the 'school of thought'. Everything is based on the reflection of other schools, visions, philosophies. In the 'school of life' one deals with trying to transfer certain experience from the 'school of observation' and the 'school of thought' into social or cultural practice. Most contemporary art operates merely on the journalistic level of commentating events in society. This is art that has ceased to invent, it ceased to be a vision or culture, for today's culture is created by MTV, CNN, the fashion industry. Contemporary artists do not create culture, for they are at least 40 years behind. These are three levels that for me hold the same importance as those we have mentioned at the beginning. I work on this basis. I constantly train in my 'school of observation', 'school of thought', but as my vision I want the 'school of life'. And this is not easy. The project Stone was an extremely difficult task on the 'school of life' level. Van Gogh TV maybe presented an even harder test. The entire artist and media scene accused us of selling poor quality video art.

*This is interesting, for the projects that you have been working on within the frame of Documenta 8 and '9 in 87 and '92 are a sort of pioneer achievement and have introduced a model of thought and organisation upon which today's media scene is based and which became very fashionable in the 90's. It is surprising that you have not integrated yourself into this trend.*

No, we have not, because the art system is interested only in the symbolic level, the 'school of thought'. It is not interested in practice. People who started dealing with this field after us did not want to hear about history. They wanted to be the first. *Piazza Virtuale* and *Van Gogh TV* were based on deep organisational meditation and preparation and included all elements; from television, internet, satellite communication to organised networks in Western and Eastern Europe.

*I remember the 1992 report for Piazza Virtuale from Ljubljana. Here the project was lead by Marko Košnik. In my opinion this project is gaining on value with time. This is also confirmed by the development in the years that followed.*

That is why I am not at all burdened by the issue of the historic share. The things are clear and sooner or later they will be sorted out. These projects involved too many people for them to be neglected.

*You have been working already from the second half of the 70's onwards. Does any sort of a critical reflection from outside exist, which would try to categorise your work and include it into various critical segments, with which the history of contemporary art is written?*

They have tried to use some of our things, but we mainly dealt only with production and not post-production, therefore it is harder to perform this, for we did not form our work for such type of perception and it is hard to grab hold of us and place us within the frame of a gallery, museum or a collective exhibition.

*Have you ever exhibited your projects in the form of documentation, in the form of photographic documents, plans and so on?*

Very rarely. We have our conditions under which this could be done and we are constantly arguing as regards these conditions. People usually want only photographs, images. If we wanted to exhibit documentation, we would only have to design a way to do this, but as you know post-production is just as demanding and even more expensive then production, that is why we prefer to invest the money we have available into new productions. The book on my work, which I have published, cost more than three other projects would. On the other hand, only about 10% of my production is connected to the art context. The art context is a constant battle, which allows you to realise merely 20% of what you wish to perform and all the rest is a compromise. Of course we always return to the artistic context, but most of our work is performed outside, in the music scene and other networks or completely independently in the narrower circle. Lately new generations of

art historians and critics are emerging and they are constantly visiting us because they are seeking for references for their concepts. They are especially interested in the so-called 'contextual art'. I personally have a huge problem with this term. The advocates of 'contextual art' say that the artist is of no value if he does not know how to write down his concepts. However, regardless of this, our 'media mystic' concept is gaining a new connotation with this new generation, for we have been operating with the issue of context already for decades. In the 80's we used these contexts to fight against being placed into special contexts. In the 90's there was another attempt to overcome the specialised contexts, i.e. mixing disciplines, which is of course connected to these globalisation issues and the field is therefore open to a greater extent. New tools have emerged and people have started realising that they can use anything that is at their disposal. Today's generation has a great problem with references and memory. On the other side it is very interested in power. Power is a drug for young people and they would do anything to obtain it. Power has become a 'concept'. These are the children from the 60's and 70's generation who did a lot of different things, debated things to a great extent and who are now doing something completely else or even contrary to what they used to stand for. And the children understand that their parents stated one thing and acted otherwise, therefore they are confused.

*What about your influences? At one stage you stated that Antonin Artaud or the Living Theatre are closer to you than the Situationists or Beuys.*

This is true. I do not like Beuys and in my opinion he is completely overrated. Following modernism, the art system needed Beuys to return to some frames of more direct looking. There is nothing wrong with this, but Beuys never completed a project which would really talk about direct democracy, he merely dealt with his signature. That is why I have no respect for him, he never inspired me and I do not know why people are reminded of Beuys when they see my work. His going on about group work and direct democracy is completely made up, for in reality he never tried to realise anything like that. In the context of the spirit of time he was important, because he introduced some controversies on the level of a broader discussion. The Situationists were a theoretical group and all that they have done was that they constantly argued amongst themselves. The excellent book *The Society of the Spectacle* does exist, but the movement fell apart in such a pitiful way that I can have no respect for the movement itself. The Situationists exist through the romantic view of the others, through an interpretation which arose in the 80's and 90's. At the end of the 1980's some art historians tried to connect us with the Situationists because they needed references and they did not know where to place us. On the other hand, Living Theatre was burdened with the context within which it occurred, i.e. the 1960's with its political climate. Three months ago I led a workshop on the theme 'vandalism, trance and ecstasy' and we encountered a similar problem, i.e. a boarder where the liberalisation of sexuality becomes a social and political affair. That, which was performed by the Vienna Actionists can be seen today in any backyard gallery and does not present a problem or danger anymore. Post-modernism undercut the context to these practices. Those things which were performed by the 'livings' represented an important research, but they were based on the opposition energy and on a political definition. Personally, I despise the left and the right wing and I am of the opinion that a political philosophy that I could adopt does not exist. The 'livings' were classified as left wing and this represents their historic limit. Collective rituals or collective synchronisation remained a field within which we also experimented for a number of years, but in the broader social plan what remains of this today is this 'new age' mania, in which the notion of spiritualism is connected to something completely unbearable. I can do something spiritual with a vacuum cleaner and I do not need Indian music or similar nonsense to perform this. Operating on this level was always a problem. For me Artaud was an inspiration, but he inspired me as an individual. Artaud could not synchronise himself with the society. He completed one or two works and finished in a psychiatric ward. I know a number of psychotics who write books that might be inspiring. But their mistake is that they mix the levels. Vision is not practice. You can write a vision down, but practical application demands additional effort, which belongs to a completely different level. Vision might not be anything else but a control system of what you do. To have control over oneself demands a certain type of discipline and violence. During meditation you are violent against yourself in order to control your body and lead your mind into some sort of a trance. You need to work hard on collective synchronisation. In the same way as a music group must have rehearsals. You can have an excellent violin player, however he can be of no use when placed in a group. Synchronisation of a certain vision or knowledge with others within a group or society as a whole demands extreme efforts, personal investment and work. The quality of 'the holiness' or spirituality interest me as a synchronisation of the body and mind in real time, within the frame of a certain action. This is the first base. The second base is the question how to divide this within a group.

*In order to define the procedures which you use in your work, you use very interesting labels, such as for instance the techniques 'climate', 'media mystic' and 'multilogue'. Can you explain them to us?*

'Climate' represents the atmosphere and is a methodology of work with the atmosphere. I have been dealing with this already for a number of years. 'Climate' is a procedure which deals with mise-en-scenes of reality. I form these mise-en-scenes with various elements.

*For instance?*

The technique in itself is rather complex, and it is based on expectation, therefore it is context sensitive, it depends where am I and what sort of people surround me. It takes into account the smell, temperature, time, visual design, dramaturgy, the sequence technique. This technique deals with the issue how to create a certain sequence of events and in which sequence do you build the event. It is also dependent on the type of activity. Do you use the rules or do you create the event without the rules; what sort of frame do you use, how to define the borders of the event? For instance, in the *Macro-land* (1991 Zürich; 1993 Hamburg; 1997 Vienna) project the rule or the borders were defined by how you go through the space. However, it could be something else. In Vienna in 1979 in the event *Maximal Art* and in a 72 h close up with participants, the room was full of mice and at first three of them were killed, because people did not watch where they were walking. Then they started walking more carefully. In this way the 'climate' changed. The frame influenced the people, in order for them to start walking more carefully. The 'climate' is a tool for the articulation of mise-en-scenes of reality. Maybe it is reminiscent of a performance or a play, however there are no roles or appearances which are typical for performances or plays. This is about giving people functions and responsibilities in a certain direct situation in which we are not dealing with a play, a simulation, but an event, which is real.

*We are therefore dealing with a sort of manipulation in the context of reality?*

In such cases it is normal to manipulate. Art is manipulation. Politics is manipulation. And all these debates about closing people into spaces, about using people in order to live out your fantasies are to no avail. We are all under constant pressure. I am under pressure when I am walking down the street. The cars put me under pressure. Other people manipulate with me, because I have to constantly adjust to them.

*What about 'media mystic'?*

'Media mystic' is a notion which we introduced twenty years ago and it talks about the following: if for example, I sing a song, and if I sing it for example in the Škuc gallery like I did yesterday and if I then sing the same song at a Christian meeting and then at a business conference or a rave party, this will not be the same song, even if I always sing the same song, because the frame is different on each occasion. In the beginning of the 1980's the groups in which I participated in had a problem that we were placed into various contexts, such as punk or new wave and we therefore had to deal with the techniques of demystifying the contexts. We formed projects such as for instance the Stone project, in which we purposely met with people from contexts which had very different but very clearly defined values. For instance the Pope. And even though nothing really happened in the meeting with him (he was a bit senile and we could not really talk to him) the photograph of the meeting with the Pope got a meaning, which worked all by itself. Then we met with the socialist minister Kreisky and thus we brought the same 'stone' into two such different contexts as Catholicism and Socialism. After that we also met the Rolling Stones and Mick Jagger in Paris and Mick was completely furious because he understood the 'stone' as a provocation to the Rolling Stones. But then when you gather all these various contexts together a new, neutral context emerges. Usually people move around in some closed, narrow contexts or networks. You can, for instance, be a part of the project for Metelkova, or in the network of Soros Centers for Contemporary Arts in Eastern Europe, or in a museum network, or merely in a community which gets together in pubs or clubs and whatever you do or create within one circle or network, obtains a different meaning when placed into another circle or context.

*What about 'multilogue'?*

The most simple example of a 'multilogue' is, when you are in a dialogue with eight different people over the Internet at the same time. In life we are constantly in a multilogue. However, we do not discuss this. We do not discuss what influences us, from sounds, movements in space upon which we react and which effect our reactions and behaviour. If it were extremely cold in the space where I held my lecture yesterday, the situation would be completely different, and the new situation would change my lec-



ture. And I call 'multilogue' these elements, these influences which people usually do not notice or do not take into account. A similar thing happens at 'media mystic'. The influences from the environment are of key importance and therefore I believe that 'multilogue' is something that we must learn to follow and operate within it, especially in the time of globalism, confrontation with various cultures and so on. We are in a situation of multilogue and not a dialogue. Even if you have a joint interest with somebody from a different cultural context, you have to practise in order to be able to completely realise it. This is like learning to play a musical instrument or learning a new language. 'Multilogue' must be learnt.

*You master quite a few skills. You speak a number of languages, play the violin, you are a great rhetoric, you have great skills for music, technology and so on. You say that you have six professions. How did you manage to obtain all this knowledge?*

For every new thing that you want to learn, from speech articulation, singing, painting, video, sound and electronic techniques and so on, you need a few years to really master them. As you have mentioned before I have four or five occupations, which in total took me 25 years of learning. And then you need another five years to connect them, in order for them to become multi-functional.

*You define your work as poly-media. What is the difference in the relation to the more frequently used definitions such as multi-media or inter-media?*

Multi-media was used in the 1960's. Since the computer appeared multi-media is used only in connection to electronics. I started using the term poly-media when I started to work with the 'climate' technique.

*Does it talk about the connections between the various media in which you operate in?*

That would be inter-media, but I would define this in another way. At yesterday's lecture I spoke, painted, I was a DJ and so on. In order to achieve this you must practise and this is poly-media. That is why I have studied 25 years and only during the past few years am I becoming a master. The poly-media concept is only now being understood also in science. Two months ago I was at a large scientific conference in Frankfurt, where they started discussing the fact that they will have to start intensively working on the connection between various disciplines and specialisations. It is interesting that the Internet lead them to these decisions. Poly-media is also the basis for the *ODYSSEY* project, which is my largest project alongside the *Stone* project. This project includes various professionals or people with special knowledge who meet in the same area and are learning to perform a joint project. This is what we are missing in contemporary society. We have one specialist alongside the other and all they can do is say 'let's have a drink together'. However, it is hard to prepare them to work together. Each of them operates at such a high level that he is incapable of translating his work onto other levels. As somebody who writes brilliant poetry in Chinese and is afraid that it will sound idiotic in the English translation. But people will have to lower themselves down to these lower levels in order to develop different and new contents.

*The ODYSSEY project deals also with the issue of emigration, with the problem of 'home' (Heimat) and the identity of the individual in the modern world?*

*Odysseus* is a project which deals with all of the above issues. Homer's *Odysseus* is on his way home for a period of 22 years. On his way home he finds himself in various situations which he must control and participate in. He is not like a contemporary artist who goes into a gallery, remains a king there for three weeks and then gets kicked out. *Odysseus* must control the situation, the 'multilogue' with reality. We do not have a white wall in the street. On the other hand it is not in our power to design streets or towns. If we were King Peter, we could have built the new St. Petersburg or Hong Kong which was also built in 9 years, or Shanghai. However, most people do not have this power. And *Odysseus* talks about people who are disoriented, lost, who are increasingly loosing their national identity, who are becoming increasingly trans-national. You can be a Slovene but the influences upon you are American, British, etc. Your passport can be Slovene but your cultural influences and interests are also from other places. How will you therefore materialise your identity? One possibility is to close the systems and take the road back, a route which was chosen by the Balkan nations. Today you are an orthodox Serb, but only a few years ago you were culturally also an American. Or Bosnians and Croats who can in their mentality once more become Ustašas or fundamentalists, because they are so disoriented that they prefer to take the route back. However, this road is not a road of evolution, this road is not the solution. The fear of globalism is wrong. This is a process we can not stop. It is like modernism, a movement that could not be stopped. It continues to roll on. However, you can decide whether you want to feed this beast, sit behind a computer and say 'let's surf, let's not seek problems, let's not dig too deep,

let's have fun', or you can mount the beast, start influencing it, tame it and become focused on some contents which enable you to come down to earth, to materialise something. In this century we lost the family, nation and religion. During the last 30 years we have lived in a society of individualism, in a society of freedom, we were against authority and so on. Now we are returning to collective languages, to the need to get down to earth and ask ourselves where are the true qualities. Today, who still knows what quality really is? Look at the way we talk in the artistic world: 'Well, you can not really say that this is bad, because you do not understand the political context'. And so on. The Odyssey project deals with how to get the qualities back, how to return our pride.

*How? In what way?*

In this society the notion of work is becoming the last romantic notion of identity. We are moving towards a society without work. One fifth of the society is sufficient to feed all the rest and for all of us to live well. The industry is squeezing everything it can out of people and is holding them in a stranglehold through work. We are subordinating ourselves because we need work in order to survive. However people can only achieve new identities if somebody allows them to do what they are interested in, something they can be proud of. The number of such possibilities is on the decrease. Work is becoming a torment. There is a difference between work and a job. The job is performed for money and nobody thinks of singing a folk song while working for his company. The Japanese would do this, however, we would not. On the other side the fun culture is even more boring. Rave parties draw out more energy from people than any serious work. For example, let's say that we have 500 people that came to a rave and we offer them to renew a house or a street for fun, just for the sake of it. Each one of them could work for an hour, drink in between, listen to music, dance, have fun and talk. The street would be renewed in one day and through work such a rave party would change something in society and therefore people would be proud. When I first did the project *Schwarzarbeit* (Werkleitzbienalle, Germany, 2000; Forum Stadtpark Graz, 2001) i.e. a research project within *Odyssey*, this took place in a village Werkleitz where the unemployment rate was 40%. The only person who had the possibility to offer work was an owner of a metal foundry. He gave me the chance of organising a workshop in his factory. I worked with two workers who he had recently fired and a group of coloured people. What was it all about: Looked for example at the office in which we are sitting, the neon lights, the ugly tables, the masochism. When I work at home, I have pleasant lighting, a glass of wine, a computer and yet I manage to work. Why must this public, representation office be so masochistic? The first thing that I changed in the factory was the environment: lighting, music, drinks, food, and yet we worked and we worked well. Maybe we were not as efficient as the rationalised masochism of the everyday factory work, which must quickly produce cheap goods. We were at most 60% of that, but we were enjoying ourselves. And then, when the factory owner and the other workers saw us they said: 'We would also like to work like that.' And I told them 'this is your workshop, use it as it is now'. And I heard that they left it like that and that they now work in it. This means that a man can create work for himself and he can organise it in any way he desires. What is happening in the last period is that we are moving towards extreme neo-capitalism, which is destroying any kind of political ethics. And this pulls behind it also many other things. The knowledge of techniques, which are dealing with integrity and dignity is disappearing and I am trying to revive it through projects such as *Odysseus* and others. I think that we all need this knowledge in a new way, in the context of the contemporary global situation. We would have to learn to use the traditional or regional sources of knowledge and find translations for them in the frames of the global trends. Self-discipline is a very important thing and most people can operate in a disciplined way only if they are fighting against something. And I think that is the greatest problem of the generations today. They have no longer anybody or anything to fight against. They did not have the chance to learn how to adopt decisions and be disciplined. That is why they are desperately seeking for sources of pressure, prohibition and so on. That was also the insanity of the 1960's. To be against. I think it is much better to be for something. For what can we possibly fight against today? Today everything is basically allowed.

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# BIOGRAPHIES

**Eda Cufer** is a dramaturg, curator and writer. Her texts on theatre, dance, visual arts, culture and politics have been published in numerous publications at home and abroad. In the 80's, she collaborated as dramaturg with the director Dragan Živadinov. In 1983, she was co-founder of the Theatre of Sisters of Scipion Nasica. In the 90's, she collaborated as dramaturg with choreographer Iztok Kovač and his dance company En-Knap as well as with director Marko Peljhan in the frame of Project Atol. Between 1991 and 1999, she collaborated as dramaturg with the group Irwin on projects that dealt with a new perception and understanding of relations between the West and the East in the period of post-Socialism. In the frame of these projects, she was editor of numerous books and catalogues: *NSK Moscow Embassy: How the East Sees the East*, 1992; *Transnacionala: Highway Collisions Between East and West at the Crossroads of Art*, 2000; *Interpol: The Art Exhibition Which Divided East and West*, 2001. She co-curated the exhibitions: *In Search of Balkania*, Neue Galerie, Graz, Austria 2002 and *Call me Istanbul*, ZKM, Karlsruhe, Germany 2004 (both together with Roger Conover and Peter Weibl). She currently lives between Ljubljana and Boston and has focused on writing a book *Art as a Mousetrap*.

**Clémentine Deliss** is an independent curator, researcher and publisher and was born in London of French-Austrian parents. She holds a PhD from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. Early exhibitions include *Lotte or the Transformation of the Object* (Steirischer Herbst, Graz, Vienna 1990); *Exotic Europeans* (National Touring Exhibitions, London 1990); and *Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa* (Whitechapel Gallery, Konsthalle Malmö 1995). From 1992 to 1995 she was the artistic director of africa95, an artist-led festival coordinated with the Royal Academy of Arts, London and over 60 UK institutions. Since 1996 she has produced the writers' and artists' organ *Metronome*, publishing in Dakar, Berlin, Basel, Frankfurt, Vienna, Oslo, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Paris, London, and Tokyo. *Metronome* has been launched at the Dakar and Venice biennales; the Kunsthalle Basel; DAAD, Berlin; *Documenta X*; and at Galerie Chantal Crousel in Paris. In 2005 she founded Metronome Press in Paris together with French critic Thomas Boutoux ([www.metronomepress.com](http://www.metronomepress.com)). In September 2006, Clémentine Deliss had a solo exhibition of her work at Kandada gallery (CommandN project collective, Tokyo), featuring ten years of Metronome and a special edition of sandals made from second-hand books. At the same time she curated the *Metronome Think-Tank* in Tokyo, which was hosted by the Mori Art Museum and organised by Arts Initiative Tokyo and Edinburgh College of Art. *Metronome* was an official participant in *Documenta 12 magazines*. Since 2003 she directed Future Academy at Edinburgh College of Art with members and research cells in Senegal, India, Australia, USA, and Japan. She has acted as a consultant for the European Union, AFAA (now France cultures) and the Ministry of Culture, Senegal. At the moment she is a director of Weltkulturen Museum in Frankfurt.

**Mike Andrew Hentz** (New Jersey, 1954). He works in the field of visual art, music, new media, performance, sculpture, installation and events. He publishes texts, lectures and organises events. He is media consultant and develops multi-functional systems. From 2010 he has regular radioshow on reboot fm, Berlin and from 2011 he is working on minus delta t archives and preparing new minus delta t projects. He is co-founder of groups Minus Delta t (1978), Frigo and Code Public (1980). He collaborated on the projects University TV (1991), Van Gogh TV (1998), pontoon (1986), European Media

Art lab (1989), Kunstaspekte, Graz (2001–2005), Berliner Street Art (2005). He led numerous projects, including Odyssee Project (Osnabrück, 1993), Macroland (Vienna, 1997); director of festivals Treuianisches Schiff, HfbK, Hamburg; Medusa in Poland, The Future of Art Education – Festival 20 Jahre Intermediales Gestalten (Stuttgart, 2005), Polymedia Jourfix (Stuttgart, 2006); he founded Radio and TV School Riga, Latvia (2007). With music – performance – installations – intermedia he participated at Performance festival Wildwechsel in Frankfurt (2006), Festival Offside in Pore, Croatia (2006), 1st German Jews Harp festival in Leipzig (2007), AVfestival in Newcastle and Manchester (2008), MoKS, Mooste, Estonia (2008, 2009, 2011), Performance festival ZOOM Hildesheim (2009), The 5th Swiss, Berlin (2011). In recent years he lectured at Tartu University, Estonia (2008, 2009), Art Academy Riga & New Media / Film department of Riseba University, Riga, Latvia (2009–2012), UCCA, Beijing (2010) & led workshops at World of Art School (SCCA–Ljubljana) in Ljubljana (2006) and Film and Media production, F+F School, Zürich (2009).

Among other, he also collaborated on: ArsElectronica (Linz), Infermental (Leipzig), Documenta 7 and Documenta 8 (Kassel). He taught and teaches in the following art schools: HfbK, Hamburg (1991–1997), and Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste Stuttgart (2003–2006), and Hochschule für Gestaltung, Offenbach (2009).

**Suzana Milevska** is a theorist of visual art and culture based in Skopje, Macedonia. Currently she teaches art history and theory of visual art at the Faculty of Fine Arts – University Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Skopje. From 2008–2010 she taught fine arts and digital art at BA and MA level at the New York University in Skopje and from 2008–2010 she taught art history and analysis of styles at the Accademia Italiana Skopje and she was its Dean. From 2006 to 2008, she was the Director of the Center for Visual and Cultural Research at the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Institute 'Euro-Balkan' in Skopje and she taught Visual Culture at its research degree M.A. in Gender Studies. She holds a Ph.D. in Visual Cultures from Goldsmiths College in London (2006) where she taught from 2003 to 2005. In 2004 she was a Fulbright Senior Research Scholar at Library of Congress and she also received P. Getty Curatorial Research Fellowship (2001) and ArtsLink Grant (1999). Since 1992 she curated over 70 art projects in Skopje, Istanbul, Stockholm, Berlin, Bonn, Stuttgart, Leipzig, London, Ljubljana, Zagreb, Utrecht, Vienna, etc. She was one of the curators of the Cosmopolis Balkan Biennial in Thessalonica (2004) and of the International Biennale of Contemporary Art 2005 in Prague. In 2010 she published her book *Gender Difference in the Balkans* and edited *The Renaming Machine* in connection with a research and curatorial project with the same title (2008–2010). She was one of the researchers for the projects East Art Map (initiated by Irwin, 2001–6), Gender Check and for Call the Witness – Roma Pavilion at the 54 International Art Exhibition – Venice Biennale–Collateral Event, 2011; and curated the exhibitions Call the Witness, BAK, Utrecht, and Roma Protocol at the Austrian Parliament.

Since 2006 **Oliver Marchart** is Professor at the University of Luzern, 2001–2002 he was Scientific Advisor and Head of the Education Project of documenta 11. He lectured at different universities (University of Vienna, University of Innsbruck, Art Academies, Essex Summer School, University of Basel). Fellowships: Research Fellow at the Centre for Theoretical Studies, University of Essex (1995); Junior Fellow at the International Research Center for Cultural Studies in Vienna (1997–1998); Fellow at the Columbia University Institute at Reid Hall and the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris (2005).

**Saša Nabergoj** is an art historian, curator and critic. Assistant director at SCCA-Ljubljana, Center for Contemporary Arts. A member of AICA (International Association of Art Critics) and IKT (International Association of Curators of Contemporary Art, Amsterdam). Writer, editor, curator and lecturer on contemporary art, focusing on curatorial and critical practices. She curated many exhibition, among them *Studio 6 Presents: CAC Bukovje (SLO) and Studio Golo Brdo (CRO)* (Matchpoint Gallery, November 2011), *Tomislav Brajnović: Ekspedition\_ego* (Alkatraz Gallery, November 2010); both with Sonja Zavrtanik, *Around the world of art in 4.380 days. World of Art 1997-2009* (Alkatraz Gallery, November 2009), *Ola Pehrson. Retrospective. Ljubljana. Beograd. Stockholm* (Škuc Gallery, 19.12.2007-20.1.2008, Salon of Museum of Contemporary Art Beograd, February, March 2008 and Färgfabriken, October 2009); with Joa Ljungberg. She has lectured extensively, recently: *Legends and Stories of the Parallel Reality* on symposia *Archive as a Strategy: Conversations on self-historisation on the Case of East Art Map* organised by Calvert 22 and University College of London (May 2012), *Curatorial Intervention* on a conference *Applied Exhibiting*, ECM, Postgraduate educating, curating and managing studies at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna (May 2012) and *A Praise of Lazyness at TEDx* in Maribor (January 2011). At SCCA-Ljubljana she is a head of World of Art, School for Curators and Critics of Contemporary Art (since 1998) and Studio 6 (since 2004).

**Dorothee Richter** is an art historian and curator; Director of Studies for the Postgraduate Programme in Curating, ICS, at the ZHDK Zurich and publisher of On-Curating.org. Prior to that she was Artistic Director of the Künstlerhaus Bremen. She has initiated symposia on questions of contemporary art with the following publications: *Curating Degree Zero* – an international symposium of curators (with B. Drabble); *Dialoge und Debatten – on feminist positions in contemporary art; Im (Be\_)Griff des Bildes* (with Katrin Heinz and Sigrid Adorf); *Die Visualität der Theorie vs. zur Theorie des Visuellen* (with Nina Möntmann); *Re-Visionen des Displays*, (with Sigrid Schade and Jennifer Johns); *Institution as Medium. Curating as Institutional Critique?*, Kassel (with Rein Wolfs), teaching: University of Bremen, Ecole des Beaux Arts, Geneva, Merz-Akademie Stuttgart; University Lüneburg, Zurich University of Arts. She initiated (with B. Drabble) the *Curating Degree Zero Archive*, an archive, traveling exhibition, and website on curatorial practice ([www.curatingdegreezero.org](http://www.curatingdegreezero.org)). Other editions: *Curating Critique* (with B. Drabble), editor of the web-journal On-Curating.org. She is curator of *New Social Sculptures* in cooperation with the Kunstmuseum Thun and students of the Postgraduate Programme in Curating.

**Nora Sternfeld** is an art educator and curator. Part of trafo. K, Office for Art Education and Critical Knowledge Production (with Renate Höllwart and Elke Smodics-Kuscher) and of schnittpunkt. exhibition theory & practice. She is professor for curating and mediating art at the Aalto University Helsinki and co-director of ecm – educating/curating/managing – Master Program in exhibition theory and practice at the University of Applied Arts Vienna. She was a lecturer at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, the Viennese Art School, the Art Academy Kassel, the Zurich University of the Arts and the University of Education in Vienna. Curatorial projects have been: *Contradictions! Critical Agency and the Difference Within*, Open Space Vienna 2011; *Plakate und Kommentare*, IG Bildende Kunst, Vienna 2009 (w/ Toledo i Dertschei); *Nothing for us. Everything for everyone. Strategic Universalism and Political Drawing*, IG Bildende Kunst, Vienna 2007 (w/ Toledo i Dertschei); *Let it be known! Counter Histories of the African Diaspora in Austria*, Hauptbuecherei am Gürtel, Vienna 2007 (w/Araba Evelyn Johnston-Arthur); *Summit Non Aligned Initiatives in Education Culture*, Berlin 2007 (w/Kodwo Eshun, Su-

sanne Lang, Nicolas Siepen, Irit Rogoff, Florian Schneider) and *Hidden Hi/stories. Remapping Mozart*, a project for Wiener Mozartjahr 2006 (w/Ljubomir Bratic, Araba Evelyn Johnston-Arthur, Lisl Ponger, Luisa Ziaja). Moreover she is part of the editorial board of *Bildpunkt* – magazine of the Viennese artist association IG Bildende Kunst and publishes on contemporary art, education, politics of history and anti-racism.

**What, How & for Whom/WHW** is a curatorial collective formed in 1999 and based in Zagreb and Berlin. Its members are Iveta Čurlin, Ana Dević, Nataša Ilić and Sabina Sabolović, and designer and publicist Dejan Kršić. WHW organizes a range of production, exhibition and publishing projects and directs Gallery Nova in Zagreb. Recent exhibitions include: 11th Istanbul Biennial *What keeps Mankind Alive?*, Istanbul, 2009, *Hungry Man, Reach for the Book. It Is a Weapon*, Printed Matter, New York, 2010; *Ground Floor America*, Lakeside – Klagenfurt and Den Frie – Copenhagen, 2010; *Art Always Has Its Consequences*, former building of MOCA Zagreb, 2010, *One Needs to Live Self-Confidently... Watching*, Croatian pavilion at 54th Venice Biennial, 2011, *Details*, Bergen Kunsthall, 2011, *Second World*, steirischer herbst, Graz, 2011... Currently WHW is curating two exhibitions *How Much Fascism?* to be opened in BAK, Utrecht and Extra City, Antwerp in fall 2012 and the festival *Meeting Points 7*, to take place in 2013.

**Miha Zadnikar** (1962) is ethnologists and cultural sociologist. In the 1980's he operated mainly as a journalist, essayist and lecturer in the field of cultural and artistic – specialised mainly for music and film – criticism. He wrote for a number of publications in Yugoslavia. At the time he still had some sporadic hopes for institutions. With the declaration of Slovene independence he focused his activities and became an independent social – political activist – the problem of Metelkova as a whole, Intervention Bureau, etc. Later he dealt with club micro-sociology (he was the head of the program activity at the Gromki Club, AKC centre Metelkova Mesto, Ljubljana), the theory and organisation of 'new' subcultures and underground, promotion and organisation of boarder-line and overlooked musical practices (*Cinema-ear* at the Slovene Cinematheque, 'Defony' in Gromki). He regularly presents his endeavours on radio stations (mainly Radio Student), in publications (mainly the magazine *Mladina*) and is a lecturer at the Faculty of Arts at the University of Ljubljana where he holds the subject Anthropology and Sociology of Music.

**Luisa Ziaja** is an independent curator and author based in Vienna/Austria. Since 2006 she is co-director of the postgraduate master program ecm – educating/curating/managing at the University of Applied Arts Vienna. She is part of schnittpunkt. exhibition theory & practice and currently works on the research project *Post-Communist Past. Representations of communism in exhibition contexts of art and contemporary history* (2009-12). Recent exhibitions include re: ex-post. *Critical Knowledge and the Post-Yugoslavian Condition* (2010, Open Space, Vienna); *Recollecting. Looting and Restitution* (2008/09, MAK, Vienna, w/Alexandra Reininghaus); *Have The Cake And Eat It, Too. Institutional Critique as Inherent Practice* (2008, Kunsthalle Exnergasse Vienna, w/Charlotte Martinz-Turek); *De-Revolution* (2006, Galerie IG Bildende Kunst Vienna, w/Berthold Molden); *Hidden Hi/stories. Remapping Mozart*, a project for Wiener Mozartjahr 2006 (Diverse Spaces, w/Ljubomir Bratic, Araba Evelyn Johnston-Arthur, Lisl Ponger, Nora Sternfeld). From 2001 to 2004 she was assistant curator and exhibition coordinator at Generali Foundation Vienna. She was a lecturer at Technical University Vienna (2008/09), Academy of Fine Arts Vienna (2004/05), and Vienna Artschool (2004-06). She has contributed to numerous exhibition catalogs, anthologies, and magazines on contemporary art, politics of history, exhibition theory and practice informed by current socio-political questions.

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